

From Fisherman to Shepherd

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Preacher: Ed Upton

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, church family. This is Pastor Sam checking in with you from vacation. My family and I very much look forward to being back with you next Sunday worshipping together. But until then, let me introduce to you a very special guest.

Ed Upton is the Senior Director of the Church Ambassador Network of Texas. He is an elder at Redemption City Church in Fort Worth. He's also served as Vice President at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

He has served on the staff of the Executive Committee of our Southern Baptist Convention. He has served on the staff of two of our largest SBC churches, Cross Church in Arkansas under Pastor Ronnie Floyd, as well as Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

Ed pastored in a smaller town, Neosho, Missouri. He holds his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Ed is a man of the church.

He's a man of God, and he's one of my closest friends on this earth, one of my favorite people. I believe his family is here with him today. I hope he's a blessing to y'all. I know he will be.

[0 : 5 9] Please welcome my friend, Ed Upton. What a sweet boy. How we doing?

We good? He's a liar. He was not filming that on vacation. That was in his office. So we're going to talk to him about that when he gets home, okay? My goodness gracious. Are we good?

I need to know, before we start, I need to know how responsive y'all are, because I got some questions about the sermon, and I want y'all to, will y'all speak back to me if I ask you questions? This is yes. This is yes.

Okay, cool. All right. Just making sure. It's a privilege to be here. I bring you greetings from Fort Worth. I bring you greetings from Redemption City Church, which is a church plant that Sam and Holly helped us plant a few years ago in Fort Worth.

And that we still, we consider First Baptist Henry at a great partner with us in the gospel work that's going on all across North Texas. I have known Sam for a few years.

[1 : 5 3] Like he said, we worked together. And Sam and Holly, I think Eleanor and I would tell you, are some of our closest friends. And so it is an honor to be here with you. I like to think that everything good that Sam knows about the church, I taught him.

All the bad, I'm sure he learned somewhere else. But it wasn't for me. So you're going to find that out today, hopefully. So grab your Bibles. Turn with me to John chapter number 21. So if you brought a copy, it's a paper Bible.

I've got a paper Bible. If you got it on your phone, you're not going to bother me if you get your phone out. John, you're going to bother me if you're scrolling on Facebook, but you're not going to bother me if you get your phone out and look at scripture. John chapter number 21 is where we're going to be today.

And while you're turning there, I want to tell you a story. You guys like stories? I'll tell you a little bit of a story. The year 1514, so going way back. In the year 1514, a middle class farming family in southern Scotland named Knox welcomed a new baby into their family, a little boy that they named John.

John Knox grew up and when it was time to go off to college, although his family wasn't super well off, they scraped up the money and they sent him to the University of St. Andrews. Sometime after his graduation from the University of St. Andrews, Knox was introduced to a preacher by the name of George Weissart.

[3 : 08] Weissart was, in fact, instrumental in Knox's conversion to Christ. Knox began preaching after Weissart was martyred by the local cardinal in Scotland.

In fact, when Mary I, first came to power, she was known as Bloody Mary, you might have heard of her in history. Knox fled to Geneva where he studied under a man named John Calvin. After the death of Mary in 1558, amidst a renewed Protestant insurgency in Scotland, Knox returned to Edinburgh in 1559 and began preaching, despite a price that was thrown at his head.

Throughout the years following, God used John Knox to see hundreds, even thousands of Scots professed faith in Christ, Knox was known throughout Scotland as a man who feared God more than he feared anything or anyone else.

He was known also as a man of prayer. Another Mary, Mary Queen of Scots, who came to power later in John's life, is reported to have said that she fears the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.

One of John Knox's more famous prayers that he prayed was simply this, God, give me Scotland or I die. He was known for that, God, give me Scotland or I die. And God granted his request.

[4 : 18] God used John Knox. He used his insatiable desire for his country to rejuvenate the preachers in Scotland and to start God's churches throughout the nations, thus in turn reforming the church in Scotland.

Through God's providence, John's legacy includes some 750,000 believers in Scotland, over 3 million in the United States, and countless more worldwide, all starting with someone who simply had the desire to see his country come to Christ.

