

GREATER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JOHN

GREATER: the book of John

SCRIPTURE: John 21: JESUS > OUR MISTAKES

John 21:1-3

1Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: **2**Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. **3**"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

After the feast of Passover ends, the Apostles return to Galilee as Jesus had directed. They wait for Jesus to appear to them there.

Instead of just sitting around, Peter decides to go fishing. We was, after all, a fisherman by trade. Peter gets into his family fishing boat and heads out. Six men come with him.

They fish throughout the night without catching anything.

Verse 4 says....

John 21:4-6

4Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

6He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

At this point they have not recognized that it is Jesus who has called out to them. And for some reason they listen to him and cast their nets to the other side of the boat.

There's a similar event that happens at the beginning of Jesus ministry recorded in Luke 5. Jesus is teaching the people and there is such a large crowd that he asks Peter and the others to allow him to use their boat to push out into the water so he can continue to teach. When he is done teaching he tells the fishermen to "let down their nets for a catch."

In spite of his skepticism, Peter and the others let down their nets and catch so many fish that they have to use two boats to pull them all in.

It must have been this memory that John remembers and recognizes Jesus on the shore...

John 21:7-14

7Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. **8**The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. **9**When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." **11**So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. **12**Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. **13**Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14**This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus has been tortured, mocked, stripped of his clothes and brought before both Jewish and Roman courts with charges against him. During one of those trials one of his closest friends and followers, Peter, denied knowing him and abandoned him.

They had led Jesus away to be crucified on a Roman cross. There he bled and after six hours he died. They laid his body in a borrowed tomb. His followers all went into hiding and back to their old jobs like fishing and farming.

Then the remarkable happened. Jesus came back from the dead. And when he did, he appeared to hundreds of people including his closest friends and disciples.

The once down and out, /scared and scattered believers/ began to believe again. The one they had put their hope in was once again filling their hearts with expectation. Jesus was back from the dead to dispel their doubts, energize their hearts, and fill their lives with joy and purpose.

But there was one friend who needed more. There was one disciple who needed a face-to-face. There needed to be a clear-the-air moment between Jesus and Peter.

Have you ever gotten side-ways with a friend, a neighbor, a spouse? Have you ever wanted desperately to clear the air, but at the same time wanted nothing more than to forget the whole conflict?

That's where Peter must have been. The last significant encounter he had had with Jesus, he had denied knowing him. And that's after assuring Jesus that he would never do exactly what he ended up doing - acting like he didn't know him.

Jesus had appeared to his disciples, but Peter had not been able to speak to him. As a matter of fact, Peter did not know if he would ever get that chance. What would Jesus require of him, would he knock him down a rung or two, would he deny Peter since Peter had denied him? Would there be penance to pay? What would Jesus want from Peter in order to reinstate him into the fold?

John 21:15-17

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

There's some speculation about why Jesus would ask Peter three times. Is it the poetic symmetry of matching Peter's three time denial of Jesus? Is it for emphasis or gravity? Is it to get Peter's attention or to make an example of him?

Jesus says to Peter...

Do you love me more than these? Three times.

Do you love me more than your lifestyle? You've gone back to *where* you know. Are you willing to leave everything? Your home? What's familiar? This place?

Do you love me more than fish and fishing? You've gone back to *what* you know. Are you willing to *sacrifice* everything? Your income? Your comfort?

Do you love me more than your friends and family? You've gone back to *who* you know. Are you willing to start over? Make new friends? Lead new people? Leave your safety net?

To me, how many times the question is asked is not as important as the question which Jesus asks.

When Jesus reinstated Peter, he doesn't ask Peter if he believed he was the Son of the Living God; he didn't ask if Peter had been reading his bible or praying, he didn't ask if Peter was journaling.

He asked him **"Do you love me?"**

Peter made some mistakes and Jesus question to him is simply... Do you love me?

That's an important question for Peter.

That's an important question for us. Jesus is asking... "Do you love me?"

JESUS > OUR MISTAKES

Sometimes our past mistakes deter us from going and doing and being all that God wants us to be. And the question that forces us back to reality is this...

Do you love Jesus? Because he can make our lives all that they should be, in spite of our mistakes...

OUR MISTAKES **DON'T HAVE TO OVERWHELM US**

Do you think Peter was anxious to meet with Jesus? Can you imagine how it must have felt to have this face to face with Jesus? I like to clear the air, but it must have been overwhelming.

Sometimes our past mistakes can overwhelm us and change us.

Isaiah 43:18-19a

18“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. **19**See, I am doing a new thing!

God wants us to move forward and not dwell on the past.

Philippians 3:13-14

13Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Our past sometimes tries to manipulate us. Good or bad it overwhelms us. Don't miss the prize that's coming by being overwhelmed by your past.

OUR MISTAKES **DON'T HAVE TO DEFINE US**

Jesus did not want Peter's past to change his future. It was important for Jesus and Peter to have this moment. To help Peter refocus. To move him past his errors to a new preferred future.

Same is true for us...

We cannot allow our past mistakes to dictate our future.

Sometimes we get stuck in our past mistakes. God wants us to move forward.

Galatians 2:20-21

20I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **21**I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

When we get stuck in the past we are forgetting that Christ died for our future.

You see sometimes that's how we react to our past. We blame others or the circumstances and it usually ends up causing us pain. Then we move forward with the scars of those mistakes and that tends to dictate how we move forward. Those mistakes have the tendency to define us.

Instead of overwhelming or defining us our mistakes should...

OUR MISTAKES **MIGHT SERVE TO SHAPE US**

Our past mistakes can serve us well if we take what we can from them and then move on.

God is much more concerned about where we are headed, than where we have been.

Johnny Cash said...

You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space.

Philippians 3:13-14

13Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

And that's exactly what Peter did. He responded to Jesus question "Do you love me more than these" in the best possible way... he moved forward and lived for Christ.

Back to John 21...

John 21:18-19

18Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

19Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

According to church history, Peter did follow Jesus into a martyr's death on a Roman cross during the time of Nero. According to legend, he asked to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified as Jesus had been.

Jesus is asking... "Do you love me?"

Small Group Questions.

1. Be it beat boxing or fishing, what is your fondest memory and why?
2. Why do you think the disciples went back to their former lives? When Jesus seems so far away, what keeps you going and not turning back to your old ways?
3. When Jesus told the disciples to through their net to the right side of the boat, what do you think the conversation was on the boat? What do you think Jesus was thinking as he saw his friends pulling in the fish?
4. When you are in a disagreement with a friend or loved one, how quickly do you want it to be over? What do you do to remedy the situation?
5. We see in verses 15 thru 19 the exchange between Jesus and Peter. Does anything in their conversation stand out to you?
6. After the exchange with Jesus and Peter we see in vs. 20 -22 that Peter was focusing on what Jesus was going to do with or for John. Do you find yourself looking at others and wishing for their gift or role instead of using or fulfilling yours?
7. Why do we allow our past mistakes to define our future?
8. Sometimes we have a hard time forgiving ourselves, do you think Peter had a hard time forgiving himself? Why or why not?

9. What are your thoughts on when David said, "When we get stuck in the past we are forgetting that Christ died for our future."?
10. How can we begin to see how our past mistakes can shape us, and how can we use that to help others?
11. Pray for your group, and encourage each other use your history to shape someone's future for the better!