

Howdy If you have a Bible, go to John 21. I'm going to read it and pray and then we'll jump in. While you're turning there, my name is Ben Stuart. I work at a ministry called Breakaway Ministries down in College Station. Yeah, we work with the Aggies, and it's a wonderful thing. My wife and I are big fans of this church. We went here when we lived in Dallas, and we love the community here. Your pastors, quite a few of them are up in Seattle. They are providing leadership to a conference for young church planters, for people who want to take the body of Christ and begin churches somewhere around the country. So I'm just thrilled that they get to do that, that this community of young pastors is going to get to hear from the leadership here and all that God is doing here with the hopes to encourage them. I'm thrilled they're there and I'm happy to be filling in for them while they pursue that worthy endeavor. So if you've got John 21, let's jump in.

Starting in verse 1, "After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I am going fishing. They said to him, We will go with you. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, Children, do you have any fish? They answered him, No. He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, It is the Lord When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, 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. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? and he said to him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, Follow me. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you? When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? 22Jesus said to him, If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me "

Let me pray for us. "Father, I pray that in these next few minutes together, as we gather around Your word, You would show us what it is to follow You, even after we have tremendously failed. God, there's not one of us in here who isn't scarred by sin, not just sin general, the evil of the world, but by our own violations of our own conscience, how much

more Yours. And God, we come in here wearing scars and carrying heavy loads. And I pray that You would show us what it is to encounter a Jesus who sees us and says, Follow Me anyway." And I want to ask you to just take a minute and talk to Him and ask Him to teach you something. I think God wants to release some burdens from some people tonight. So I'm just hoping that you would take this second right here and ask the Lord, "Please teach me. Please help me see what You have to say. And then if you would, please pray for me, that God would speak through me and that it would make sense. "Father, we love You and we trust You. Use this time. And we pray that in Jesus name. Amen."

Well, I was not a Disney child growing up. I didn't watch many of those shows. It wasn't until high school that I actually watched a Disney movie. It was when I broke my femur and was confined to a bed for two weeks. One of the nurses that was watching me decided we were going to have a Disney day. And so we watched about six in a row. Now I don't know what your Disney threshold is. Maybe for some of your parents it's rather high. I found that mine about four movies. That's when I about top out and get to a place where I felt like it was slowly stealing my will to live. So around number six I was like, "No more dancing bears. Please turn it off. I can't handle it." But it wasn't until late high school that I ever went to watch a Disney movie in the theater. It was "The Lion King." Now, I'm about to reveal some of the plot to "The Lion King," so if you haven't seen it, please close your ears. I'll never forget sitting there and there was a time where Mufasa falls and he's not getting up. And I'll never forget watching the movie and between the two seats, I see an adorable little face of a little kid who turned to his father and went, "Why isn't he getting up, daddy?" And I just remember going, "Oh God, that's the saddest thing I've ever heard." I'm like, "Disney, why? ? The children, think of the children." But more than that scene, there was another that stood out to me, some reality in the movie. Do you remember the little guy, how in impacted the son? Was his dad's death his fault? No, there were bigger forces in play for that. And yet, he knew in the midst of all that chaos, he had disobeyed his father's will and he had disrespected the king. So when tragedy unfolded, what did he do? He ran. And there was a land that needed him, there were a people that were hurting and needed his help, but he was far away. Where was he? Kicking it with his buddies. The need is over here; he's over here. Was it a terrible life? No, it wasn't that bad. He made some friends, a little warthog, Hakuna Matata. But the tragedy was where there was need, he was far away and he had tried to cover the shame with a cocoon of distraction.

