

SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Reminders for Disciples

Text: John 21

INTRODUCTION: Wow! It is good to be back in the pulpit to share the Word of God with you. My heart overflows with gratitude to my fellow pastors on staff who so magnificently preached God's Word from the Gospel of John through the month of December, allowing me to get a much needed replacement of my right hip joint, which, glory to God, is doing marvelously.

Let me say a word about next week. Next Sunday, January 13 is going to be an incredible Sunday. You do not want to miss it. We will go back to having our small groups meeting weekly along with our morning worship. Aren't you ready to start meeting again in our Lifechange Groups?

So, half of you will have LCGs at 9 and worship at 10:30 and the other half will have worship at 9 and LCGs at 10:30. Thank you for your outstanding spirit of cooperation in planning and organizing this shift. I have great confidence that this move is of the Lord, and He is going to use it to glorify Himself in our church and grow us and build us to be all that He desires.

And I will be starting a new eight week sermon series next week called **What Good is Good Doctrine?** We live in a day that many do not think sound doctrine matters. But it does matter, and I hope to share with you eight major Bible doctrines and some ways they make very important practical differences in our lives.

So, next Sunday will be the beginning of a new chapter in the life of our church. Let's make it a blow-out day! If you were planning to be out, let me ask you to change your plans if you can. Let's say by our presence and our enthusiasm that we are excited to be a part of what our great God is doing. Let's make our commitment and response a way of saying Thank You to the Lord for all He has done in our lives individually and as a church. Amen?!

OK, today, I want to finish out our consideration of the Gospel of John. Mark, Thomas, Jeremy, and Rick all did a terrific job preaching through this book showing us

- Jesus, the Light of the World, that overcomes the darkness, even the darkness of sin and death.
- Jesus, the unexpected Messiah, fulfilling all the prophecies of the coming Christ, yet in ways and far beyond the typical expectations of the people.
- Jesus, the humble servant of God, serving His Father in absolute obedience and serving men and women He created by seeking and saving those who were lost.
- Jesus, the disciple maker, Who not only wants to save us to live with us eternally, but Who desires to transform our lives as we grow to be like Him and in turn help others to become the Disciples of Jesus also.

I am grateful for all that they covered of this precious book of the New Testament, which by the way, if you have never studied through the Bible, there is no better place to begin than by reading and re-reading the Gospel of John.

But I am also grateful that they left one chapter at the end of the book that I can preach to you today! John, chapter 21.

I call this chapter "**Reminders for Disciples.**"

Remember the context.

John, chapter 20 is the chapter on the cross.

Chapter 21 is the chapter about the resurrection.

In these two chapters, all that Jesus claimed to be, all the prophets had said He would be, **all that Jesus began to show the people that He truly was, reached their climax in Jesus' death and resurrection.**

- **The Light of the World was victorious over the darkness of sin as He paid the penalty of sin once for all on Calvary. Through the resurrection, Jesus declared victory over the darkness of death.**
- **The unexpected Messiah fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that the Jews could not accept as God the Father laid upon His own dear Son the iniquity of us all.**

- **Upon the cross Jesus demonstrated the magnitude and depth of His love for all mankind, giving His life as a ransom for many. As a humble servant He was obedient to God even to the cruel death on the cross.**
- **After the resurrection, the risen Savior met with His disciples, showing and telling them that they remained His disciples for He ever lives, and that their calling is to go and make new disciples for the Master.**

And then John says at the end of chapter 20 those words that have been the foundation of our whole series through the Gospel of John:

John 20:31 ... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

My friend, if you have not yet believed, trusted in Jesus, receiving Him as the Lord, the Master of your life, today for you can be your day of salvation. The Gospel of John was written that you might believe, and believing have life in the name of Jesus.

But you must act. Acknowledging that these things are true is not enough. Many believe in God, at least as they define Him. But to be saved you must trust Jesus Himself, put your whole weight upon Jesus and invite Him to be your Lord. Dear lost brother or sister, you can do that today.

But when John writes, "Believing, have life in His name," he is not just writing to those who have not yet come to faith. He is writing to those who are men and women of faith, because **believing in Jesus is not something I did, it is something I do.**

I came to trust in Jesus as an eight year old boy after

- faithful teaching of God's Word in children's Sunday School,
- the testimony of a playmate named Ruth Ann,
- the conviction of the Holy Spirit that I needed to be saved.

Since then there have been

- doubts that have arisen

- questions I could not answer
- crises in my faith and in my walk

But Jesus has kept me believing.

I have not kept myself believing, but Jesus said that He gave me eternal life and I would never perish, so He keeps me believing.

So in the last chapter, the Holy Spirit writes through the hand of the Apostle John some reminders for us believers, reminders I need all the time. My guess is that you who believe need them about as much as I do.

