

**Feed My Sheep**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
April 12, 2026

Text: John 21:1-14

Purpose: Christ commissions Peter to return to his original calling – Be a Fisher of men. We too can be fishers of men!

One Sunday morning, a pastor assured his congregation he was their servant and that they should feel free to call him anytime they had a problem.

Later that night the pastor's phone rang at 3 a.m. On the other end was a dear elderly lady who said, "Pastor, I can't sleep."



"I'm so sorry to hear that," he comforted her. "But what can I do about it?" the pastor asked.

She sweetly replied, "Preach to me a while, pastor." <sup>1</sup>



*"Gone Fishin'!"* How many of us have ever wanted to place a sign on the door of our business or home that said, "Gone Fishing!"?

Our scripture passage this morning finds our disciples going back into the family business of fishing. Jesus had not been out of the grave very long before they had reverted back to

their old ways of life. Do you remember where Jesus first found Simon Peter, James and John? That's right, they were fishing.

The New Testament mentions fish or fishing several times. We see in the gospels; Jesus turned a little boy's lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish into a feast for over 5000 men. (Matthew 14:17)

In another passage we see that Jesus and Peter were required to pay their half shekel temple tax. Since Jesus had no money of his own, He told Peter to go down to the sea and draw up a fish. In the mouth of the first fish Peter caught would be enough to pay the temple tax for both of them. (Matthew 17:27)

Our passage today in John 21, reminded the disciples of the first encounter they had with Jesus. The similarities between the two are remarkable.

### READ LUKE 5:1-11

Peter, James and John first met Jesus when they were fishing along the shores of the Lake

Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. A few years ago, I was able to go to the Sea of Galilee and saw men working the water to draw in their daily living just as they did during Jesus' day.

This passage of scripture tells us the disciples had fished all night and they had caught nothing. They were now on shore cleaning up their nets and Jesus asked Simon (later known as Peter) to go out into the water so He could teach



the crowds. After he had finished speaking, Jesus told Simon to go out into the deep part of the lake and cast their net into the water. When he did, the catch was so great that the net began to break and they called other boats to come help them. (Luke 5:1-11)

When we compare the first encounter Jesus had with Simon and the meeting between them after the resurrection, the similarities are interesting to note.

In the passage we read earlier in John chapter twenty-one, we see Simon Peter, Thomas who is called Didymus, Nathanael who was from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (James and John – the sons of thunder), and two other disciples. I am sure after Jesus' resurrection the disciples were at a loss as to what they were to do. I am sure you have said to your spouse or a friend a time or two, "What do you want to do?" "Where do you want to go eat?" The answer usually goes like this: "I don't know. What do you want to do?"



Simon Peter spoke up and said, "*Let's go fishing!*" The other disciples decided to tag along. I always thought after Jesus called Peter into the "Fishing for Men business" that he sold his boat and nets, but I am not so sure now. Maybe Peter kept it during those three years while he was with Jesus. After all, what boat did they use to cross the sea? What boat did have when they encountered the rough seas at night and Jesus approached them walking on the water?

Jesus had already met with the disciples two other times after His resurrection. One time there were ten gathered in a room and Jesus appeared. A second time, Thomas was with the others and Jesus presented Himself to them for their inspection. Yes, Jesus was alive!



This third encounter Jesus had with His disciples was standing on the sea shore watching these men toil without results. He called out to them, *“Hey! Have you caught anything?”* They replied, *“NO.”* Jesus then told them to try their nets on the other side of the boat. Maybe they thought that the person on the shore could see a ripple in the water that they couldn’t from their view. They cast the net on the other side.

Almost immediately, their nets were filled! John, the beloved disciple, recognized that the person on the shore was none other than Jesus. Peter immediately put on his outer garment, and dove into the water. He had to see Jesus.



Simon Peter is our passionate follower of Jesus. He was willing to die with Jesus, but when the time came, He just as passionately cursed ever knowing Jesus. Finally, the boat came to shore with the nets almost bursting. In the nets, we find that they had 153 fish. Now why in the world did John let us know there were 153 fish?

