

Sermon Topic: Will You Follow The Risen Lord Who Restores? – 28 April 2019

Sermon Text: John 21: 1-19

Five Names, One Common Trait (vs 2)

Out of all the 7 gathered by the Sea of Tiberias, 5 names were mentioned. What was common between them?

- Simon Peter: professed to follow Jesus to prison and to death (Luke 22:33)
- Thomas: persuaded the 11 disciples to risk death with Jesus to Bethany to mourn Lazarus' death.
- Nathanael: First among them to declare Jesus as the Son of God and followed Him (John 1:49)
- James & John: Tempted to call fire down on the Samaritans who did not extend hospitality to Jesus (Luke 9:54)

They are remembered for their fervor for Jesus. Each of them claimed to give their best to follow Jesus till they had a chance to be proven and failed as deniers and deserters.

Reflection: *Could you identify a time in the past (or even now) where you over-declare and under-deliver your promise to follow Jesus?*

Perhaps you've told Jesus your resolve to follow Him by:

- Being a better mom to your kids only to yell at them thrice in a day.
- Giving Him your best at work till your supervisor said you underperform.
- Surrendering your single years to Jesus but reach home to question if you've been forgotten & left behind.
- Being a hands-on grandparent to your grandchild, only to hear your child complain you meddle too much.
- Honoring God at work, at home yet your children walk away from God.

When you are tried and your fervor for Jesus dipped, do you feel like you failed Jesus?

What if I tell you that God's greatest work is built on the ground of our frailty and failure?

Perhaps that's why the evangelist John finds it important to elaborate how Jesus wiped away the disciples' shame and restore them for His service.

From Jerusalem To Sea Of Galilee

The disciples had met the risen Lord in the 1st week of his resurrection. It's puzzling why Jesus had requested to meet them again at another location (Matthew 28:10). Could they still be fighting shadows of fear and failure associated to Jerusalem as broken people?

Whatever the reason, Jesus showed up in Galilee).

Fishing While Waiting (vs 3)

Some people have argued that Peter and the others getting back to fishing was a response of:

1. Aimless activity done in desperation
2. Abandonment of God to return to their former lifestyle
3. Action owing to hunger while they waited for Jesus to show up. It was natural duty.

Since a cross-reference (Matthew 28:7) in Scripture showed that the disciples acted in faith as instructed, they couldn't be disobedient. Instead, physical hunger could have motivated their action to fish. The state of catching "nothing" all night sets the stage for Jesus to show up and act.

What This Means For Us: Lesson 1 - Sometimes, time spent waiting for God to show up can seem barren. But keep doing our natural duty and God will visit and guide us.

Children, Have You No Fish? (vs 5)

The Greek Word "Pai-don" is better translated as "children" rather than "friends". "Children" In Greek can be used in 2 ways:

- Young kid, have you no fish? This translation would sound awkward. Having not recognised Jesus yet, it would sound strange to their ear to hear one man addressing seasoned fishermen as kiddos.
- Young obedient servants, have you no fish? This refers to someone who is in total obedience/submission to another. Other texts that use the root word "Pai" include:
 - *The centurion referring to his sick servant (Matt 8:6)*
 - *Jesus as suffering servant (Matt 12:18, Acts 3:13)*
 - *Israel as God's servant (Luke 1:54)*
 - *Herod calls his servants (Matt 14:2)*

Perhaps Jesus knew that once the disciples recognized Him, the term "young obedient servant" would make sense.

That God would address me "faithful" when I deem myself a "failure" is powerful.

Ask: What if God is using seeming failure to cultivate faithfulness in me?

Reflection: *That God would address you as obedient even when you deem yourself a "failure" is powerful. What if your failure is part of God's plan to cultivate faithfulness?*

When Jesus Showed Up: None, Some, Full (vs 3, 6, 8, 11)

Our culture teaches us to be transactional with one another: I'll do this for you if you do that for me. I do this for you, I expect you to do that for me. You pay the bill, I treat you nice. Transactional relationship is pretty selfish and ugly.

Sometimes, we are tempted to relate to God in similar manner: I do good (QT, prayer, tithing, etc), God you better be good to me. Oh I mess up, God will sure punish me.