Praying the prayer, God, give me Scotland or I die. I think that John's life and his prayer carries implications for us today as we look at John chapter 21.

And so what I want to do is I'm going to read the passage. I'm a big believer. Let's read the whole passage we're going to look at together. Then we're going to come back and let's kind of chop it up and walk through it as we go. Good? Yes? All right. So John 21, starting in verse number one, and I'm going to read.

I think it's on the screens, but I don't have the clicker. So if it's not, just follow along in the Bible. We've all got Bibles, right? John 21, verse one. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

[5 : 26] Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathaniel of Canaan and Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing. They said to him, we will go with you.

And 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?

And 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.

[6 : 28] And although there were many, the net was not torn. Jesus then 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. Verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And 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.

Verse 17. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? And 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. Would you pray with me this morning as we get started? Father, we declare to you this morning that there is none like you. There is none greater than you in the heavens or on the earth.

[7 : 28] And so, Father, it is with that attitude that we come before you this morning, and we ask very humbly that you would speak to us, that you would teach us. Father, we pray that you would use this time to deepen our affections for your word, to deepen our affections for you.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right, so John 21, right? I want to give you some background on kind of what we're looking at in John 21, and we're going to work through it together. You with me? So as we get into John 21, right before we come to these men, they're gathered by the Sea of Tiberias.

We kind of see in the chapters leading up to this the death and the resurrection of Jesus, as well as him appearing to the disciples a couple of times. You with me, right? The most recent being in the chapter before this, you see Jesus appear to Thomas, right?

Doubting Thomas. You can, you know, put your fingers, see my wounds, put your fingers in my wounds, and you can see that I'm real and that I'm really here. So if you keep in mind that there's only about 40 days between the resurrection of Christ and his ascension into heaven, which is what we see in Acts chapter 1, you've got to believe that these guys who are gathered here by the Sea of Tiberias are probably a little shell-shocked over the events of the last month, right?

Just a little bit shell-shocked over what's going on. I mean, they've spent the last three years of their lives living with Jesus every day. They gave up everything they had. They followed him. When he first called these men, you remember, Jesus instructed them to leave everything behind, their families, their livelihoods, everything, and follow him.

[8 : 56] In fact, you see Matthew and Mark in the Gospels, you see in Matthew and Mark, excuse me, in the Gospels, two of the disciples leave their father, right? They left everything.

James and John left their father to go be with Jesus, three years with Jesus, spent watching him heal the sick and raise the dead and comfort and encourage people, preach to the masses about the glory of God, all culminating in his murder at the hands of the Jews and the Romans.

Okay, so I've got to believe there's some shell-shockedness going on here. Their heads are no doubt spinning at the events of the last 40 days. But truthfully, if we're looking at kind of the life of these men and what they've been through the last three years, this should not have been a surprise to them, right?

We know that Jesus had been talking to them about his death for a while. In Mark chapter 14, you see Jesus tell the disciples, you will all fall away for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, he says, I will go before you to Galilee. Then in Mark chapter 16, verse 7, the angel at the tomb instructs Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, to go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

[10:04] There you will see him just as he told you. So he's telling them that he was going to meet them in Galilee. He's giving them instruction about what is coming and what they are to do when it happens.

So when we get into John chapter 21, it really should be of no surprise that we see these men gathered by the Sea of Tiberias or more commonly known as the Sea of Galilee. What is surprising here, though, about this entire episode that you see in John 21 is the picture that's being painted for us here by John.

There is some surprise at what's going on within John 21 and within the picture that we are seeing. So if you look back with me to John 21, verses 1 and 2, I want to take a moment and we're going to walk through the passage and we want to make some notes along the way as we go concerning this specific picture.

There's an illustration, there's some imagery here that John wants to make sure that we don't miss. This verbiage that John uses to give us a very vivid picture of what is happening with these guys.

And as we look at this, I want you to remember something else as we walk through this passage for the next few minutes. And this is the statement. Words mean things. Okay? Words mean things.

[11:15] Words that you say, words that you don't say, words that you see in Scripture. Words mean things. And many times, a singular word can make the difference when you're reading Scripture between us making up our own mind about whatever we're interpreting going on here versus how the Scripture was intended to be understood.