Throughout the centuries, many people have concocted various theories of the meaning behind the 153 fish.

Cyril of Alexander (376-444 AD, Patriarch of Alexandria) said that the number 153 is made up of three things. The number 100 is representative of the “fullness of the gentiles.” (The shepherd’s fold in Matthew 18:12 or the seeds full fertility is 100-fold.) The 100 represents the fullness of the gentiles who will be gathered into Christ. The 50 represents the remnant of Israel that will be gathered in. The 3 represents the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

אלהים	הא	אני
Elohim	Ha	Ani
God	the	I
40+10+5+30+1	1+5	10+50+1
Total: 153		

Jerome (347-420 AD, translated Bible into Latin) said that in the sea there are 153 different kinds of fish and that the number stands for a catch which includes every kind of fish. This symbolizes the fact that some day all men of all nations will be gathered together in Jesus Christ.

I think it is there to remind us they caught MANY fish in that one casting of the net.



Jesus had prepared a meal for His hungry friends. He had prepared a fire in which to bake the bread and roast some fish on. This is only the second time that a fire of coals is mentioned in the New Testament. The first time was when Simon Peter had warmed himself beside the fire the night he betrayed Jesus. This second time, Jesus prepared the coals to feed His disciples. Jesus knew the needs of His disciples. He met them at the point of their need, and was willing to provide for their needs.

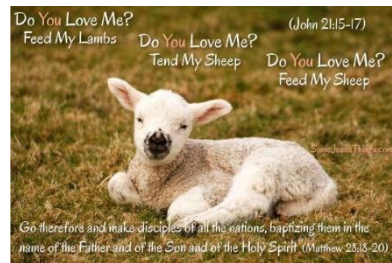


Can you imagine the surprise on their faces when they saw Jesus again for the third time? It is true that Jesus had met Mary in the Garden. He had met with the disciples in the Upper Room. He walked with two down the road to Emmaus. Jesus also met with the disciples again while Thomas was with them. Why did Jesus appear to so many after his resurrection?

He wanted them to know the reality of His resurrection. Even today, people are denying the truth of the resurrection. Thomas the disciple refused to believe it unless he saw Jesus for himself. Thomas had to physically touch Jesus to believe it was true. Over the centuries there have been people that denied the truth of the resurrection. But it is true – He is Alive!

**READ John 21:15-25**

As they were sitting around the fire, Jesus turned to Simon Peter and asked him, “*Peter, do you love me?*”



In the English language we use the word “love” to represent many different things. We love chocolate, we love baseball, we love country music, and we love our children. Obviously that word “love” takes on different meanings in the English language.



In the Greek language, which is what the New Testament was written in, there are various words used for that word “love.”

The word *agape* represents a high, God like, pure love. The word *philo* represents a brotherly kind of love. The word *eros* represents a sensual type of love.



This word that Jesus first used for love was *agape* or a pure Heavenly kind of love.

Jesus said to Peter, “*Do you agape me?*” Peter responded, “*You know I philo you,*”

Which means I love you like a brother loves a brother.

Jesus said to Peter, “*Feed My lambs.*”

Jesus asks the question a second time. Simon Peter responds in the same way. Jesus replies to Peter, “*Feed My sheep.*”

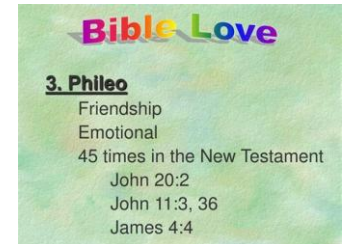
Jesus asks a third time, “*Peter, do you even philo me like a brother?*”

Peter was grieved because the Lord questioned Simon Peters love – even the *philo* kind of love.