If Jesus were transactional with the disciples, “nothingness” would be the best deal for failure. Instead, Jesus approached with kindness and hospitality. Still shaking off shadows of past failure and barren from fear of what's ahead, Jesus cooked breakfast for them. What is the character of God revealed through Jesus? No failure stops God from working on them. He pulls them away from “nothingness” and fill them “full”. This is unconditional grace and underserved mercy. His love is deep and unshakable. His love bypasses their past and restores them to fullness.

What This Means For Us: **Lesson 2 - Don't live as prisoner to your past. Live in the provision of God's love that is deep, unshakable and restoring. In Christ's love, you'll always have more than enough.**

Tender Conversation Around The Fireplace (vs 15, 16, 17)

1. The use of a full name: Simon, Son of John

There are 2 reasons why a full name is used as a personal address. To discipline a wayward person or to invite a commitment from another (marriage or baptism vow). The 2nd scenerio sets the tone here.

2. Do you love me: Agape vs Phileo

In his 2 questions, Jesus asked if the quality of Peter's love for him could be unrestricted, unrestrained and unconditional (Agape). Peter could only answer that his love for Jesus is of friendly, brotherly nature. By the 3rd question, Jesus' question changed from agape to phileo. His questions were for self-examination rather than information.

Peter hurt because every question reminded him of his frailty. He had promised Jesus faithfulness before. But tasted the bitterness of his denial. Each question brought Peter to confession of an imperfect love. Aren't we not all frail and weak our love for Jesus too. Yet, God's greatest work in us is built on the ground of our frailty and failure.

Possible dynamics in the tender conversation:

Peter: Jesus, You know I cannot love You with a 1st class love. I can only love You with a 2nd class love, or even a more inferior love.

Jesus: Peter, I know your love for Me now is only 2nd class. You still love your life too much. Yet I accept and commission you as you are. But the day will come when you will love Me with a 1st class love, Peter. And you will not be afraid even to die for me. I'm not through with you yet.

Jesus' love restores Peter where he was at. Jesus commissioned Peter even when he was far from exhibiting perfect love for Jesus. This shows as that we can count on God's unshakable love for us even when we cannot count on our love for Him.

3. Feed my lambs, Take care of my sheep

Jesus revealed His love to restore Peter. At the same time, He asked for a response of love from Peter. A Christian who folds his arms and hands; He who does nothing to respond to His revealed love is hardly alive to Christ. Action is evidence of a sincere love to Him. Christ's love always invites us to action.

We oft' interpret "feed my sheep" as a vocational call to raise pastors to care and shepherd a congregation. Most of you here may not be called to become pastors. There are still many different ways you can demonstrate your love for Jesus in the way you relate to lambs and sheep here in AMC. If you love Jesus, then can you:

- Spend time with lil children for the sake of Jesus?
- Teach a youth class to help them hold fast to Jesus?
- Adjust your usual seat to welcome others during a combined service?
- Break out of comfort zone to say "hi" to someone if you're new to AMC?
- Break out of your friend circle to embrace an unfamiliar person even when you're an old timer in AMC?
- Are you already doing a little in AMC? If so, can you do a little more? If you can, then do it for Jesus. If you cannot, then give your utmost in the little you do.

Let not your love for Jesus be dreadful duty. If His unshaken love has restored you, stir yourself to serve Him gladly. There are lambs and sheep here in AMC and out of His sheep pen. Will you love Jesus enough to care through action? Will you follow Him?

What This Means For Us: **Lesson 3 - God's revealed love for us will always invite us to action. Action will prove if we are alive to Him; if we will follow Him.**

Discussion Questions For Cell Groups Or Personal Study

1. Do you ever feel like a failure? How do you handle your feelings? Relate one positive and negative situation.
2. Why did the disciples not recognize Jesus at first?
3. What does Jesus want to teach them by giving them the huge, miraculous catch?
4. What can we learn from this? How can we be reliant on God instead of ourselves?
5. Why does Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves Him? What is the significance of the Greek in this passage?
6. What is God saying to you through this dialogue?