And so I want to take note of the very specific language that John is using here to describe this scene because I think it helps us get a clearer picture of this little interchange that we see take place between John and Peter.

So John 21, verses 1 and 2. After this, look back with me. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathaniel of Canaan, Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.

So here's what we have. Peter, six other guys are together. Maybe experiencing a little bit of trepidation over what they'd seen the last few weeks. They decide to go fishing. So the first kind of two words of this passage set the stage for what we're going to see.

It says, after this, well, after what? After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. After he's appeared to the guys a few times. But here in particular, it's after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

[12:27] The disciples had returned to Galilee from Jerusalem as instructed by Jesus. And Jesus appears to them by the Sea of Tiberias. And so here's where we begin to see this specific language that will give us kind of this mental illustration of the scene taking place.

John names when this is taking place. He gives you specifically when this is taking place. And he gives you names, right? He names names of who is there. Okay? And so we may mention this earlier.

Sea of Tiberias is also known as the Sea of Galilee. If you look back at John 6, you would see this is not the first time that John has called the Sea of Galilee the Sea of Tiberias. So we see they're here, where so much of the time that Jesus had spent.

Anybody ever been to Israel? The Sea of Galilee is, I mean, if you ever get to go, the Sea of Galilee was my favorite spot because it hasn't changed in thousands of years. It's the same as it was when Jesus walked on it. And this is where so much of Jesus' ministry had taken place, so much time that he spent with them.

And it's important to note also, this is their home. Okay? This is where these guys are from. It's their home. And so if you've ever been, it's awesome. You should go. So Jesus reveals himself in this way.

[13 : 29] And then John tells us specifically who's there. Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, who we refer to as Doubting Thomas. Read about it in the previous chapter. Nathaniel of Canaan and Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, who were James and John.

You remember the name that they were given, the sons of thunder? If you ever want to call me, I want to be a son of thunder. Okay? I think it's a great name. Call me. I want to be a son of thunder. And then two others of his disciples who are nameless in John 21 that John tells us.

So you've got this picture in your mind. They're by the sea. There's seven of them together. They're hanging out. They're back home. And I want to, as you move into verse three, you see this phrase, Peter tells them, I am going fishing, right?

And they say to him, we will go with you. Now, I want to take a second and I want to ask you to think with me as we kind of move forward. What does this phrase, I am going fishing here mean?

Okay? What does the phrase mean when Peter says, I am going fishing and they said, we will go with you? Is this the guys out fishing, blowing off some steam? Or is there something else taking place here that we need to notice and that we need to know about?

[14 : 34] Well, as we keep reading, John answers this question as we move through the story. Verse three, they went out into the boat that night and they caught nothing. So notice the specificity that John uses.

How many fish did they catch? None, right? They caught nothing. There was no fish. There was nothing going on. Verse number four sets the scene for where this particular, the time this particular scene is happening.

So when did this happen? Verse number four, what time of day? Right? In the morning time. So just as day was breaking, so verse four, just as day was breaking, early in the morning, notice the specificity that John uses, just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, do you have any fish? They said no. And he said, cast the net where? Keep working through. On the right side of the boat. This is oddly specific, right? This is oddly specific for what you would normally see in scripture.

Okay, on the right side of the boat, that's great. And you will find some. So they cast it and the scripture says they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish. Then verse number seven, you see John names another disciple.

[15 : 38] He names himself, right? That disciple whom Jesus loved, that's John, the disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, it is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was Lord, he put on his outer garment for he was stripped for work and threw himself into the sea.

And there in verse number seven is where I think we get our first really clear glimpse at what is actually taking place in this picture that John is painting for us. He begins to answer the question that we asked earlier of what does it mean when Peter says, I am going fishing.

John isn't really hiding the fact here that Peter is working, right? Peter's gone fishing. He's gone back to work. In fact, if you remember back in Matthew chapter number four, when Jesus first crosses paths with Andrew and Peter, they were fishing, right?

Jesus said to them, put down your nets and follow me. And what does he say? I will make you fishers of men. Okay? So Peter then, after all this had gone on, spent three years with Jesus, the last 30 or 40 days trying to figure out what in the world is happening with my life, Peter leads these men back to fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

And just to make sure that we know exactly what John was telling us, he continues chapter 21 in this specific imagery, verse number eight. The disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land.