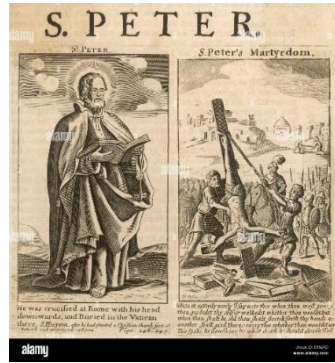
Simon Peter responded, “*Yes, you know all things, I do philo (love you like a brother) you.*”

Jesus again replies, “*Feed My sheep.*”

I believe the reason Jesus asked Simon Peter the same question three times because it was Simon Peter that had denied Jesus three times on the night of Jesus’ betrayal. Jesus, three times instructs Peter after his response, to “*feed my lambs, feed my sheep, and feed my sheep.*”



This encounter by the Sea of Galilee ends with Jesus telling Simon Peter the kind of death he would endure if He followed Jesus. He was to be stretched out and killed. Tradition has it that Peter was killed by crucifixion. Just before he was crucified, Simon Peter requested they nail him upside down instead of right side up. He did not even consider himself worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus.



John the beloved disciple was not to face the same fate as the others. It is said that John is the only disciple that was NOT martyred for his faith. The internal evidence for the authorship of this book is found in verse 24. *“This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”* John is credited with writing the Gospel of John, I, II, and III John, as well as the Book of Revelation.

This record of John is by no means meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the life of Jesus Christ. John concludes the Book of John in 21:25 by saying, *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, that which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”*

What is the application for us now that we have heard about the life of Christ? Christ’s words to Peter are the same words that should apply to us today.

1. Do you love Me? Then help take care of My fellow believers. Feed My lambs and My sheep.
2. Are you willing to be a fisher of men? Did you notice that the disciples were only fruitful when they obeyed Christ?
3. Do you REALLY believe that this is the Christ, the Son of the Living God? God incarnate, Christ dead, buried, and resurrected. If you REALLY believe that, what are you going to do about it?

There are some things that we need to keep in mind before we launch out into the deep and go fishing.



**1. Make sure your nets are in proper order – there are no holes in them.** During Peter’s day, the fishermen would take time and make sure there were no holes in the net. Fishermen would spend hours tying up the loose ends where the fish were escaping.

If the church will continue in unity and love, the harvest can be great. If there are rips or tears in our fellowship due to bitterness and disagreements, the harvest will not be gained, and the harvest will slip through.

**2. Secondly, make sure your nets are clean.** The scripture records that the fishermen spent time washing their nets. The nets were designed to glide through the water without anything hindering them. Over time, the nets may become filled with debris, moss or other trash particles. If left unclean, they eventually may rot. It is important if we are to become fishers of men, we need to

keep our lives clean and free of the debris of sin. Our sin hinders our ability to catch a thing.

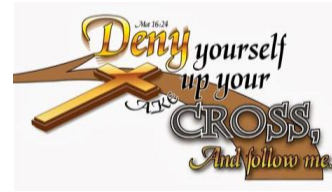
**3. Thirdly, if the harvest is to be caught, the nets need to be cast.** If we have pretty nets that are tied tight, and have all the debris cleaned out, but fail to cast the net overboard, outside the boat, into the water, we will NEVER bring in a harvest. It is rare for the fish to jump into the boat.

We, as a church, need to be willing to take our nets and cast them out into the world – outside these four walls.



Just before Christ ascended up into heaven He said, *“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Love is costly! For Simon Peter, the Lord commissioned him the task to feed, teach, baptize, and lead the sheep of God. Simon Peter became one of the key leaders of the Jerusalem Church. It was his sermon on the Day of Pentecost that brought 3000 people into the Kingdom of God. Simon Peter became passionate about telling everyone about Jesus. Simon Peter took up the message of the cross, and eventually he died upon it. It cost Simon Peter his life.



Jesus said, *“If you are to be My disciple, you must be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”* So few are willing to deny their desires, so few are willing to take up the cross God has given them, and even fewer are willing to follow Christ.

Jesus’ word to Peter is a word to us today. *“Never mind the other person, as for yourself, follow me.”* We need courageous people willing to step up and follow Jesus Christ, no matter the cost.

The world has yet to see, what one person, fully sold out to God, will accomplish!

God is calling you! Will you respond?

**LET US PRAY**

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Mikey’s Funnies – April 25, 2019 – A Call Funny