Let's just read through the chapter, and let me point them out. They are not complex or difficult to understand. But they are really important and exceedingly helpful.

John 21:1-14

1 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. 9 Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"--knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. 14 This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Reminder # 1 - Do exactly what the Lord tells you to do.

- **Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat."**
- **Any other side was the wrong side of the boat.** Not just the left side, front side, back side or the other side. Anything different than what Jesus said was the wrong side.
- By the way, do you know the significance of the text being so precise as to say they caught 153 fish? There are a lot of wild speculations in commentaries, but most of them are fanciful speculations.
- Do you know what I think? It offers evidence that this was an actual event. This is real. Fishermen always count their fish! They may not always tell you the real number, but they know.
- When I was Student Minister in Slidell, (OK, I know that is ancient history, but hang with me.) my two brothers came down for a visit, and I got one of the really great fishermen in our church to take us out off the coast. This was in the days before there was a limit on speckled trout.
- Four of us caught 347 speckled trout, most of them two at a time. You think we didn't count them? The actual count was 347 speckled trout and one sea gull. He swooped down and grabbed the baited hook after my brother cast it before it hit the water and hooked himself. Do you know it is really hard to unhook a Sea Gull without getting pecked to pieces, but we eventually managed. We confirmed the count when we came in and divided the fish so we could clean them. We didn't clean the sea gull. He was catch and release.
- Jesus was reminding the disciples of what He had already taught them: **Apart from Me you can do nothing.** Even when we are dealing in areas of our expertise, the Lord's way is the right way.
- God's way is not just plan a and ours is plan b. **God's way is Plan Only if you want to get it right.** (By the way, next week when I begin to share What Good Is Good Doctrine, we will see how we can know what God's plan only is so that we can cast on the right side of the boat.

Let's read on and see another reminder.

John 21:15-19

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. 18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

Reminder # 2 - Returning to fellowship with the Lord after we stray from Him, requires action on our part.

Jesus initiated Peter's return to sweet fellowship with the Master. Peter did not seek out Jesus. Jesus sought Peter.

Jesus is always ready to restore us to fellowship after we sin, no matter how much or how many times. But fellowship is a two way street.

Jesus requires repentance and confession to demonstrate we want to be in fellowship.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession is more than a recitation of our wrongdoings. **Confession means agreeing with God that what we have been doing is wrong.**

Repentance is more than saying, "I'm sorry." **Repentance is turning around and walking a new direction.** It includes abandoning the sin. But it also means going the right way, in obedience, doing what the Lord tells us to do.

That is why Jesus asked for Peter's commitment to take up his calling once again and feed, tend, and care for the flock of God as one of Jesus' disciples. The Lord even warned Peter that doing what God had called him to do would mean that he too would die upon a cross. Jesus ended His plea with Peter with the words, "Follow Me." The right way for Peter, the God's Plan Only for Peter, and the way for Peter to be restored to fellowship with God after denying Christ, was for Peter to repent and start walking the path of obedience to which Jesus had called him as a disciple.

Let's read the final section of the chapter and see the third reminder. My, my, does this have application to us who have just been through Hurricane Michael.

John 21:20-25

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." 23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Reminder # 3 - Do not compare what the Lord has done in your life with what He has done in someone else's life.

Jesus told Peter that his path as a disciple would lead him ultimately to death on a cross, and it did. Peter requested that he be crucified upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to die as His Lord had died.

But when Jesus told Peter this, Peter said, "Well, what about John? How is he going to die?"

In essence, Jesus said, "Peter, stay in your lane. This is none of your business. You be concerned with my plans for you and don't worry about my plans for John."

This is great counsel from on High for us who are still working through the aftermath of the hurricane.

It is easy to get consumed with the why question:

- Why did our church get damaged so much when others got far less?
- Why did other churches get damaged a lot more than ours?
- Why was my place destroyed and others hurt so little?
- Why was I spared when so many have been devastated?

God has answers to those questions, but we won't know them until we are with Him and made to be fully like Him.

Those are not questions we should spend time thinking about right now.

We should focus on what God is doing in our lives.

Folks, **what God has allowed for each of us individually, for each of our families, and for us as a church collectively is right for us.**

God is altogether powerful. He causes a dozen trees to fall and one to stand.

But our God is altogether good. Even the difficult, even the tragic things He allows into our lives, God purposes to work through those things for good for all of us who love Him and are the called according to His purpose.

Let's stay in our lanes.

Let's not worry about John.

- **Let's commit ourselves to do everything the Lord tells us to do, for His Plan Only for us is good.**
- **If we have strayed, let us return to Him in confession and repentance, walking the road of a disciple in obedience, following the Master.**
- **Let us receive with grace what God has been pleased to send, and walk through it faithfully as a follower of Christ, bringing Him glory.**
- **Let us be focused on what the Lord would have us to do, without concern about God's plan for someone else.**