Now, why do I mention that to you? Because in ministry, I see a lot of people right there. There was a passion for Jesus, maybe it was in high school. I've talked to a lot of dudes in bars where they go, "What do you do?" I tell them I'm a pastor and they're like, "Dude, I was in Young Life." And then they kind of look around and go, "Yeah, uh..." And you can tell that somewhere they derailed. And don't say anything to them like, "Oh really?" I don't do anything like that, but I can just see a shame cover over them because there was a time they were chasing and something happened, a decision, a series of decisions, some social pressure and then years of living in a place far from where God meant for them to be. I remember buying a wallet one time. I went to a luggage store to buy one of those little thin ones you hide in your pants like for when you go to Europe and don't want people to steal your money. I walk into this place and I'm buying one of those and this lady comes up and goes, "Hey, where are you traveling to?" And I go, "Well, I'm going to Venezuela on a mission trip." She goes, "Oh, that's so cool. We used to go with..." And then she didn't finish the sentence. She looked down and never made eye contact with me again. And then she said, "Yeah, my brother still does stuff like that." And you could just see the shame wash over her and this wall came up. "I don't want to deal with that, because I was chasing Him, something happened and now I'm not." And forget just propositional other people; what about us? I don't know about you, but my youth camp experience was all kinds of crazy. I would go to camp as a kid, and first three or four days everyone would live like crazy. Smoking, drinking forties. I mean, I had a very weird camp experience. But by Thursday night everybody got saved. And the band would be playing and people would be emotionally drawn in, the speaker would go, we'd lock pinkies and sing "Friends are friends forever." And then we always had open mic night. And all of us would take turns getting up in front of the mic, saying, "I'm never going to do that anymore and I'm going to share Christ with everyone in my school. I'm going to tell my dad I love him and finally spread the love..." Everyone's making promises. Everyone's affirming them in that. And I can't think of a single one of us that didn't go home and within two

weeks time break every promise and find ourself sitting on our floor surrounded by our addictions going, "I don't know what just happened. But I can guarantee for most of us, we lived our normative high school experience feeling a deep sense of shame that drove us into not radical sin but into complete ineffectiveness for the kingdom of God. And some of you have been living there for years. For some of you, it's just been happening this week. You took some wrong turns and now who knows what God thinks of you?"

And so tonight I wanted to answer that question: What does God do with us? What does God do with a group of people who make promises, who say, "My allegiance is with You" but start making decisions that lead us far from storming the gates of hell for His namesake. What does He do with us? What does He think of you when you fail big time? Well I want to look at that by looking at the life of Peter. I know you all probably know who Peter is. He was a disciple of Jesus, walked close by Him. Peter was that guy who was kind of all heart and maybe half head. He just really didn't think things through. He was kind of a ready-aim-fire kind of guy. Which isn't always a bad thing. It makes a great fallback. You don't need a guy who needs to think through it all, just put your head down and go. And so there are some times where being wired that way helped him out. Like in that major moment in Jesus' life when He looked at His disciples and went, "Who do you think I am?" Peter was the first one to fire. He said, "I think You're the Son of God." Good job, Peter. But a couple seconds later, he starts giving Jesus advice. He's like, "Hold on, Messiah. You've got this all wrong. Let me map it out for you." And he starts telling Him how to do His life. Peter's not always thinking it through. Like in the garden of Gethsemane when he's falling asleep, Jesus wants him to pray but he's not into it. So he wakes up and suddenly sees all these troops around him, surrounding them with weapons and flames. And Peter gets up and pulls out a fishing knife to attack them. The craziest part about that is the book of Luke tells you they had two swords and literally he'll pull out a fishing knife. You're like, "Peter, at least grab some heavier artillery." But he's like, "Everyone back up. Back up, Lord. I've got this." He's going to fight them with a fishing knife. And then he goes after that dude to kill him and just cuts off an ear. He's trying to end a guy and just gets a lobe. I mean, he's not a real organized human being. And Jesus tells him to knock it off. And they arrest Jesus and take Him to that courtyard and they beat Him and mock Him and Peter follows them. He enters into that place and watches his whole nation, his entire peer group deny his King. And there in that moment with all his adrenaline sapped out, he sits around a fire and a little girl goes, "Hey, don't you know that guy?" And he just says, "No, no I don't." And he's asked again, "Are you sure? Because you kind of look like a dude that tracked with him." And he's like, "No, I don't." The third time, to prove to them that he's really not one of those holy people, he starts cussing like a sailor, just to show them, "I'm not like Him. I don't know anything about that." And at that moment, not only does the rooster crow that Jesus told him about, but the book of Luke says Jesus looked directly at him and Peter left and he cried. The sad thing is I think a lot of us know what that feels like, to violate not only our own conscience but what we know is the expressed will of our King. What's God going to do with people like us?

Well, chapter 21 of John says, "After this Jesus revealed himself again..." What is "this?" It's the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died, didn't stay dead and starts appearing to His disciples. It's confusing to them, they don't understand it. He's not hanging around, but it's getting some expectation and some hope built up. And so He shows up to the girls once, the book of Mark says He comes to his lady disciples and He tells them, "Hey, tell the boys... and Peter to meet Me in Galilee. Peter, you screwed up. I want you with Me." And so they go to Galilee and when they arrive there meaning to wait on Jesus, Peter makes a decision in verse 3. Peter, who has walked far away from the God he swore to love forever, arrives to the sea of Galilee and says, "I'm going fishing."