[16 : 53] How far were they from the land? About 100 yards, right? They got out on land, they saw what kind of a fire in place? A charcoal fire in place with fish laid out on it and bread.

So Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Simon Peter went aboard, hauled the net ashore, full of large fish. How many fish? Okay, what?

Okay, so let's have a conversation. All right? So you gotta think to yourself, 153 fish. Are there fishermen in the room? Anybody like to fish? Man, we love to fish. If you'll, I'll be out in the lobby after it's over, I'll show you a picture of a fish my son caught two nights ago at this little pond.

It was great. I mean, it's, you know, we're getting to the point in our fishing careers where they don't want to fish for bluegill anymore. They want to fish for largemouth bass and catfish, right? Because you, like, we were talking about this last year.

We were out at this place over in Jacksboro fishing and they were just catching bluegill like crazy, right? And I'm just out there fishing for bass, you know, and my sons are like, don't you want to catch fish?

[17 : 53] And I was like, well, sure, but I don't want to catch bluegill. I want to catch big fish, right? And so, just get this in your mind if you're a fisherman. Are there lakes to fish around here? I'm sure there are, right? Texas, okay?

Is there good fishing around here? I need to know this. This is good to know. Okay, good. All right. Anybody here have a boat? Let's just keep going down this. No? Okay. So, those of you that fish, okay, you need to get this picture in your mind.

They haul this net ashore full of fish and it says 153 of them. Now, when you throw a net out into the water, it kind of goes down. Anybody ever, you guys net fish?

Nobody really net fishes anymore, right? So, if you ever watch the video, they throw the net out and they kind of cast this wide net and it goes, sinks down and then they pull it up and it pulls in like everything, right? It's not just large fish, it's everything.

You're going to have, you know, if you're fishing on, you know, you're fishing at a lake in Fort Worth, you're going to get bluegill and you're going to get bass and you're going to get probably carp and you're going to get, you know, just different kinds of, who knows, right?

[18 : 52] All this kind of fish, minnows and whatnot. And so, they're pulling it ashore and in the passage, it says that they couldn't put it on the boat so really what they did was they hauled it ashore. When I was a kid, we used to go carp fishing.

You all have carp here? We used to go carp fishing. I grew up in Arkansas. We didn't eat the carp but we caught them because they're fun to catch, right? They're huge and they would fight and I remember when I was a kid, I caught one and I couldn't reel it in and so I turned around and put the pole over my shoulder and just walked up the bank, right?

And just pulled the carp up on the bank. That's the idea. So they pull the net up and they're kind of dragging it up on the net and then when you let the net go, if you've got a net full of fish and you just let it go on the bank, what's going to happen to the fish?

They're just scattered, right? They're all, they're flopping around, they're all over the place. So there's this imagery that John wants us to see here that is going on of this, right? It's kind of chaotic. There's fish everywhere.

Obviously, they counted the fish, right? Oddly specific, 153 large fish that you see, okay? So this is kind of this scene with all this kind of fish everywhere.

[19 : 55] I mean, that would be the definition of slaying them, right guys? If you go fishing and you catch 153 fish in one setting and you don't invite me the next time you go, I'm going to be angry with all of you, okay?

And I'm going to talk about you at Redemption City Church and we're just going to have a bad time in Fort Worth, okay? That is a lot of fish. There's something to be said here, though, about what's going on, right?

And John kind of alluded to it a minute ago. They're not just going fishing, are they? They went back to work. That's what these guys did. They fished for a living.

They literally, they took their ball and they went home, right? Occasionally, my boys will be playing Xbox and one of them rage quits, right? You know what I mean when I say rage quits?

Like, they'll be losing, like, you know, in a baseball game, 15 to nothing and they're just like, I'm done, I quit. Or like, when I was growing up, I would do that to Monopoly. I would just rage quit, right? I'm out. I don't want to, I'm losing, I don't want to do this anymore.

[20 : 50] That's what these guys did. They took their ball and they just went, I mean, they'd had enough. Jesus had been murdered. Peter cut the ear off of a dude. He denied Christ three times.

