

THURSDAY 26 May 2022 "Kingdom Builder?"

(John 21:16-25; Acts 1:1-6)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Yesterday I left you sitting on the shoreline of Lake Galilee with the resurrected Jesus and seven of His disciples. *They were having a Jesus cooked breakfast after a long night of 'empty net' fishing. It was a remarkable, unforgettable experience.* Jesus had just asked Peter a huge question: **"Peter, do you 'love' Me more than these?"** (John 21:15). Peter, of course, reflected deeply on his denials of Jesus, his flight into the shadows as Jesus stood trial, and was beaten and later crucified. Finally, Peter responded, **"Lord, you know that I 'love' you."**

I explained to you yesterday that Peter used a very different word for **"love"** than what Jesus had used. But still, Jesus invited Peter to a new mission in his life. He had said, **"Feed My lambs."** *A powerful statement of entrusting Peter with the care of the most tender, most vulnerable of Jesus' followers.* Who would they be? Perhaps those suffering great persecution, or those who are the first to follow Jesus in their family and are expelled or abandoned by their family. Or maybe those who are widows or orphans and trust Jesus but have no family to love them and help them grow spiritually? *Who do you know who might be considered 'tender lambs' in their spiritual journey? Who is helping them grow?*

Let's rejoin Jesus and His seven disciples around the fire, for Jesus isn't finished yet. In fact, twice more Jesus asked Peter essentially the same question... **"Simon son of John, do you 'love' Me?"** (John 21:17) The first time Jesus again used the 'agape' word for love, and Peter again responded with "phileo" love, and finally the third time Jesus asked it using that familiar "phileo" love word. John tells us **"Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'do you 'love' (phileo) Me'. He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (phileo) you.'" (John 21:17)** But then Jesus said something more, and what He said really explained WHY He had asked Peter this deep, soul-searching question three times, using specific **'love'** words!

"Jesus said, 'Very 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.'" (John 21:18) John then writes his commentary explaining Jesus' words: **"Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God."** (John 21:19) Historians tell us Peter was imprisoned by Caesar in the most famous of all horrific Roman dungeon prisons, called the Mamertine Prison, now it's a famous pilgrim destination in Rome. Peter was then executed by crucifixion upside down, according to history. *Peter was resolute, determined to never again deny his Lord Jesus.*

Jesus then evidently rose to His feet, as breakfast was finished, and said to Peter **"Follow Me."** It was both a recommissioning for the rest of his life and an immediate request for evidently, they began to stroll down the beach together. Turning to look back at the breakfast, at one point, Peter was surprised to see John coming along the shoreline behind them. So, Peter asked Jesus a simple question, the type of question you and I have probably asked when considering someone else's life... Peter asked, **"Lord, what about him?"** (John 21:21) *There's always danger in comparison isn't there my friends?* Financial comparison, vocational comparison, family comparison, spiritual comparison... so easily we are drawn into the danger of comparing ourselves with someone else. With His response Jesus made it very clear... *each of us is invited into a personal, private relationship with Jesus and our focus should remain always on Jesus and His work in our lives, never on comparing ourselves with someone else.* **Each of us is designed uniquely by God and for a unique role in God's larger purpose in our world.** Do you believe that, and are you living in God's purpose for you, my friends?

John closes his story of Jesus with a very powerful statement: **"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that not even the whole world would have room enough for the books that would be written."** (John 21:25) I'm so glad John wrote that! While it may be a bit of an exaggeration from our perspective, especially in our day with computer chips able to hold enormous amounts of information, in John's day, he was right! *Don't limit the story of Jesus to only what we have in the four Biblical accounts!* In fact, Dr. Luke, the Gentile physician, wrote both his story of Jesus' life called "Luke", and also the book of "Acts" which tells the story of the next years after Jesus' ascension back to heaven. Luke tells us of two more significant moments for the disciples and the resurrected Jesus.

Come on friends, let's join Jesus for one last meal with His friends. It appears it was in Jerusalem. We don't know exactly what day of the week, or what time of the day, nor who exactly was at the table with Jesus. But Luke records it this way: **"While Jesus was eating with them, He gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** (Acts 1:4,5)

They understood. They knew John the Baptizer had called people to prepare themselves for the coming Messiah, and then he identified Jesus as that Messiah. Their baptism in the Jordan river was a baptism repenting of their sin, wanting to be clean and ready for the arrival of their long-awaited Messiah. (Acts 19:4) But in the upper room, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus had spoken a great deal about the Holy Spirit of God. *Jesus explained that when He arose, after His crucifixion, and He returned to heaven in all His glory, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to live IN the followers of Jesus, empowering and guiding them to accomplish the mission of taking the story of Jesus to the world!*

Now during this meal, Jesus is explaining this never before experienced empowering... an anointing of the Holy Spirit, would come upon them in Jerusalem in a few days, and they would be changed by that power, therefore they should wait and be prepared. *Is waiting, with anticipation of something significant, easy for you to do?* How long would they wait? What should they do while they were waiting? What would it be like when it happened... were only a few of many questions without answers at that moment?

Perhaps it was that same day, as they continued to talk together, that the disciples asked Jesus a very important question: **"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"** (Acts 1:6) We don't know who asked the question, perhaps Simon the Zealot, since the overthrow of Roman domination and a return to the glory days of old Israel was a hope always on the mind of the Zealots. What it shows me is that at least some, if not all of the disciples, STILL did not understand Jesus' life mission, God's Redemption plan for humanity. *Jesus' life mission was NOT about kingdom building here on earth, at least not the kingdom of Israel. Jesus had come to make the Kingdom of God available to all humanity, one person at a time, and this kingdom is a never ending, it's an all-supreme kingdom!* BUT... the KING of this Kingdom, Jesus, needed to return to heaven to REIGN over His kingdom from there, no longer walking this earth, and that's what we'll look at tomorrow!

Today, let's pause right here, sitting at this table with Jesus and these men and consider these questions: Is Jesus your King? Are you and I living our lives in what I call **"followership"**? It means following Jesus with every aspect of our lives, in an ever-growing love relationship with HIM. Is that true of you? Are you, every day, growing in your understanding of Jesus and His mission, His kingdom? Are you and I every day, learning HOW to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives in the very practical stuff of life? And finally, what difference is 'followership' making in your life and what difference are you and I making in our world as we follow Jesus? Those are important questions, aren't they, my friends?

Here's a song to help us consider these questions and this way of living...

Today's Scripture is John 21:16-25; Acts 1:1-6.