Now, why would he go fishing? Some people say maybe it's for fun. No, it's not for fun. They fish all night long. That's not good times. Some people say maybe he wanted to make a little money on the side. I don't really buy that either. You've got to look at who is speaking and what they're saying. This is Peter saying, "I'm going fishing." It would be like for me to walk into my living room some time next week and tell my wife, "Hey, I think I'm going to go play basketball." Her mental image instantly would be of me putting some shorts on, going to the little park by our house and just trying to

dribble that ball and get it into the hoop. But we all remember in the 90's when Jordan came to that press conference after that unfortunate little foray into baseball. And he sat there and said the exact same thing. "I am going to play basketball." And that meant a whole different thing. I don't think anybody in that crowd thought for a second that he was going to shoot around in the driveway with his kids. We knew, "This is Jordan. This is a career move. This is millions of dollars. This is a whole new direction." And so here you've got Peter who was a fisherman all of his life. That is what he grew up doing, right up to that moment where Jesus said, "Hey you know what? You used to do this. Now I want you fishing with Me." And so Peter looks in this moment and I think he sees that he's denied his Lord, he's heard rumors of Him coming around but he just doesn't know if he's qualified for the game anymore so he takes a regressive step. He goes back to the familiar. He's not going on mission trips anymore, he kind of fell out of the Bible study deal and he's just going back to the places he used to go. He says, "Hey, I'm going to go fishing. I think shame has pulled him in a different direction. And it's interesting, he's not alone. It says in verse 3 that the others said, "We will go with you." Peter's a leader. When I was in high school as a freshman, I remember we had a group of juniors start a Bible study with us. And it was so cool to have this group of older guys telling us about how to follow Christ in high school. And then senior year came around and they didn't call the Bible study back together. And as we watched them, we saw that they had kind of ditched that whole scene and were partying and sleeping with their girlfriends. And I remember for us it was so confusing and devastating, and I don't know that we ever really recovered in high school. And it's interesting, Peter as a leader says, "I'm going. I'm going fishing." And they say, "We'll go too." It's funny how many people kind of rationalize sin and go, "Well, it's just my life." Well, it's never just your life. We're all knit together. You're an influencer.

And they get on the boat with him. And then it says in the end of verse 3, "They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing." Why did they catch nothing? We're going to find out later. It's God. It's God jacking with His kids. And that's what He does. Is he going to let you go and waste your life? No, He's got a plan for you. And so He begins by complicating things. And it says in verse 4, "Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore;..." In the midst of their frustration, Jesus is going to enter the scene again. But it says, "...yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus." Now, why didn't they know? What's going on with that? Have you ever noticed that? Whenever Jesus shows up after the resurrection, people aren't recognizing Him. What's going on with that? Does the resurrection body look different? Do they just not believe it's Jesus. Is He disfigured because Revelation tells us He's the only person in eternity that will still bear His scars? What is it? Do you know what I think it is based on my understanding of Scripture? I think it's His sense of humor. I think it's Him jacking with people. I mean, you see it in one chapter earlier when Mary Magdalene runs in and sees the two angels dressed in white. There's no mistaking who they are. And she says, "Where's the Lord?" And they're like, "Hey, He's not from here." And so she turns around and looks right at Jesus and He says, "Why are you crying?" He knows why she's crying. And then He says, "Who are you looking for?" He knows who she's looking for. Why is He doing that? And then you see she keeps the conversation going, "Well, I'm looking for my Lord and I can't find Him." And you're like, "Why is she not figuring that out?" It says later in that text that it was because she thought He was the gardener. Why? I think it's because Jesus was messing with the bushes going, "Hey, are you crying? What's going on?" She's like, "I don't know." He's like, "Who are you looking for?" Because all it takes for Him to be recognized, it says Jesus looked at her and said, "Mary," and she was like, "Jesus." You see it in the book of Luke. Two disciples are walking along the road to Emmaus and He comes walking along and hears them talking about what's been going on in Jerusalem. He says, "What are you talking about?" They say, "Are you the only person in Jerusalem who doesn't know what's been happening these days?" And He goes, "What things?" He knows what things. Then they start telling Him about His own death. And then He's like, "Oh, that's interesting. Wait a minute, wasn't that meant to fulfill prophecies in Scripture" And He starts unpacking the Old Testament to them, still not letting them know who He is. And then it says they arrived at their destination and He pretends that He's walking further until they invite Him to dinner. And it says right at that moment, He breaks bread and He's like, "Dudes, it's Me." And He's gone. He disappears. So He waits until the seven mile trip is over and they're like, "That was Jesus." So they run back seven miles to Jerusalem, go to where the other disciples are hiding, say, "We just saw Jesus." The others are saying, "I'm not sure if I believe you." And then right in the middle of that