And what's kind of crazy here is that we know this is now the third time, right? In verse 14 that Jesus had appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

We had already talked about the fact that Jesus told them what to do after all this happened. He told them he would meet them in Galilee, but I just have to wonder if these guys weren't at their wit's end. And they just throw their hands up in the air and they say, I'm out.

It's too much. It's too hard. Jesus, I know that you said you would meet us in Galilee. I know that you told us who would be fishers of men. I know that we spent the last three years of our lives watching you and learning from you and being disciplined from you, but bro, I'm out.

Life is too hard. I have bills to pay. I got to make money so I can live. I'm tired of other people making fun of me. I've got Roman soldiers looking to kill me. I'm just tired.

[21 : 56] And I think to myself, my goodness, have I not been there in my own life? Right? My goodness, has my life not turned out the way that I had planned it out 15 years ago? Am I the only one in the room?

I didn't think so. Life is hard. It is. I think it's hard to help us remember from time to time that this is not where we belong, right?

But it's hard. It's not easy. You know, I had a pretty great life in Arkansas. I really did. It's hard.

Following Christ is not supposed to necessarily be easy. Back to our verses for the day. Go to verse 15. It says, When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? And I want to stop there just a moment. I'm going to go back to something I said at the very beginning of our time because so often when we're looking at a passage of Scripture or studying a passage of Scripture, just one word can make the difference in whether or not we understand a passage correctly or not.

[23 : 12] And here today, I want to submit to you that that one word I want to look at is the word these. You see it there? When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there and I want to stop there We've already answered one question today. These guys had quit what they were doing, they packed up and they went home.

But the real question here in the passage that we need to answer is what is Jesus talking about when he asked Peter if he loves him more than these? Now, there are a couple possibilities that he could be talking about and my whole life I kind of thought as I was reading this passage and studying it that he was talking about the other disciples that were around the fire.

Right? They had all gathered up, there's this fire, the charcoal fire with fish and bread on it and they were all together, it was breakfast time, they were probably eating, there's all these fish all over the shore and my whole life I thought, man, is Jesus saying, you know, Peter, do you love me more than your friends?

Right? Do you love me more than these? Do you love me more than your friends? Until a few years ago I was in a doctoral seminar in Louisville, Kentucky and someone interjected another thought. So think about this with me for a moment.

[24 : 19] Why would John be so specific about the events of the evening and the events of the early morning only to flip the script on what he was talking about all of a sudden in verse 15 and all of a sudden not be as specific as he was being earlier.

The previous 14 verses that we looked at have all been about how these men went fishing, caught nothing, saw Jesus, caught a ton of fish, laid them out on the beach to count, and now are sitting around, maybe standing around a fire eating breakfast, the whole story revolving around fishing.

And I just wonder if Peter didn't look, if Jesus didn't look at Peter and say something like this, right? Remember that maybe they're sitting around the fire, maybe Peter and Jesus were walking together and maybe Jesus puts his arm around Peter and he says, hey Simon.

And that right there would have caused Peter to pause. By calling him Simon, Jesus goes back to using his old name. You notice that? He goes back to using his old name.

This must have been terribly defeating for Peter. Jesus had already changed his name to Cephas, which means stone or rock, right? And now, in the midst of all of this, Jesus is going back to his old name?

[25 : 31] Hear me church, never, when you are working and trying to heal a guilty conscience, should you minimize the seriousness of the offense or conceal the source of the old sin nature that we all have.

Jesus didn't do that with Peter either. Hey Peter, the Simon is still in you. The Simon is still there. You have to fight against that.

Right? Jesus didn't do that. His first word to Peter, Jesus calls him out. Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? And I just wonder if he said that. He said, hey Simon, do you love me more than these?

And maybe gesture down at the fish. All these fish, 153 large fish on the shore. And Jesus says, hey man, do you love me more than you love fish?

Now, why would Jesus ask Peter this question? I have to believe a look of realization came over Peter's face when Peter concludes that Jesus is asking Peter this question because, bro, you sure did go back home really quick.

