

Jesus Christ Restores

DAVE BAST

What happens if you fail Jesus in some major way? What if you have committed some kind of huge sin, or you betrayed your Christian friends, or maybe you even denied your faith? Is there a way back? What happens when you try to talk to the Lord after that? Well, a meeting between Jesus and his disciple Peter after Jesus' resurrection shows the answer. We will be talking about that today on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, we have come at last to the seventh and final program in this overview of the fourth gospel, the Gospel according to John; and as we saw, if you are regular *Groundwork* listener, which I hope you are, then at the end of our last program we noted how Chapter 20 wraps up with a statement that sounds like it is the conclusion to the whole gospel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes: ³⁰Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

And that looks like it is time to roll the end credits and the show is over; not quite, but that statement is significant, though, Dave, because John is saying: Look, I have not written a dispassionate account here. I have been grinding an axe all along. I have edited Jesus' life. We noted earlier in this series that he seemed to have moved the cleansing of the Temple up to the beginning. John has license to do that as an evangelist...as an apostle...and he is saying: I am doing it all so that you will believe, and that was my purpose. The end...except not quite. We get John 21.

DAVE BAST

Which is a wonderful chapter. It has one of the coolest stories in all the New Testament, but it is a rather odd story that raises a number of questions about it; because all of a sudden, it seems like Peter decided to go fishing, and they are back in Galilee. They had been in Jerusalem. That is where Thomas fell on his knees in the upper room and said, "My Lord and my God," that tremendous confession of the divinity and the salvation work of Jesus; and yet, the next thing we see some of them—six or seven of them—have gone to Galilee and Peter wants to fish again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, it is interesting because John is the only part of the New Testament that gives us anything that happened in the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension back into heaven. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us almost nothing. Mark gives us zero. Mark ends at the tomb with the women running away; Matthew flash-forwards to the great commission; Luke includes the day on the road to Emmaus, which is still on the day of; and then in Acts 1 he gives us the ascension; but John alone fills us in on a couple things that happened in the meantime, in those forty days. This is one of them, but that is what makes this story strange. The disciples have seen Jesus twice. They are living in a world where a resurrection happened, and they look bored, as John 21, they are just sitting around. We are told there are five disciples, and then John

says there are two others, he doesn't even name them. How can you be bored in a world where the resurrection happened? They don't seem to know what to do so they go back to do what they know how to do best for the moment. Peter says: I'm going fishing; and the other ones say: Meh, we'll go with you. I mean, gee, we got nothing else to do. So, they fish. And again, we have said this before, it is a good thing Jesus called these guys to be disciples because they were lousy fishermen...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They could never catch a thing...

DAVE BAST

It seems like, yes. So, they toil all night and the sky begins to lighten in the east—the pink of dawn colors the horizon. You can just picture this scene. As they look, they see somebody standing on the shore. They are not very far into the lake because they could talk to this figure, who says: Hey, have you caught anything? And they say: Nah, we haven't caught anything; and he says: Throw the net over on the other side.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Alarm bells start to ring.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; except they don't right away for the disciples. You know, fishermen who get skunked...the last thing they want to hear when they come back in is catch anything? No; they are a little annoyed. I imagine as they move the net to the other side, they might have been rolling their eyes a little bit. It is like, as though we didn't try both sides of the boat all night, stranger on the beach, thank you very much; and of course, they do, and immediately the net just fills up with fish. We will be told later it is 153 good-sized fish; and immediately John...the beloved disciple...looks and says: It's the Lord...it's Jesus on the beach. Peter is in the boat and he had taken most of his clothes off as they toiled with their nets, and then this is very funny. I think the scene is meant to be funny. Peter gets dressed again and then jumps in the water and swims to shore.

DAVE BAST

Swims to shore; right, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now he is soaking wet. He had been ready to swim before; anyway, that is pretty funny; but, they get to the shore, the other disciples haul the boat, and there is Jesus, who has already got some fish sizzling on a fire, he has already made some biscuits. So, Jesus is tending this fire, and there he is; and yet, none of them dare ask: Is it you?

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because they are pretty sure it is him.