panic, it says that Jesus just appears to them and says, "Peace be with you." Which I think is funny because it says He terrifies all of them and He's like, "Peace be with you" and they react the opposite of that. And then in that moment, to prove that He's really resurrected from the dead, there He is, they saw Him die, now He's back to life and He goes, "Does anyone have any fish?" They go, "Yeah." And He just starts eating fish. Which I think is one of the most hilarious things. It's one of those things called internal proofs. You know that's true because no one would have made that up. "I'm back from the dead. And not for My next trick, who has some salmon?"

So what's Jesus doing when He comes up to these guys? No fish. And when He walks up to them, look in verse 5. It says, "Jesus said to them,..." If you've got an NIV, this is tragic. Because the NIV says He calls them "brothers" or something like that. He does not use the word for "brothers." He uses the word for "children," and He uses the masculine form. Literally He says, "Little boys,..." And then He asked the question in a construct that assumes the negative answer. Literally He goes as He stands on the shore, "Hey little boys, you don't have any fish, do you?" He's messing with them. What's His first interaction with them? Is He screaming from the shore, "What are you doing in the boat?" No, He starts to kind of play with them. He's almost humorous about it. He says, "Hey, you don't have any fish, do you?" And He says, "Hey, this lifestyle choice that you've been following, it's not really working, is it?" And I love their answer. It's just one word, "No." You can almost hear the tension in it. They're out there like, "Can't he see the net? Who is this guy?" Because they don't know it's Jesus yet. And yet in verse 6, "He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish." Some of you say, "Hey, I remember that passage. They can't catch any fish, move the net to the other side, a whole bunch of fish, can't even pull it in. I've heard of that one." Well, you might have read it in this text; you might have read it in Luke 5. Because this isn't the first time we've seen this. Jesus did this exact same miracle before. Now, when did He do it? When He first called Peter. I love the way "Jesus of Nazareth" does it. Some movies do it where Jesus shows up and goes, "Hey, let's go out and try to catch fish." And Peter says, "I've been trying all night and caught nothing, yet I'll go." In some movies, he says it in such a way that doesn't make sense. He's like, "We have fished all night and caught nothing, and yet at Your will we will go." And you're like, "What does that inflection even mean?" But in "Jesus of Nazareth," you can see Peter's frustration. He comes in and Jesus says, "Hey let's go fishing." And Peter's like, "I just fished all night, caught nothing. You're going to take me out again? What were You again? A carpenter? You know how to do this better than me? That's brilliant." And you can just see him frustrated in this movie. And so he takes Him out there and he's complaining the whole way. "Oh, a carpenter turned prophet. Even better." And yet, Jesus tells him how to cast a net and he can't pull the fish in. And in that moment, Scripture tells us that Peter hit his knees and said, "Get away from me, Lord. I'm not a good person." And Jesus says, "That's not what I'm here to do." He said, "I'm here to change your life. You follow Me, because I'm making you a fisher of men." Now why is that significant here? Because that's how the relationship began. That was the beautiful moment when Jesus first looked Peter in the face and says, "You're coming with Me."

And now Peter has denied Him in front of God and everybody. How do you feel when you've done that? How do you feel at 2:00AM when when you just did that thing you said you'd never do again? Well, Peter's sitting on the boat and Jesus makes the decision to recreate that exact miracle where He called Peter into a relationship to begin with. Isn't that beautiful? It's not Nathaniel's miracle. There's not a fig tree there. It's not Matthew's calling. There's not tax booth. It's Peter's. It's Jesus saying, "Hey, remember where we started this? It's still on. I haven't cast you aside. Nothing's changed."