[26 : 36] It's been 40 days, man. 40 days. We spent all this time together and you just went home. Jesus says to Peter, do you love me more than these?

I submit to you that the these, they're the fish that he's talking about. Peter says, yes Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus says to him, feed my lambs. Verse 16, he said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, yes Lord, do you know that I love you? He said to him, tend my sheep. Says it a third time in verse 17, right? Simon, son of John, do you love me? But this time, Peter's reaction is different, isn't it?

What does the scripture say Peter is this time? He's grieved. I think if Jesus was talking about his friends, I think that's a harder conversation. I think, man, are you really willing to give up your friends?

Are you really willing to die for me? Are you really willing to give up, you know, your relationships for me? I think that's a harder conversation. If you're asking me if I love you more than I love fish, I'm upset.

[27 : 43] It's fish, man. I'm upset. I'm bothered by that. And obviously, Peter is bothered by that. It says, Peter was heartbroken. Peter was grieved because he said to them this third time, do you love me?

Peter responds to him. He says, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. And I have to wonder here in this moment if Peter didn't realize that he had allowed what was comfortable to him, what he knew, to completely sidetrack him from what God had called him to do, which was to be fishers of men, right?

You remember. Come follow me, I'll make you fishers of men. But then I think to myself, it's so easy to do that, isn't it? It's so easy in my life to get so sidetracked with what I know God is telling me to do or what I know God has called me to do that I just completely lose sight of what I'm supposed to be doing.

I'm focused here, I'm focused here. You don't understand. God, I've got a family to take care of. You don't understand I've got mouths to feed and my kids are getting bigger and they eat more than I do and I don't really know what's going on with my life and things are getting more expensive and gas is, I don't know, three or four dollars a gallon and I'm just, I don't know what to do, right?

Insurance is going up. It's crazy. I've got all this stuff going on and it's so easy in the hardness of the life that we live to get completely sidetracked from what God's calling us to do.

[29 : 13] Interestingly here though in this passage, Jesus goes a step further as if he hasn't gone far enough. He tells Peter to feed his sheep, right? You see that three times Jesus said, feed my sheep, starting in verse number 15.

What's the significance of this question? Well, it may be that Jesus is restoring Peter, right? Peter denied him three times, Jesus asked him three times, feed my sheep, or you know, do you love me? It may be some restoration, but there may be another reason here.

When Jesus first called, we talked about this already, when Jesus first called Peter as a disciple, he was fishing. Jesus said he would make him a fisher of men. Here though, I want us to notice that Jesus doesn't tell Peter to go fishing, does he?

Jesus changes Peter's profession. It's not, come follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Jesus changes Peter's profession from fisherman to shepherd, right?

You are a shepherd now. You are never to go back. You are never to be this way. You are never to be this person again. You're done. You will always be a shepherd. He changes his whole profession.

[30 : 19] Where you were a fisher, now you are a shepherd. And that's what I want you to do. It's this only move forward. That's what Jesus said. Only move forward. Forget what's in the past.

Right? In fact, you see the Apostle Paul say the very same thing a few years later in his letter to the Philippian Christians. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Move forward. Pay attention to the calling on your life. Listen to me this morning first about his church, Henrietta, Texas.

In the same way that Jesus called Peter from a life of fishing to a life of shepherding the sheep, in the same way that Jesus called Paul from a life as an unbelieving Pharisee and persecutor of Christians to a life as a missionary, preacher, pastor, and apologist, in the same way that he called those two men, Jesus has called each of us to live our life not for ourself, but to live our lives for the kingdom of God.

He has called us out of darkness into light. He has called us to share the good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection with a lost world that desperately needs that information, that desperately needs the saving power that is found in the blood of Jesus Christ, and the question you need to ask yourself today is simply this.

[31 : 53] What's keeping you from doing just that? I am positive that there are people all over Henrietta, Texas that need to know who Jesus is. I'm positive. I'm positive there are people all over Clay County who need to know who Jesus Christ is.

I'm positive that there are people all over Wichita Falls who need to know who Jesus is. What's keeping us from sharing the gospel? What's keeping us from going on mission?

What's holding us back? Or maybe a better question is what's your fish? Maybe it's not actual fish. What's your fish? I know what mine is.

