

## John 21 Redefining Everything

Christmas and Easter have come and gone. Winter is over, Spring has sprung, summer has officially started. We've searched for bunnies, eaten our Easter eggs, some of us have even had holidays. So now what?

During this course we have studied the Gospel written by Jesus' close disciple and eyewitness John and have come to the last chapter. Jesus of Nazareth has appeared on the scene in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine and done many amazing things to convince John and his colleagues that He is the Son of God Who gives eternal life to all who trust in Him. The authorities killed Him as He predicted but He has returned from the dead and presented Himself to His followers. So now what? What are they, and we, to do now?

In his closing chapter John records Jesus giving us three things, an invitation to renewal, a gentle reminder and a gracious recommission.

Observe first an invitation to renewal. It might be the end of John's Gospel but it's only the beginning of the adventure, a journey of discovery, learning and growing and serving with our crucified but risen Lord. It's not over, it's a new beginning, just like Jesus spoke about with Nicodemus back in ch 3. That's why He meets His fishermen disciples here in Galilee where it all began. This is familiar territory, this is home ground. There is something reassuring and comforting about the boat and the nets and breakfast on the shore.

They had the last supper and would never forget it. But Jesus is alive and victorious over evil and death. This is the first breakfast of a new resurrection era! Our homes and our world can never be the same again!

Things will be different now, as Jesus has been explaining. He won't be *with* us physically any more, he will be *in* us spiritually by the presence of the Holy Spirit, but no less real for that! We are not alone, never rejected or abandoned. He Who lives and reigns forever lives in our hearts, so we must welcome Him and seek to make our hearts and lives a suitable home for our Shepherd, Master, King.

If it seems at times we're going in circles, or that we're back where we started or that the Lord has in some way brought us to the end of ourselves, He may in fact be inviting us to a new beginning, a deeper understanding, a more committed obedience, a more fruitful serving. Let's be open to our risen, living Lord doing new things in us!

Another thing we find here in John 21 is a gentle reminder, a reminder of why the cross was necessary.

This is poignant, painful even, but necessary. Much as we celebrate Jesus' life and triumph over the grave, we must never forget the cross, and our sin that required His sacrifice there. Three times He asks for our love, a gentle, loving way to help Peter face the uncomfortable truth of his triple denial on the night of Jesus' arrest. It's a reminder for all of us of the countless times we have acted like we don't know Him by choosing comfort or selfish pleasure over doing our duty and what is right.

This reminds us that sin is always personal. It is not just technically breaking rules, it is spoiling relationship, offending our Maker, grieving our generous Father in heaven.

These days if we speed on the motorway it is impersonal. Cold and distant. A robot photographs our license plate and we get an automatic fine through the post. But Jesus takes us for breakfast, looks us in the eye and asks, 'Do you love me?' With Him, it's always personal.

This is a reminder of our many sins, but it is a gentle reminder. Uncomfortable as it is initially, we shall be glad of it, as it not only corrects us but brings us closer to the One Who is full of loving mercy. His Spirit's conviction is the necessary, sweet piercing of our souls, bringing us to confession, repentance, forgiveness, thankfulness and fresh joy!

Sanctification then, is us becoming holy in practise, not by laboriously practising rules like the Pharisees, but by responding with love and grateful obedience to the One Who showed such love to us at Calvary. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, changing us powerfully but gently, through the love of our Saviour.

And now we are ready for service again! For after renewal and reminder comes recommission. Peter, who had failed so dismally, is once more entrusted with leadership in the Lord's precious Church. Amazingly we are given responsibility again. Jesus not only forgives us but trusts us to assist Him, like junior shepherds to the great Shepherd, helping in the care of His growing 'flock'.

He instructs us to 'feed His lambs'. We are to share the love we have received. We are to evangelise, share His invitation of grace with the world, this genuine 'soul food' of forgiveness, healing, restoration and life in His name. We are to protect, nurture and encourage those He entrusts to our company and influence.

Despite the indifference, mockery or even violent opposition we may face we must share His truth and overcome evil with His forgiving love. Love that recommissioned Peter, that converted persecutor Saul of Tarsus, love that brings all nations to the table in fellowship and peace.

This risen Lord Jesus stands at the door still today and knocks. Still willing to join us and eat with us. Still powerful to renew us.

Let us welcome Him in and love as He does.

Until He comes.

Amen.