And so that's why you see in the next verse, "That disciple whom Jesus loved..." That's how John refers to himself. I think it's because John really understood that Jesus loves him. And I hope that some of you would really grab that tonight. And it says, "That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, It is the Lord." You see, John knew what was happening. He knew how Peter felt. He saw this miracle being recreated. So he grabs Peter and says, "Do you see what's happening? That's the Lord." And so what does Peter do? I love it in verse 7 when it says, "When Simon Peter heard that

it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea." He doesn't run from God; he runs towards Him. And I love it, this is sweet Peter again. He pulls a full Forest Gump. They're like "There He is." And Peter's like, "Jenny" and he just kind of jumps off the boat. And the best part is, it says he puts on his outer garment. I mean, I don't know how it works back then, but in every movie I've ever seen, some guy who jumps into the water always takes his jacket off. They're like, "Hold this," and then they jump in. Peter goes and he puts his jacket on, then dives into the sea. And I love that you can see the relationship of the disciples too. Because listen to John in verse 8. You see through all of Scriptures the inner play of Peter and John, but look at verse 8. "The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off." They were not far from the land. Oh and they were dragging the net of fish. See, John who is a little bit more of a thinker is like, "The rest of us kind of rowed three times because we were right there. And then we carried the net. Thanks for nothing, Peter." And in verse 9, it says, "When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it..." I love that. Does Jesus need our help? No, He does not. And yet in verse 10 He says, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." He doesn't need us, but He lets us be a part anyway. In verse 11 it says, "So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. " How does Jesus treat the wayward disciple? How does He teach those who loved Him and have sworn allegiance to Him and yet have forayed into sin? Does He condemn? Does He scream? Does He beat you? No, He cooks breakfast.

You know, it's easy to hear the testimony of the person who was a horrible mess before they came to Christ and then came to Christ and their lives are wonderful. That's so convenient. Do you know what's really tough? Those of who came to know Christ early and are then making a horrible mess for our lives, when we know better. That's a real hard story, isn't it? That's Peter's story. And how does Jesus come to him? He's not that voice that beats you up. He says, "Come and sit with Me." To have someone sit at a meal with you is to invite them into a relationship. And Jesus says, "You haven't lost a connection with Me. Let's sit together." That's grace. And when God comes towards you in your sin, even tonight, He does it with grace. That's the arm that always extends first. For me, when I really grabbed this, it was when I was a youth pastor. In that time in my life I was first introduced to online pornography. And the sad thing was it was by a student and it wasn't on purpose. He was telling me how to use that crazy Google machine back when that was coming out. And I was trying to get together a slide presentation for our church. Many of you unfortunately know exactly what I'm going to say. You can type in the most innocent of words and get some very non-innocent images coming up. And that's not a sin, but the tragedy of this story is I didn't turn it off fast enough. And so I went to bed that night feeling like how I imagine Adam and Eve felt when all was stripped away and the world suddenly got really cold and they realized they made a bad decision. Some of you know that moment real well. And I woke up that next day and I asked Jesus to for give me. And then finally I decided I needed to confess to my pastor, because I did this at church. And so I walked into his office and told him what I did, and before he could say anything, I started listing of everything I could to to fix that and put different barricades in my life to never do that again because I wanted him to hear that I was okay. And then when I was all done kind of unloading all that, I was waiting for the hammer to fall. What I got was him looking me right in the eye and saying, "Ben, I love you." And then he started telling me specific things he appreciated about me. I wasn't ready for that. And then he said, "Ben, in Jesus name, you're forgiven." And for some of you, that voice that whips you in your head, that beats you, I think too many of us ascribe that to the Lord. He doesn't do it that way.

There's a beautiful parallel to this in the Old Testament in the prophet Elijah. He was a great servant of the Lord, brought the whole nation back to the Lord when they were worshiping other gods. He's the one that stepped forward, proclaimed the name of Yahweh all by himself. Fire came from heaven. He prayed for no rain and it didn't rain for three years. He was a powerful minister of God. And then he found out that the queen wanted to kill him, so he just ran to the middle of the desert. Really not good PR for the name of Yahweh, God of the Old Testament. And he lands when he's exhausted and says, "God, kill me now." And when God comes to him, He wakes him up and He doesn't kick him and go, "What's

the matter with you? Get yourself together." It says an angel shakes him awake and there's some fresh bread and some water. And he says, "Eat. This journey was way too much for you." And so he eats and he goes back to sleep. He wakes him up again, feeds him again and lets him sleep some more. And it's after that rest, that tenderness that He says, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God will always come to us with grace first. He extends the hand of kindness. He loves you. If you're His kid, He cherishes you. And when you sin, is He pleased with it? Heck no. But He doesn't come with a hammer; He comes with grace. And His kindness is what leads us to repentance.

