**Livin’ the Life**

**Jesus Provides**

John 21:15-25

October 6 , 2019

David Taylor

We are finishing up our series today in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises by looking at Jesus’ last resurrection appearance in John 21:15-25 Jesus looking ahead to the needs of church Jesus commissions Peter and John to provide leadership and witness for the church in today’s message, Jesus Provides. The passage can be divided into three sections, 15-17 Jesus Restores and Commissions Peter; then in 18-23 Jesus Calls Peter to Follow him in life of discipleship; and 24-25 John is described as a faithful witness. Remember last week, Peter had gone back to fishing and Jesus assured his disciples of his power and his presence after he is gone. Today Jesus continues to provide for his disciples, specifically Peter and the church.

**Jesus Restores and Commissions Peter (15-17)**

After breakfast, Jesus turns to address Peter. Jesus wants to restore and commission him in front of the other disciples so that Peter’s leadership will not be in question. Jesus asks him the same question three times, Simon, do you love me? He calls Peter by his birth name, Simon, rather than the name Jesus gave him, Peter (1:42). What is Jesus doing? He wants Peter to understand that the old person he was cannot follow Jesus. His boasting and self-confidence and personal strength will not sustain him as a disciple. He knows that, when the pressure was too great, he caved. Peter cannot follow Jesus in his own strength. Following Jesus requires us to repent, turn away from trying to save ourselves and come to faith in Jesus to save us from our sin and then trust his power to transform us. That is why Jesus gave them the metaphor of the grape vine, it is a picture of following Jesus. The vine and branch union illustrates our union with Jesus, positionally and practically. Positionally, we are in Jesus; practically, we are to abide in Jesus relationally, by abiding in his word and his love. Moralism is not following Jesus, being religious is not following Jesus, and following religious tradition and practices is not following Jesus. It is not what you do that makes you a christian or a follower of Jesus. What makes you a Christian is resting in what he did for you.

Three times Jesus asks Peter, do you love me (15, 16, 17)? Some want to draw a distinction between the two Greek words used for love in verses fifteen and seventeen but I do not think that is the way to go for a few reasons, I will give you two. First, John often uses different words synonymously for stylistic reasons (for instance, he uses two different words for the Fathers love for Jesus in 3:35 and 5:20 and also for Jesus’ love for Lazarus in 11:5 and 11:36; and then he uses two different words for know in 21:17). Second, Jesus is mirroring the three denials of Peter with three questions to probe Peter’s heart. Peter denied Jesus by charcoal fire (18:25-26) and now Jesus restores him by a charcoal fire. Each time Jesus asks, do you love me, Peter acknowledges, you know that I love you. After the third time, Peter is hurt that Jesus doubts his answer. Exasperated, Peter finally says, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (17).

Jesus knows everything so of course, he knows that Peter loves him. Why is Jesus doing this? Jesus loves Peter and the most loving thing for Jesus to do is address Peter’s sin so he can restore him. Though Peter denied him, Jesus has not abandoned him and does not love him any less. If Peter has any doubts about being a disciple or an apostle, Jesus wants to assure him he has not lost his place. With each answer Peter gives, Jesus tell him, feed or tend my sheep. Not only does Jesus restore Peter, affirming his leadership in front of the disciples, he also commissions Peter to serve Jesus’ church by shepherding it. Jesus is providing for his church. He is leaving the church in the hands of his disciples whom he made apostles, the first leaders of the church.

A love for Jesus is demonstrated by a love for and a desire to serve his church. It is popular to love Jesus but not the church. But here is the deal.  Jesus loves his church, Jesus died for his church, and Jesus now lives for his church. The church is his bride (Eph 5:25). When Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus, he says, Paul why are you persecuting me, speaking of the church (Acts 9:4). You can't say you love Jesus in one breath and in another say you do not love his church. So when Peter affirms his love for Jesus, Jesus restores him and commissions him to shepherd his sheep. Jesus is providing for his church.

**Jesus Calls Peter to a Life of Discipleship (18-23)**

Then Jesus tells Peter that he will die a martyr in his old age. When you were young you used to dress yourself and walk where you wanted but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go (18-19). Jesus is describing Peter having a long life and ministry until he is old he will be killed for following Jesus. Stretch out your hands is a euphemism for crucifixion. Tradition has it that Peter died by being crucified upside down. It is in this kind of death that he will glorify God. Suffering and even death for following Jesus, glorifies God because it exalts the value and worth of Jesus above the comforts and safety of this life. Then Jesus challenges him, follow me, that is, obey my calling in life to shepherd my sheep, the church, and obey my calling in death, your martyrdom (13:36-38). But this is not a pessimistic prediction. It is filled with hope because in following Jesus, death is the path to resurrection. When we come to faith, we are turning from our old life and putting our faith in Jesus for salvation. This comes with a dying of our old way of life and a resurrecting to a new way of life, a life of obedience to him. But resurrection life this side of death is only a foretaste of resurrection life in eternity in which we enjoy the object of our faith, Jesus, for eternity. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die (11:25-26). For all of us, following Jesus requires us to take up our cross daily and follow him.

They must be walking down the beach at this point because Peter turns around and sees John following them. When Peter saw him, he asks the Lord about him (21). How is he going to die?  Jesus says, in effect, that is none of your business (22)! Then Jesus repeats his challenge, you follow me.  John has his own path of discipleship that is different than yours. Do not compare yourself to him. Do you struggle with comparing your life with others? God created each of us differently with different paths. Jesus is saying in effect, follow your own path and don’t worry about someone else’s path. Then John clarifies a misunderstanding that was going around at the time he wrote this gospel, that Jesus would return prior to John's death and that is not what Jesus said (23). So, Jesus is providing for his church by commissioning Peter and challenging him to follow him in a life of discipleship.

**John is the Faithful Witness (24-25)**

Then the gospel closes by describing John’s own path of discipleship.  John is the faithful witness to Jesus’ life and ministry and we, the apostolic band, know his testimony is true (see 1:14; 1 john 1:3). In fact, if John wrote down everything he saw Jesus do, there would be too much to write (24-25). Peter was uniquely gifted to lead and shepherd God's people while John was uniquely gifted to witness and record Jesus' life and ministry. He had a special intimacy with Jesus as one of his earliest disciples (1:35-40) and one whom Jesus loved (13:23-26). Jesus Provides. Jesus provides for his church through Peter as a shepherd and John as a faithful witness in writing his gospel.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
2. What are the three aspects of following Jesus David highlighted?
3. Why is death sweeter than life for the Christian?
4. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you?
5. How would you summarize the main point of the teaching in one sentence?
6. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
7. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
8. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
9. How does this teaching affect Jesus’ command to make disciples?