Mine's comfort. Mine's comfort. I don't... I just want peace and quiet and comfort. But that can turn really, really bad for me really, really quickly.

Right? What's your fish? What is it? What is keeping you from doing what God has called you? What's keeping you from walking next door and sharing the gospel with your neighbor who you know desperately needs the message of Christ on the cross?

[33 : 02] What's keeping you from going to the school and loving on teachers and loving on students? What's keeping you from going out into Clay County and sharing the gospel with people all over this county who needs to know the beauty and the grace and the mercy that is found in the blood of Jesus Christ?

What's your fish? I was reminded the other day, continually reminded really, of how easy it is to fake this life.

There's so many other things going on, so many other things that are vying for our attention, for our thoughts. What's your fish? What's your fish? What's your fish? What's your fish? And if the question that I would ask for you to ask yourself is what's your fish, the question that I would posit to you today out of John 21 is how's your heart?

How's your heart? How's your relationship with Christ? What does that look like? Do you have a relationship with Christ?

I'm not asking you if you were saved 30 years ago. I'm asking you, how's your relationship with Christ today? How are you doing walking with Christ? How are you doing in that? How are you doing in living in the calling that God has given to you?

[34 : 15] I guarantee you that God wants to do a work here in Henrietta. Matter of fact, if you look back over the history of your church, you've done it before. Continuing to do it now.

Look at the people in the room. God wants to do a work here in Henrietta through this body of believers. Are we really going to allow something with zero eternal significance to get in the way of that?

And I'm not asking that question to myself. You're just, you're here for a personal counseling session, so you're hearing a personal counseling session that I'm having with myself. Back to our story about John Knox for a moment from earlier.

I just wonder what would happen if the rallying cry of this body of believers became give us Henrietta or kill us. One or the other. One or the other. God, give me Henrietta or I'd die.

God, give me Clay County or I'd die. I wonder what, I wonder what this place would look like, this whole area would look like a year from now. God, give us Henrietta or kill us. So here's what I want to do.

[35 : 21] I want you to bow your heads. I want you to close your eyes with me for the next few moments together. And I want to just ask you some questions, okay? I want to, I don't really know how y'all normally do an invitation, so I'm going to let you just sit.

I think the band's going to come back up and sing and play here in just a second, but I want you to sit, I want you to ask some questions and I want you to take an inventory. And here's my encouragement to you with your heads bowed and your eyes closed.

Here's my encouragement to you this morning. It's easier to lie to yourself than it is to anybody else. Okay? It's easier to justify to yourself than it is to anybody else. So don't do that.

Okay? Okay? So don't do that. Take an inventory. And the first question that I want you to answer is how's your relationship with Christ today?

How's your relationship with Christ today? Okay? Do you have a relationship with Christ?

[36 : 49] If you don't, I would love the opportunity to talk with you in the lobby after the service is over. Greg would too. And the other deacons here I'm sure would be out there as well.

Would love to talk with you about it. Please, I beg of you, do not rest on that you walked an aisle 30 years ago.

How's your relationship with Christ today? Second question. From the passage we read today, what's your fish?

What is it that you're allowing to keep you from doing what God has called you to do? Y'all, I am Peter.

I am. I let things get in the way. I let things dominate me that shouldn't dominate me. I have to continually ask myself, continually take this inventory of what are the things that I'm allowing in my life to get in the way of what I know God's called me to do.

[38 : 11] What is that for you? What is that for you? What is that for you? What would it be like if the rallying cry of First Baptist Church Henrietta, Texas was simply, God, give us Henrietta or we die.

Father, I pray your blessing over this church.

Father, I pray your blessing over them as they go out and they reach their community for you. Father, I pray that you would give them vigor, that you would give them boldness as they go.

Father, I pray that you would encourage them along the way. Father, I pray that this area would become known throughout Texas, throughout America, throughout the world as a place of revival, as a place of awakening.

Father, I'm so encouraged by everything that Sam says about this great group of people. I'm so encouraged. I'm so encouraged of how they love Sam and Holly.

[39 : 48] I'm so encouraged of how they love their city. Father, bless them. Father, give us Henrietta or we die.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.