And so it's interesting. He comes to him with this display of that first miracle. "The relationship with Me is intact." And so He recreates that scene, but it doesn't stop there. He's going to move to recreate as second one. You sit it in the word "charcoal fire." Did you notice how odd it is that it calls it a "charcoal fire?" Why does it say that? Well the truth is it's a really weird word for fire. You get "fire" all over the Bible. But this word "charcoal fire" you only get twice. It only shows up twice in the whole Bible, both in the book of John. One is in this moment here. The other is the fire Peter was sitting around when he denied even knowing Jesus. So Jesus is going to recreate two moments: "The moment we came to love each other and walk together and the moment you really screwed up." Isn't that interesting? That's what grace does. He takes him to the moment and says, "You're Mine. But now we've got to go back and deal with this moment." And that's what grace will do. Will grace pass over sin? No, grace will make you deal with it. He doesn't beat us, but He calls us to repent. And that's what He'll do with Peter. Look further in the passage where it says, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" It's interesting. I don't if Peter caught on with what was happening when he saw the charcoal fire. Part of me thinks he did, like he saw that and went, "Oh crud." I don't know how much fish he could even eat. Maybe he didn't catch on to that. Maybe he missed it. But I think verse 15 gives it to him when He calls him "Simon, son of John." Because if you look in the Bible, He only calls him that four times and they're always at major moments in their life together. It's like when your mom calls you by your full name. You're going to pay attention to what's coming. So He looks at him and says, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Now who are "these?" There's two things it could have been. It could have been the other disciples. Because at their last meal together, Peter said, "Hey, all these guys might fall away but I won't." And so Jesus could be saying, "Do you still think you love Me more than everybody else in this room?" Or the "these" could have been the fish. Jesus had called him away from being a fisherman to walk with Him, and He could have been holding the fish and saying, "Which do you love more? Why are you back here? Do you love me more than these?" I don't know which it is. Part of me thinks maybe there was a disciple over there holding a fish and He's like, "Do you love me more than these?" and just kind of covers both of them. "He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? and he said to him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. "

Every time I read that when I was younger, I always thought Jesus was being mean. Because He's walking him through the three denials again with three "do you love Me's." And I thought this is God beating up on him. This is like, "Do you love Me?" "Yeah." "Are you sure?" But I don't see it that way anymore. And I get that because if you look at it, He says, "Do you love Me?" And he says, "You know I do." And He says, "Feed My sheep." What direction is He pointing? He's pointing to the future. It would have been beating on him if He says, "Do you love Me?" "Yes, I do." "Are you sure? Because a week ago it looked real different, Peter. And I'll tell you something else..." But He doesn't do that. He says, "Do you love Me?" "Yes." "Then feed My sheep." What's that? It's a call back into ministry. "Do you love Me?" "Yes." "Then let's go. There's more to do, there's hurting people, there's sheep. Sheep are confused animals that are lost. Come with Me and let's go. Help people, don't wallow. Let's get past it and move." And so I think Jesus is saving his life because if Jesus hadn't done this to him, then every time Peter sat around a fire, he'd think of that night where he said, "I don't even know Him." Every time he heard a rooster crow, it would have haunted him his whole life. I think Jesus is rescuing him by saying, "Do

you see that I still love you? Okay, then let's go to this place of brokenness and let's revive it. Let's make this horrible place a place of life." That's what He did to the people in the Old Testament. When they were walking with God in the book of Joshua, a man named Achan sinned against God and it causes massive death in the community. It was a horrible disobedience. And yet we find out later in one of the prophets, Jesus says, "The valley of Achor, that very place you disobeyed Me, I will make a doorway into hope." And I think the beautiful thing Jesus does to many of us is He takes us and says, "Do you see that I love you? I'm not going anywhere. But let's go back to this place, because I need to heal you here. And I'm going to make this place of pain a place of life." Because grace will call us in love and grace will wound us, so it can heal us.

I'll never forget the day I did break my femur. I broke it in the middle of a football game in high school. They carted me off to a hospital and my family doctor showed up and went, "Hey, this hospital that you're in, these guys are crazy. I'm getting you out of here. I'm taking you to a specialist downtown." The doctors in this hospital weren't real thrilled to hear my doctor say, "Hey, you're all crazy. Don't touch the kid." And so to get back at him, they denied giving me any pain killers. And when you break the largest bone in your body, that's real uncomfortable. And I'll never forget when my doctor came in, who is a very large man, and he stood at the foot of the bed and said, "The ambulance is here to take you downtown, but your leg's too far out of place for us to transport you." I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "I'm going to have to partially set it into place." I said, "Is that going to hurt?" and he said, "Yes." And right as he said that, there were nurses filing in behind him. And as he's talking to me, they're starting to hold my body down. I'm like "Why is this happening?" And then this huge man puts my foot under his arm and jumps backwards. And then he takes his hand and slams my leg. And it was the most interesting experience, because you think you would scream. You really can't because it sucks all the wind out of you. So I just sort of started crawling the wall moaning and then started sweating profusely. And then I started laughing, because, "That's just incredible how much pain I just experienced. I'm going to pass out if you guys are okay with that one." But I don't resent him, because he was wounding me so he could heal me.