DAVE BAST

Yes, but, there is something really strange about this scene, and rather awkward and uncomfortable; and as you pointed out, Scott, in our church the pastor usually before he gives the benediction says: Remember, we

live in a world where a resurrection happened, which is a wonderful, encouraging phrase. They are living in a world where they know a resurrection has happened, and yet, they don't seem to be acting differently.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And what about Jesus? He is the resurrected Lord of Lords and King of Kings; what is he doing cooking breakfast? Is this what you do after the resurrection...you make breakfast? Why isn't he, you know, witnessing to the Caesar in Rome or curing some diseases or bringing justice like a mighty river? It is just an odd thing that Jesus is spending his time after the resurrection cooking breakfast on this particular occasion.

DAVE BAST

But it is a wonderful sort of homey scene...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Like outdoors at the campground; and the reason that Jesus has set this whole thing up is because he has some business to transact with Peter, and that is the main point of the story which we come to as we read a little further. So:

¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said. "You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶Again Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷The 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."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So there it is. Some have pointed out that this triple questioning of Peter may be in response to his triple denial of Jesus earlier; on the night in which Jesus was arrested, three times Peter said: I don't know him, I don't know him, I tell you...and then he swears...I don't know him! So now, three times he gets a chance to affirm his love for Jesus. There is a little wordplay here, which some commentators used to think was a big deal. A lot of them don't think it is a big deal now. Jesus uses that word *agap*?...do you love me; and Peter keeps answering with a different word of *phil*?, from which we get, you know, like Philadelphia...brotherly love.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Some have thought maybe Peter didn't dare go out on a limb anymore and use the *agap*? word, so he uses a second-tier word; and then the third time, Jesus uses the second-tier word, and it is almost as though he is coming down to Peter's level. Peter is initially hurt, but Jesus says: It's okay. And even if there were something to Peter using a secondary word for love, Jesus still says: Feed my lambs; take care of my sheep. It didn't matter. Jesus was willing to meet him where he was, and he still had work to do.

DAVE BAST

Interesting, too; another little detail. You mentioned the difference in the words for love. Notice that Jesus doesn't call Peter, Peter. Jesus had given Peter that nickname, which means rock...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Rock, yes.

DAVE BAST

When Peter had confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God; but here he says to him: Simon, son of John...Simon, son of John, do you love me. So, I mean, maybe he is reminding Peter that he wasn't such a rock at the time when he denied Jesus, but nevertheless, he is being restored...he is being brought back into that relationship. The one fundamental for anyone who wants to belong to him is to love him. That is all you need to do, really; and that has implications: If you love me you will keep my commandments, yes; but it keeps coming back to this: Do you love me? Do we love him? And if we do, then Jesus gives us something to do about it: Feed my sheep...my lambs. Now, that was special for Peter because he was going to be the leader of the disciples, he was going to write a couple of letters in the New Testament; but for us, too. Care for the body of Christ, care for those who belong to him, that is Peter's commission.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We will want to think about that a little bit. So, love for Jesus is key. It has implications. It is not just something you do on the side, it dictates what you do with your life; and so, in just a moment, we will wonder about what is actually quite literally the pastoral task of the Church. Stay tuned.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, where today we are looking at the epilogue of the Gospel of John, Chapter 21, which seems to have been tacked on after John wrapped up the gospel in Chapter 20, with the statement about his purpose being so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ; and we have just seen Jesus kind of restoring Peter; actually, Paul says that there was an earlier private appearance of Jesus to Peter after the resurrection. He says that in 1 Corinthians 15. So, we have to understand, I think, that they have already kind of restored their relationship, and that the primary thing that is going on here is Peter's commissioning for ongoing service, not just as one of the disciples, but really, as the chief of the disciples; and so, Jesus gives him, as you said, Scott, this pastoral task.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Pastor means shepherd, and Jesus uses the image of sheep and lambs, and maybe that means adults and children, who knows, but it is literally a shepherding task, which is the pastoral task. That is where we get our word for pastor in the Church to this day. We are all undershepherds of the Great Shepherd. Earlier in John Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd," so Jesus is the great, good shepherd, the big shepherd, and then we are all underlings—we are undershepherds who take care of his sheep. We feed them, which probably means preaching the Word of God, doing the sacraments...the Lord's Supper...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We think of a literal feeding. We take care of the lambs. That is what the work of the Church is.

