

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “The Reason You Were Forgiven”

Scripture: John 21:1-17

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of John, we find the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples while they were about to go fishing in the Sea of Galilee.
- Simon Peter told the other disciples that he was going to go fishing and they all joined him. They went out at night, as this was the customary time for fishermen to fish. However, they did not catch anything that evening and anchored the boat close to shore.
- In verse 4, Jesus appears to them on the shore while they were still in the boat. He said to them: “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” At this point, they did not recognize that it was Jesus talking to them. Jesus then instructed them to cast their fishing net on the right side of the boat. They did and caught so many fish that “...they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.”
- All of the sudden, in verse 7, one of the disciples said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Peter heard this, he jumped into the water and the other disciples followed him to shore in the boat. When they got to shore, Jesus was waiting there by a fire and cooking them fish and bread. Jesus asked for some of the fish that they caught, and Peter climbed into the boat and retrieved the net of 153 fish.
- Some biblical scholars believe that the significance of 153 fish revolves around the number of types of fish that those in antiquity believed existed. The Book of John Shepherd’s Notes explains: “This would indicate that the gospel would include all persons and that the net of the kingdom of God would be strong enough to hold all without breaking. Clearly the gospel is for all, and the kingdom of God holds everyone.” This now accounts for the third time in John that Jesus appears to the disciples after His resurrection.
- When they finished their breakfast together, Jesus turns to Peter three separate times and asks him each time if he loved Jesus. Each time Peter would say that he did, Jesus gave him a command: (1) “Feed my lambs”; (2) “Take care of my sheep”; and (3) “Feed my sheep”. Peter grew more and more hurt with Jesus asking him and finally says in verse 17 “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- What if we lived our lives through the labels that others have given to us?
- In today's Scripture, this story is known as the "reinstatement of Peter". Peter had denied knowing Jesus before the crucifixion and now Peter and Christ are reunited on the shores of Galilee.
- Whereas Peter denied Jesus three times, Christ now asks Peter three times "do you love Me?" Each time, Peter says "yes!" Jesus' questions can be seen as a way of releasing the burden and guilt of Peter's former denial.
 - Jesus had forgiven Peter, but Peter now has to release the guilt he feels.
- This passage is a living parable about the nature of God's grace, mercy, and the purpose behind it.
- This story captures the essence of the reason that we are forgiven:
 - The entire Passion drama (Jesus' death, resurrection) was about restoring the bonds between man and God broken by sin. We can become plagued by our sinful nature and the resulting guilt that haunts us. Jesus has already forgiven Peter and is restoring Peter from his pain and guilt.
 - When Peter says, "yes Lord, I love you", he was forgiven and through this forgiveness was given a new purpose of a lifetime of serving others that never would have happened if not for this moment for Peter.
- After Peter's sin of denial was forgiven, he was reinstated by Jesus' grace and mercy. God chooses Peter as the "keynote speaker" on the first Pentecost or first Birthday of the Church. How far he has come from what he did in the courtyard!
 - The same is for each of us...*we are forgiven so that we might become a living Gospel to everyone that we encounter!!!*
- Today's "cancel culture" is perhaps the biggest stumbling block to removing old name tags. It is completely antithetical to the atonement offered to us by Jesus Christ. We all have said and done things that we regret. Calling out others for their past sins enables the accuser to turn their gaze from the mirror of self-reflection.
 - 1 John 1:9-10. When we bring our sins to God, when we fall at His feet of His grace and mercy, we are forgiven. Our past in God's eyes are canceled!
- We cannot change the pains of our past, but through God's grace, can be healed from its effects. We can continue to grow in a new light, in a new identity and then share this light with others. This is the reason that we are forgiven!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Read John 18:15-18. What parallels do you see between this verse and John 21:1-17 (i.e. Peter denying Jesus three times, the fire in both stories, etc.)
- Reflect on a time when God provided for your needs. What happened? What was your reaction?
- Why do you think Jesus asked Simon Peter if he loved Him? What do you think Jesus was trying to impress upon him?
- Like the disciples, we sometimes cannot see God present in our lives. Why do you think this is? How can we change this?
- Reflect on how Peter might have felt after denying Jesus three times in the courtyard (about 43:45 minutes into the 8:30 am service). If you were to write something that you regret or feel guilty about on a name tag, what would you write?
- How is today's "cancel culture" antithetical to the atonement that Jesus offers to us?
- Why are we forgiven? What is our mission in life as a forgiven people?