And I think that's what Jesus is doing. He takes him back to this moment, not to beat him up but to save him. And for some of you, you have walked in here with guilt weighing on you. Yeah, you're still coming to church, but that fire of pursuing Christ's glory in this world is gone. And so when it's time to pray up here, you don't really pray; you just kind of look at your feet. When it's time to sing, you just kind of look around. And when it comes to seeking God on your own in your house, you just never find time for that. The passions gone, and it's because when you think about Him, all you can think about is that burden of guilt that you have because of bad decisions that you've made. Can I tell you something? He's going to call you and say, "You're still Mine. You haven't lost that, but we have got to deal with this." He's going to keep taking you to that sexual addiction saying, "Let's get this out of here. because I want you to be free so you can chase the others, you can help the others. but we've got to deal with this. He's going to take you to your obsession with your image when you look at the mirror, and he's going to say, "We've got to get past this. You can never help them if you can never see past you." He's going to keep taking you to this place of pain. Because He's mean? No, so you can move past it and it won't dominate your experience in this world. And so for some of us, it's going to be very uncomfortable.

My hope for you is the most spiritual, most Christian thing you'll do this week is find a trusted Christian friend and confess and say, "These are the sins that have got my mind all mixed around. Can I just talk with you about this and have you pray with me?" My hope for you is that the most Christian thing you'll do is go to Celebrate Recovery or another small group and say, "I'm not going to let my sins in the dark dominate my experience of how I view myself and every other human being. I'm going to get free so I can join in the work of feeding my lambs." Because there's work to be done. There's sheep out there that are in a lot of pain. Anytime Jesus mentions sheep, He mentions it because He say they're lost, they're scattered, they're confused, they don't even know what they're doing. Sheep are the most helpless animals in all of creation. They have no natural defenses whatsoever, none. Any other animal, some can bite you, some can run fast, some can inflate with little needles, even lizards can shoot blood out of their eyes where you're like, "I

don't want to get involved. That's gross." Everything has a defense mechanism but sheep. They can't even run; they're helpless. And Jesus looks at the lost world and says they're just like sheep. They have no idea how to find water unless someone helps them. They have no idea how to keep away from the sins of the dark if someone doesn't come rescue them. Do you think that describes high schools? Junior highs? Do you think it describes so much of this world that's lost in the dark? And too many of us that name the name of Jesus are not dominated by His passion to heal the world; we're dominated over the guilt of a sin we committed who knows how long ago. And He says, "That time is over. Peter, do not let your mistakes dominate your existence where you just hide behind comforts and don't seek My great mission. No more fish, Peter. Sheep!" And it's the same with us. My prayer for you tonight is that you would not let the sins of the past dominate you but that you would Him heal you.

It's what He did with Jonah. He said, "Jonah, arise and go to Nineveh." And what did Jonah do? He arose and fled to Tarshish, the complete opposite direction. Did God ditch him? Did He say, "Well, there goes Jonah. Amos, you in?" He didn't do that. He sends that storm into Jonah's life. And for some of you, He's been rocking your boat. When he starts to drown, He sends a fish to rescue him. Is a fish comfortable means of rescue? I don't think so. And for some of you, the way He's going to rescue you from addictions is not going to be comfortable. But he praises God when he hit the shore. And God dropped him right back at Nineveh and said, "Let's move." And for some of you, that's the exact same motion He wants from you.

It's the same thing He did with Johnny Cash. Johnny grew up as a Christian, but as soon as his music got big, he got hooked on amphetamines. It ruined his life. He wrecked every car he had. He even wrecked one in a national park and almost killed an entire endangered species of condor. He was a mess. Over 6 feet tall and less than 120 lbs, he was killing himself with drugs. And so Johnny found a hole, a cave in Tennessee, and he climbed into it until his flashlight battery died. And he said, "I laid down and never wanted the world to see me again." And he said in that moment he heard the voice of the Lord say, "Get up. You were not meant to stay here." When he climbed out of that cave, he was still an addict, but there were two of his Christian friends waiting at the cave for him. They got him healed, and he spent the rest of his life praising his king. The last two videos he did on MTV were him talking about the judgement that would follow the unrighteous if they don't repent...on MTV! And God wants to do the same with you. Don't waste this week, don't waste your life letting your sins of the past dominate how you see yourself in this hurting world. Let's get past them. Let's go. And let's go feed His sheep. There's a hurting world, and they need us.