DAVE BAST

Yes, and speaking of sacraments and this wonderful image of sheep and lambs, the reason we baptize infants in our tradition...in the Reformed tradition...is because as one of the English Reformers said in the 16th Century: The lambs, too, are part of the flock. Our children belong to the Lord, and we give a sign of this. So, they are included, and the whole flock needs that kind of feeding on God's Word; and faithful pastors, not just Peter, who was famous, and a leader, and according to Catholic tradition, the first Pope; nevertheless, all the way down to a Sunday school teacher or a youth leader, the thing we are supposed to be doing is helping people take in God's Word, understand it, grow from it, and follow Jesus more closely. So, that is what Peter is told, three times over, just like the three times questioned: Do you love me? But then, the encounter with Jesus and Peter takes a different turn, and it seems as though Jesus leads Peter away a little bit to say something in private to him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹⁸“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.” (And then John inserts this almost like a parenthetical) ¹⁹This was to show by what kind of death Peter was to glorify God; and after saying this, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow me.”

So, this book ends the gospel. The first thing Jesus says to all the disciples is: Follow me. Now that Peter has been restored, we are on the other side of the resurrection now, the call goes back: Follow me. But, following Jesus means often going the way of the cross...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, when Jesus calls a person, he bids that person to come and die; and Jesus is apparently predicting that Peter will end up dying for the gospel. Despite his feet of clay nature...this Peter the rock ended up having feet of clay...but with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter will preach that glorious sermon on Pentecost and become a leader, and he will die for the Gospel one day.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and that is certainly what the cryptic language Jesus uses about Peter's hands being bound and him being led to someplace he doesn't want to go; and we are not told in the New Testament how Peter died or when Peter died, but there is a very strong tradition in the early Church, and continuing on, that Peter died in Rome under the persecution of the Emperor Nero, probably in the year 64 AD, and his body, in fact, is buried on the Vatican Hill, which was where Nero's pleasure gardens were, and where he executed many of the Christians; even according to Roman historians, some of them he set on fire as illumination for his parties in this garden. Peter was crucified head downward, tradition says, because he didn't feel worthy to die in the same position as the Lord had died; and he is buried there; and a church was built over the spot when Christians had permission, and that church is St. Peter's.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We think basically...maybe with the exception of John, who was exiled to the island of Patmos eventually...we think that is the same John who wrote the gospel and the epistles anyway, although there is some controversy on that, but we think that all of the disciples met a martyr's end, including the disciples, you know, who we don't know and hear a lot about...you know, Thaddeus and Bartholomew and some of the others, but James and Andrew and Simon or Peter, they all paid for the Gospel with their lives, which tells you indeed how deeply they believed and knew it was true. Chuck Colson...we have mentioned this before...Charles Colson, who worked for Richard Nixon, went to jail because of the Watergate scandal. Colson said that his being convicted in the Watergate scandal convinced him that the gospel was true, and here is why: He said they had all made a pact that they would not tell the truth about what happened with Watergate. He and the other co-conspirators...nope; but as soon as they put the pressure on and said: Well, you are going to go to jail for a few months, they all cracked and they all told the truth. He said, that was just a little jail sentence. You wouldn't die for something unless you totally believed in it; and indeed, they did. Peter did, too, and he overcomes his earlier denying Peter to become the great apostle, who will indeed die a martyr's death.

DAVE BAST

So, Jesus is saying to Peter: You are going to have to literally die, and the other disciples met that same fate. When he calls us to follow him, for most of us that is not going to lead literally to our deaths, but there is a sense in which, as Bonhoeffer said, we are called to come and die, because spiritually speaking, we need to die to ourselves. Jesus said it elsewhere: Take up your cross daily and follow me. That is adopting the position of a person who no longer is alive for themselves, but living only for him. That is what it means to

follow Jesus; and somebody else was following Jesus and Peter in that last little conversation. We will look at that at the very end in the last segment of this last program.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, so we are coming now to the very end of John 21, and the end of this series, and we have just seen that Jesus had not only reinstated Peter and recommissioned him to feed—to tend—the flock of his Church, but he also told Peter something about how Peter’s own life was going to end, and it was going to end in a martyr’s death.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But then, there is this curious little scene that, you know...you said I think that maybe Jesus had pulled Peter aside just to tell him this part privately. They were having breakfast on the beach. This is still the same scene that we began in John 21; and then Peter turns around and sees the beloved disciple. We think that is John’s signature for himself...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So: ²⁰Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who leaned back against Jesus at the supper and said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” ²²Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” ²³Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that that disciple would not die, but Jesus did not say he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” ²⁴This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

So, a number of curious things there. Dale Bruner points out that throughout different parts of John, there is like this friendly rivalry between Peter and John. You even see it in John 20 when the disciples hear Jesus’ body has been raised; and so Peter and John have a little footrace to get to the tomb, and John makes sure to put in that: Well, he got there first. Peter got there second and then ran right into the tomb, but John won the footrace; and now Peter has just been restored, Jesus said, “Follow me,” and yet, Peter is worried about this other guy...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What about him? And Jesus almost seems a little annoyed, like: I just told you to follow me, what are you worried about him for? If I want him to stay alive, that is what will happen.

DAVE BAST

It makes me think of the Narnia books of C. S. Lewis. He says to one of the children: You know, you only get to hear your own story; you don’t get to hear the other person’s story. So, that is exactly what Jesus is saying to Peter here. You just focus on your story because whatever happens to him is between me and him. So yes, Peter is going to go on following Jesus. It is going to lead him eventually to his own cross, and the other disciple, the beloved disciple, will lead a different kind of path; in fact, most Christians believe and assume that John lived to be the very last of the original disciples...to be a very old man, at which time he

may be writing the gospel and also the epistles, and maybe the book of Revelation as well; but it is especially interesting, I think, to note the last verse in the passage that you read, Scott. *This* is the disciple, referring to the beloved disciple, who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. And my question is: Who wrote *that* verse? Because it is not John.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Who is *we*?

DAVE BAST

Yes; who is the *we*? *We* know that his testimony is true.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, we think maybe...I mean, it is possible that the community...the church that John would later found...maybe helped get this all written down and put it together. Maybe they were even the ones who remembered this other story John told them, and maybe that is where John 21 came from, because as we said, John 20...at the end it looks like the end. So, this is maybe the community saying...okay, there are no quote marks in Greek, but if there were quote marks, verse 24: "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and wrote them down." Close quote; and then the insertion: We know that his testimony is true. So, this is the Church talking, which is exactly what Jesus has said. When the apostles succeed, as John does through this gospel, with tending the lambs and feeding the sheep, then the word comes, and we know that is us again, even to this day we know that John's testimony is true; and then, we get a repeat of almost the same words, but not quite, of how John 20 ended, which looked like the end. Again: (verse 25 paraphrased) Jesus did many other things that not written in this book. If all the things Jesus said and did were written down, the world could not contain the books that would be written, which is a clear, wonderful example of hyperbole. It is sort of like Jesus saying, you know, take care of the log sticking out of your own eye before you do the speck of sawdust...it is hyperbole. Of course, you could write everything Jesus said and did and the world wouldn't, you know, be full of books everywhere you turn, but it might be the way of saying: Jesus and the gospel really are bigger than the world, because they contain the world, they contain the cosmos...God so loved the cosmos...it is bigger than the world because it saved the world.

DAVE BAST

And you might also remember that Jesus continues to speak and to act, and he does so through the Spirit working in and through his followers. So, as we follow him, the way he invited Peter to do, so the Spirit comes to us and enables us...gives us the strength to begin to love as Jesus loved, to begin to serve as Jesus served, to begin to witness to all that he has said and done, the way John first witnessed, and we believe because we have heard from others...trustworthy witnesses. I mean, it invites you to reflect on how do you believe anything? Mostly we believe things because reliable witnesses told us...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

We didn't figure it out for ourselves; and that is what the end of John is saying: Look, this church is saying...maybe it is the church of Ephesus, where John served, we believe...look, we know him. He was our pastor for years and years and years. We know he tells the truth, and he told the truth about Jesus, and you can believe it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we flash back to John Chapter 1 where we began, where John says: ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Dale Bruner, the commentator, likes the present tense of *shines*. That light shines and it shines and it shines and it shines at the end of John. It is true, thanks be to God. Thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig into scripture to lay the

foundation for our lives.

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