

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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## SERMON TITLE

Close Encounters of the God Kind – Peter Restored

## SERIES

## DATE

4/23/2023

## KEY SCRIPTURE

John 21:1-17

## SYNOPSIS

An encounter with the Lord can bring complete restoration.

## HIGHLIGHTS



## ☞ Close Encounters of the God Kind – Peter Restored

### John 21:1-17

**1** Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: **2** Simon Peter, Thomas (called 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. **4** Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

In this instance, Jesus showed up while the men were at work. He isn't only interested in meeting ☞ with you on Sunday, but at any time. **He is interested in every aspect of your life.**

**5** He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. **6** He 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.

There are several components in this story that are key reminders for Peter. This part here is reminiscent of Luke 5 - just before Peter became a disciple, Jesus told him to catch some fish. He had toiled all night, but at Jesus' instruction, he let down the net and caught so many fish they had to call their partners in another boat to come and help bring it in. Peter's best catches were when he obeyed Jesus. **When we follow his instructions, he brings success.**

Whether there is any real significance to the "right side" of the boat is unclear.

☞ But the main idea is that **Jesus knows best.**

Their greatest success came, in both cases, when they obeyed the word of the Lord. And, here in John, it was only a slight adjustment they needed to make. Those slight adjustments that the Lord asks of us are not too difficult to follow, but they might be harder to believe. "How could such a minor modification make any difference?" Think about the blind man that Jesus put mud on his eyes. Why not just heal him on the spot? Or the leper that had to dip 7 times in the Jordan to be cleansed. Why not just once or twice?

"Do I really need to read my Bible? I know the gist of it." "Do I really need to pray or ask for help? I mean, God already knows what I need." "Do I really need to participate in church life? I can be a Christian on my own." "Do I really need to be a giver? Do I really need to... etc.?" We often don't understand the reasons, but the Lord always knows best, and

☞ **our obedience is the key to finding success, no matter how great or small his direction.**

**7** Then 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.



John knew that anything this wonderful had to come from Jesus. But as in other cases, Peter was the first one to act. Once he knew it was the Lord, he couldn't wait to get to him. I've said before about Peter, that in spite of all his faults, he did one thing right consistently. He was always wherever the Lord was. He was one who stayed near when Jesus was arrested. He was there at the transfiguration. He was the only one who walked on the water with Jesus. Peter is a great example of **the importance of being close to the Lord.**

**10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 Simon Peter climbed aboard 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 is often seen eating with His disciples. This is a picture of intimate, friendly fellowship. Once Jesus provides this miraculous catch of fish, he then invites them into something quite simple and ordinary: a meal. This is something we see throughout Jesus' ministry. **Evidently, there is something special about sharing a meal together.**

☞ Here's something very practical for your household: **share a family meal together** at least once a week, preferably, daily. Magical things happen around the family table when all other distractions are removed. Conversation and interaction take place almost automatically while eating. It's good and healthy for your family relationships... We see an important conversation take place here as well...

**15 When 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."**

The Lord is up to something very important right now. Let's set the scene. Here they are at sunrise, sitting around a fire of burning coals, with the smell of smoke rising in the air. This is another key reminder for Peter. In Luke 22, Peter had boldly proclaimed that he was ready to go to prison and even death for the Lord. But Jesus prophesied that he would actually deny him three times before sunrise. Then later in that chapter, it tells about the arrest of Jesus.

Peter did what he always did; he followed the Lord. The story goes on to describe the scene: there was a fire kindled and Peter sat there with the people. It was during this time that some started saying they recognized Peter as one of the disciples. But he denied it three times just as Jesus predicted. And, then the rooster crowed. At that, Peter went outside and wept bitterly. It was his greatest failure.

So, here we are again sitting around a fire... the warmth of the flame; the smell of the smoke and the sun just beginning to rise. This was very purposeful on the Lord's part to get Peter



remembering. And then, Jesus asks a pointed question: “Do you really love me more than the others do?” You see, Peter had also previously declared that even if everyone else deserted Jesus, he never would. So, Jesus is revisiting Peter’s pride and failure.

In the original language we see more clearly the exchange going on. Jesus asked, “do you love me - with total commitment and devotion?” Peter answered, “you know I love you - as a close friend.” Then, we see the same question and answer again.

**16 Again 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."**

Then, finally, Jesus changed the question...

**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."**

This last time Jesus asked him, “Do you love me – as a close friend?” This stung, no doubt, as Peter was not only confronted with the true depth of his love for the Lord, but also with this third question, he was reminded about that third denial just a few weeks ago. At this, Peter confesses basically, “You know me even better than I know myself.”

Jesus didn’t ask Peter, “Are you sorry?” nor “Will you promise never to do that again?” Jesus simply challenged Peter to **love**. This **is the main thing the Lord wants from us**.

Matthew 22:36-39

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

This exchange between Jesus and Peter was actually a moment of redemption. In a similar setting, with the same number of interactions, Jesus brings Peter to the point of his failures and redeems him.

*Mercy Came Running by Phillips, Craig, and Dean*

*Sometimes I still feel so far; So far from where I really should be  
He gently calls to my heart; Just to remind me  
Mercy came running; Like a prisoner set free  
Past all my failures to the point of my need  
When the sin that I carried; Was all I could see  
And when I could not reach mercy; Mercy came running to me*

That’s what happened here. Jesus had appeared to the disciples twice before this and we hear nothing from Peter. Now, Jesus seeks him out personally. He restored Peter in the presence of the other disciples by causing him to face his point of failure; then Jesus challenged Peter to set his



eyes on the work ahead. Jesus had already called Peter to leadership and now he's reaffirming that call.

Going back to fishing suggests that Peter felt unworthy of his calling. But now Jesus restores him completely. Each time he asked Peter about his love, Jesus followed up with a call to shepherd his people... "Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep." He is essentially saying, "Not only do I still want you to be my disciple. I want you to disciple others."

The Lord sets a very high standard with forgiveness. Not only does he forgive Peter's betrayal, but he welcomes him back into leadership. We tend to struggle with mercy, and even when we can muster up some forgiveness, we tend to keep our trespassers at a distance. Not so with the Lord. ☞ He is ready to forgive and forget. **Your greatest failure is not beyond the Lord's redemption.**

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 43:25

I am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Psalms 103:12

as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

This is what the Lord offers to all of us – a complete and total redemption. He forgives and forgets; he restores and rebuilds.

☞ If you are willing to return to him, **the Lord is for you, not against you.**

Perhaps you feel like you've let the Lord down. Maybe you even walked away. The Lord is willing to receive you back. He doesn't hold your past against you. In fact, he celebrates your return. He just wants you to love and follow him.

☞ That's what he said to Peter in verse 19 – **"Keep following me!"** Once you've returned to the Lord, then give yourself to obey him fully in every aspect of your life. He knows best in every situation. The Lord redeemed Peter; he can redeem and restore you, too.