And so He calls Peter and says, "Follow me." I love the way it ends. He tells him, "Hey, you're going to die glorifying Me." We're all going to die. C.S. Lewis said it, "Not one of us is getting out of here alive. And yet Jesus says, "Your death is going to glorify Me. That's my hope. I hope I go all the way to the end. And He says, "Hey, you're going to glorify Me, even with the way you die." And I love it. It seems like Jesus will stand up and say, "Follow Me." Because it says Peter will turn and see the disciple whom Jesus loved and say, "What about him? I'm going to die for you? What about that guy?" Do you remember how Jesus responds? The same way your mom did a lot of times probably. "I'm talking to you about you. You follow Me." "Well, I want to come to Him, but my husband..." "Hey, you follow Me. I'm talking to you about you." "Well, I want to start going to church, but she won't go with me." "Hey, I'm talking to you about you." "Well I want to walk with Him, but my friendship group..." "That's okay. You might have to lose them all." He's talking to you and the call is very clear, "Follow Me."

I'm teaching "Pilgrim's Progress" to my students in College Station. "Pilgrim's Progress" is an allegory written by a Puritan way back in the day. The allegory is a little picture of a Christian and he's walking down a little narrow road that leads to life. And he's encountering all different kinds of people. Evangelist gives him the right road, Help helps him, Lord Hategood...it's a little obvious what's happening there. And as he walks along this little narrow road that leads to life, the family helps to outfit him to fight the enemy in some armor. He enters a valley called Humiliation. And in the

Valley of Humiliation, the devil himself attacks him and overpowers him, knocks him flat on his back and pins him. His sin has got him laid out. And yet in that moment, he cries out for help and what he finds is the sword called Truth. And before he jabs it into his enemy who is accusing him, he says, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. Though I fall, I will rise." And my hope for some of you tonight is that the enemy who is beating you up with guilt and accusation and making you combat ineffective for the kingdom, I hope that you can say, "Enough of accusations, enough of this lying on my back. Yes I have fallen, but don't start rejoicing over me, because I will rise." And I hope you will grab the truth of Scripture that our Lord is quick to forgive, abounding in love, His arm of grace is extending to you saying, "The relationship's intact. Let's go."

Let me pray for us. "Father, I want to thank You that Your economy of worship is not calling us to perform in such a way that wins Your approval. That was never Your intent. God, I thank You that Your word says that You know that we are but men. And so God, I pray that we would not come to You pretending like we've done no wrong; You know we have. For some of us, it's grieving us even now. And God, I pray that we could come to you in a moment of honesty and believe that You extend grace to us. I pray that we would not believe the lie that You come to us in furious anger. You don't. To Your kids, You come in love. And maybe for some of us tonight, the best thing we'll do is apologize for seeing God so poorly and seeing His love as so small. God, You called Peter to be honest and address his sin. I pray that we could." And I'd invite you even now, that thing that's been weighing on you, to confess it to Him. "And God, I'm just so grateful that when You came to Peter You asked him that question 'Do you love Me?' and You cleared the scene to let him speak from his heart." And for some of you, I'd invite you even now to hear Him ask that question and take a chance to respond in the quietness and say, "Yes, I do." "God, I pray for those in this room who don't know You tonight, that they could come to You and realize we are dead in our sins and yet Christ has come to give us life. I pray that they might come to You even now and find that You forgive. Your death on the cross was to take sin away. Your life is a promise to us of new life if we trust You. And God, for those of us who belong to you, I pray we would understand that when we're Your kids, You love us, You call us with Your grace, You will make us address sin. And I pray for some of even tonight that You would call our sin to mind, we won't beat ourselves up, but we will begin to ask You, 'What will it look like to be called forth into freedom? Do I join Celebrate Recovery? Do I confess to a friend this week? God, show me what it looks like to get free.' And then God, I pray for us that this might be a community that doesn't just spectate at this church and watch Matt and Bleecker up front, but that this would be a group of people who would say, 'Yeah, we're broken, but Jesus is healing and we are seeking the sheep. They are lost, they are clueless, they are bruised, they are hurting and I am going towards them because that is where Jesus is going.' I pray that this would be a whole community that's blessing Dallas for Your glory and for our good. Thank You, God. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen."