

# “Come and Have Breakfast”

John 21:1-25

Key Verse: 21:15

**“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’”**

Chapter 21 is the epilogue of John’s gospel. The last verse of chapter 20 is John’s purpose statement of the gospel (Jn 20:31). Yet he decides to add one more story to his gospel here. The story he includes is about the resurrected Jesus’ unchanging, life-giving love for his disciples, especially Peter. The Risen Jesus appeared by the Sea of Galilee and restored his love relationship with his disciples. He also reinstated Peter as a shepherd for God’s flock and handed his redemptive work over to his top disciple, Peter.

There are three phrases that Jesus says to Peter in this narrative that reveal his love and care. **“Come and have breakfast,” “Do you love me?”** and **“Follow me.”** May God bless us to hear Jesus’ words speak to our hearts as we go through this passage this morning.

## **I. “Come and have breakfast” (1-14)**

Let’s consider the disciple for a moment. The past few weeks were indescribably intense with the nightmare of Jesus’ crucifixion and the unexplainable wonder of his resurrection. Look at verse 2. Now Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two others, were all wondering, “What’s next?” It was disorienting. Jesus had been their whole life for the past 3 years. Now he wasn’t around. They were at a crossroads, with a new chapter of their life looming. Yet, they didn’t know what to do.

Peter, maybe bored, impulsively says, “I’m going fishing.” Everyone else says, “(I guess) we’ll go with you.” This shows that Peter was still a leader among them. Every group of friends has an initiator. He decides. Everyone else follows. Peter was still that guy with the disciples.

Fishing was Peter’s profession before the Lord Jesus called him. Peter knew just what to do: prepare the nets and boat, go fish, sell what he caught in the market. Its familiarity must have brought him some comfort. He turned to the one thing he was good at before he met Jesus.

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But that night they caught nothing. All night they fished. Cast and pull. Nothing. Cast and pull. Nothing. Try the other side of the boat. Nothing. Move the boat. Nothing. A little deeper. Nothing. A little shallower. Nothing.

Three years earlier the same thing had happened to Peter in the same place. He had been fishing all night. In a state of failure, frustration, and despair he's back on shore cleaning off his nets when Jesus comes to him and says, **“Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.”** (Lk 5:2) This was actually a ridiculous command. The fish weren't biting all night. The sun was now up so they surely wouldn't be biting now. Furthermore, how can a carpenter tell a fisherman how to fish? But for some reason, Peter did what Jesus said. Sure enough, he caught so much fish his nets were about to break. That event, three years ago, changed Peter's life.

So this night must have brought back a terrible rush of feelings of failure and despair. Peter was failing again now without Jesus. Worse yet is the weight of his failure of abandoning Jesus and disowning him three times. He failed in every conceivable way. He failed as a fisherman. He failed as a disciple. He failed as a friend. Reflecting over the past three years felt like everything was for naught. His life felt like it was completely over.

Have you ever felt like this? Felt like a failure? Felt like everything seems futile? Frustrated with our own failings? Like you let Jesus down? Peter felt all these things.

In this state, how does Jesus deal with Peter? Jesus had good reason to scold and rebuke Peter, to shame and punish him. He could have justifiably said, “I told you so!” But instead of a rebuke Jesus appears as a gentle friend and shepherd to graciously restore his relationship with Peter. Look at verse 4. **“Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.”**

Jesus' love takes the initiative. Jesus meets his disciples where they were. He shows up in the middle of their failures. He calls out to them ever so warmly, **“Friends, haven't you any fish?”** No words of frustration, finger pointing, or disappointment. Only words of friendship. Then, just like three years ago, Jesus makes an almost insulting suggestion from the shore, **“Throw your net on the right side of the boat.”** Like they hadn't tried that..., all night, with no result. But they obeyed. Sure enough, like before, they experienced a miracle. So many fish came swarming into the net that they couldn't haul the net in.

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Jesus’ love seeks the success and blessing of others, even the success of his enemies. The disciples acted like enemies when they abandoned Jesus to die. They knew they deserved punishment, yet they were blessed with a miracle. This is grace. Jesus restores our failure and despair.

Now the disciples knew that this catch of fish was supernatural. John realized first: **“It is the Lord!”** At that, Peter immediately puts his clothes back on and jumps into the water. He bailed on the disciples he had brought fishing with him, and left them to do the hard work of hauling in the huge catch of fish. In typical Peter fashion, he was so excited that Jesus had come.

Verse 9 says, **“When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.”** For some reason, this verse stood out to me the most. Jesus didn’t happen to bump into them on the beach. This event was well planned out and prepared for. Jesus had been preparing an intimate and special time of fellowship to restore and reconcile Peter. He brought coals and got them started. He had fish, while the disciples struggled all night to catch some. He had bread. He planned a BBQ. What better way to reconcile with a bunch of guys than with a BBQ!?

**Jesus’ love is intentional.** It is like when I plan a date with my wife. When the details are planned, reservations are made, babysitter lined up, etc. They are an expression of a love that is seeking intimate fellowship. It is a love that is intentional, a love that says, “You are important to me.” That’s what Jesus does for his disciples. Everything in this passage is intentional, it is purposeful. The time and place, the event, the failure, the miraculous catch, everything was done as an intentional expression of love to restore the relationship he had with his disciples, especially with Peter.

With the coals still hot, and food ready to eat Jesus invites them to join him. He first asks to include some of the fish they caught (10). So Peter jumps back into the boat and pulls the net full of fish to shore. There were 153 fish. Then Jesus welcomes them saying, **“Come and have breakfast.”** He serves them a warm breakfast and has a wonderful meal at sunrise with his disciples.

What does a meal together with friends represent? It is special. It shows that Jesus wanted to just spend some quality time with his best friends. Jesus didn’t have to go to such great lengths to serve his disciples this meal. But this is what I love so much about our Savior.

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Jesus’ love wants a relationship. Jesus could have just shown up on the shore and told them what to do. The disciples probably would have been OK with that. But Jesus was much more interested in restoring a relationship with his disciples, than just showing up with directives. Yet how often do we treat Jesus like one who only has marching orders for us? If that's all we think Christ has for us then we are missing out on the real, blessed Christian life: a life of a personal and intimate relationship and friendship with our Savior. That's what our Savior wants most. He wants US first and foremost.

This is what makes Christianity unique among religions. But for some reason, we forget that. We practically make Christianity out to be a bunch of rules to follow. Statistically, up to 70% of those who grow up in Christian homes leave the church when they become adults. Many of them have closed their hearts to God thinking that they’ve “tried” Christianity and it didn’t do much for them. This saddens me because the few I know share that their experience was about following “Christian rules” and meeting expectations. They missed what it is all about. Jesus is the most amazing Friend that we could ever have and he wants to be our friend.

Jesus’ love never changes. We're no less precious to Jesus no matter what we've done, or how we've failed. Jesus is so eager to meet with us and love us and help us. Do you ever approach Jesus as your punisher? As if he’s going to get even with you for your sins? As if he's going to shame you? As if he’s too disappointed with you or frustrated? I have.

I don’t know why I approach my loving Savior this way. Just last week I was having a bad day: traffic getting to work was terrible, my students were unfocused and misbehaving all day, I get home and my kids are crabby, they all go to bed late. And I kept thinking to myself that God must be punishing me for something I did. As if my bad luck was Jesus getting even with me.

That’s not Jesus. Jesus loves us, even when we’ve failed and forsaken him. God loves us with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3). Jesus’ love is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). God’s love endures forever. This is fallen man’s ONLY hope. God’s love for his children truly never changes. Jesus loved Peter with an unchanging constant love. And it’s the same with us. When we feel lost, and depressed; Jesus is eager to visit us and to love us, and to restore us.

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Do you hear Jesus’ ever present open invitation? **“Come and have breakfast.”** He is ready and he is waiting. Please join him for a meal. No matter how long it’s been since you last spent time with him. No matter how terrible your sin or grievance may be. No matter how unworthy you may feel, Jesus is knocking at the door of our hearts with a smile and a warm embrace. Please open the door and let him in.

### II. “Do you love me?” (15-17)

So after breakfast with the disciples, Jesus turns his attention to Peter. Verse 15 says, **“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’”** Jesus’ question is extremely searching. It is the ultimate question in life, **“Do you love me more than these?”** **“More than these,”** for Peter, refers to Jesus’ disciples. Peter’s answer was humble, depending on Jesus’ knowledge. A similar exchange happened two more times in verses 16 and 17. Why did Jesus ask Simon Peter **“Do you love me?”** three times, Jesus may have been giving Peter a chance to make up for the three times he had denied Jesus.

More significantly Jesus was trying to help Peter love Him sincerely. Peter’s character is that he passionately wanted to do something for Jesus. He was extreme. Peter loved Jesus, but he loved Jesus Peter’s way. Throughout the gospels, Peter was all heart, zeal and fervor for the Lord. He wore his heart on his sleeve. He wanted to build shacks on the mountain to stay with the transfigured Jesus forever. (Mt17) He cut off a high priest’s servant’s ear when they came to arrest Jesus. (Jn18) He’s the disciple that took one step on a lake to walk toward Jesus only to fall face first into the water. (Mt14) Despite his zeal, something was still lacking about Peter’s love.

What Jesus was getting at was that Peter could not love Jesus by his own ability, zeal, or strength. Even though he really wanted to do something for Jesus, he couldn’t. Peter needed to get himself out of the way and realize that the power source of his love for Christ is that Christ loved him first. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.” Until Peter grounded his love and commitment in what Christ already had done for him, he would continue to fall short. Only when we know how deeply we are loved can we truly love Jesus in return. Dwelling on the love of Jesus is truly the ultimate way to love Him. The more we know and experience how real and unfailing Jesus’ love for us is, the more we want to never

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lose fellowship with him, to always hear and delight in his word, and then lovingly share his love to his sheep.

The third time Jesus asks Peter the same question, Peter was finally hurt. Look at verse 17. The third time he said to him, “**Simon son of John, do you love me?**” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “**Do you love me?**” He said, “**Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.**” Jesus said, “**Feed my sheep.**” Jesus’ questions were forcing Peter to deal with why he had denied Jesus in order to bring to him a life changing conviction. This is how Jesus’ expresses his true love for Peter. Jesus’ love challenged Peter. Jesus’ love may hurt us. But Jesus hurts us to bless us. In love, Jesus exposes our weaknesses to strengthen us. Jesus wanted to free Peter of the great burden his failure had caused and to restore him to a full relationship with his Savior.

Each time Jesus asked him, “**Do you love me?**” he followed by saying, “**Feed my lambs,**” “**Take care of my sheep,**” and “**Feed my sheep.**” Simply put, Jesus is asking Peter to love him by loving his sheep as a shepherd. The word “shepherd” (1 Pet 5:2) is commonly used in UBF. We even uniquely use it as a title for people. What does it mean to be a shepherd? It is to love and care for people, as Jesus loved and cared for Peter. It is to love someone every day of the week: praying for them, caring for them.

A fellow teacher of mine at Lane Tech High School has become a great friend and brother in Christ to me over the past two years. He has 4 non-Christian roommates. He is a shepherd and friend for them by living with them and loving them. They are his best friends. He shepherds them by praying for them and serving them in the daily routine of their lives.

Shepherd’s feed their sheep the living Word of God. As we seek to love Jesus by shepherding his sheep, we need to be intentional about planting the word of God as we do so. This is important. If we are loving and shepherding people without planting the word of God we’re not giving them what matters most. Jn 6:63 says, “**The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you--they are full of the Spirit and life.**” My dad taught me about being a shepherd this way. He said, if you’re going to shepherd people, you need to **B.L.E.S.S.** them. Begin with prayer. Listen and sometimes you have to listen for a long time. Eat together with them. Serve them in whatever way. The final S stands for sharing the word of God. We should whole-heartedly B.L.E.S.S. God’s sheep and pray for the opportunity to share the gospel and to serve them with the word of God. God’s words are life giving and most precious. So we need to intentionally

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seek the opportunity to plant the words of God, whether through casual conversations, or formal one to one Bible studies.

Who are God’s sheep? There is some slight variation in the original Greek in these three different phrases. But one word is the same in all of them. It is the word “my.” The sheep we shepherd are Jesus’. They are precious to him. Where are they? Our children are our sheep. We need to love them, pray for them and shepherd them. Parents should love and shepherd their children as their own sheep.

We should also love and shepherd our neighbors, co-workers, classmates, family members and anyone God puts into our lives. There is no box. Everyone is precious to God. We should love and shepherd little children, college students, the middle aged, and the elderly. Jesus’ sheep are all around us.

There are some in our church who quietly yet faithfully go onto the various campuses in Chicagoland to seek out Jesus’ sheep. No one knows. No one is keeping track. It is their expression of love for God and his sheep.

What the church, the body and bride of Christ does is they love Jesus by loving Jesus’ sheep. Who are Jesus’ sheep in your life that you are shepherding? Are you intentional about loving someone and seeking the opportunity to share the word of God? May God give us the eyes to see the people around us that need a shepherd. And may God give us the courage to love them like a shepherd.

To be honest, after I accepted Christ when I was 17 years old, I wondered why it was implied that I stay in this church. I was still in high school wondering how I can decide to commit to a college ministry. So I came honestly (and a little arrogantly) to God, as a young Christian, seeking the answer to this question. This was the passage that convicted me. I realized that as a young Christian my intentions were good, but my approach to my new life was wrong. Perhaps like Peter, I wanted to love Christ my way, in a way that “fit me,” in a way that “suited me.” At that time, I felt like Peter, saying, **“Yes Lord! You know that I love you!”** Then I heard Jesus’ call to me through these verses to love him the way he wanted to be loved. I heard Jesus asking me to love him by caring for the people he loves so dearly. That’s the way Jesus wants to be loved.

So when I look at our church, what I committed to, and am still committed to, is the fact that I see a church that firmly believes in feeding Jesus’ sheep. I see a church that encourages us to be the loving hands and feet of Christ. I see a church committed to sacrificial living and selfless caring for God’s sheep. Yes, we have

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weaknesses, and I have to repent often for complaining about our church. But when I think about Jesus, and how he wants to be loved, I know and believe that the expression of love he seeks is something at the very core of what UBF values.

Let's be a church full of sinners who know how much Jesus loves us. Let's all love Jesus by loving and shepherding Jesus' sheep, for Jesus' sake. Do you hear Jesus tugging on your heart, **“Do you love me?” “Take care of my sheep.”**

### **III. “Follow me” (18-25)**

Jesus continues to help Peter in verse 18. **“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”** In the past Peter lived as he wanted, and did whatever he wanted. But as he got older Jesus would lead Peter's life. Then Jesus says to Peter in verses 19 and 22, **“Follow me.”** It was a call to complete surrender onto death. In following Jesus Peter will change from a free-wheeling young man, doing whatever he wants, depending on himself, to a resolute man following Christ, depending on Christ, even unto death through martyrdom.

When Peter heard about his death, his heart must have sank. “I didn't sign up for this. So what about John over there? Is he going to be martyred too?” Jesus basically told Peter, “That's none of your business.” Because of Jesus' love for him, Peter's life would be different. Jesus basically says to Peter, “Feed my sheep, be martyred, and I'll see you in heaven.” The test of love for Jesus, of the everyday, down to earth, putting Christ first love is, are we following him? Both a wonderful invitation and a heavy cross Jesus has for us when he says, **“follow me.”**

Do you hear Jesus' voice this morning? Jesus' love restored Peter and changed the trajectory of his life. And Jesus' love, invitation, and challenge extend to all of us. May we all be blessed to know that Jesus loves us with an unchanging love. And may we love Jesus by shepherding his sheep whom he died for.