
JESUS RESTORES US WITH HIS GRACE
Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter 2022
John 21:1-19

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel Reading read before, John 21:1-19: **After this, Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how He showed Himself: ²Simon Peter, Thomas, who was called “The Twin,” Nathanael, who was from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples of Jesus were together. ³Simon Peter said to the others, “I am going fishing.”**

They told him, “We too are coming with you.”

They went out and got into the boat but that night they caught nothing. ⁴When morning had already come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

⁵ Then Jesus asked them, “Children, you do not have any fish, do you?”

They answered Him, “No.”

⁶ He told them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat! You will find some!”

So, they cast the net and could not pull it in again, because there were so many fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved told Peter, “It is the Lord.” When Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he put on the outer garment that he had taken off, fastened it with his belt and jumped into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the small boat, towing the net full of fish. For they were not far from the shore, only about a hundred metres away. ⁹ Then, when they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals set there, with fish laid on it and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus told them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught!”

¹¹ Then Simon Peter got into the boat and dragged the net ashore, full of one hundred and fifty-three large fish; and, although there were so many, the net had not been torn. ¹² Jesus told them, “Come and have breakfast!” None of the disciples dared to ask Him, “Who are You?”

They knew that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and the fish as well. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after He had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵ So, when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus told him, “Feed My lambs!”

¹⁶ Jesus asked him again, a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

He answered Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus told him, “Be a shepherd to My sheep!”

¹⁷ Jesus asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

Peter was saddened because He had asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

He answered Him, “Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.”

Jesus told him, “Feed My sheep! ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to tie on your belt and walk where you wished. However, when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will tie on your belt and carry you where you do not wish.”

¹⁹ Jesus said this to signify by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After He had said this, He told him, “Follow Me!”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It has now been a couple of weeks since Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples. Last Sunday, we heard how Jesus came and appeared to them a second time, on that occasion specially to bring Thomas to repent of his unbelief and confess his faith. Now today, Jesus appears again to seven of His disciples - not in Jerusalem, as on the previous two occasions, but now in Galilee, the home base for many of the disciples.

Jesus appears to them unexpectedly, while they're out fishing. He's standing on the shore, standing by a fire He has made. They don't know that it's Jesus there on the shore, but He calls to them.

Many of the things in today's Gospel are the same as they were when Jesus had first called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and told them that they would catch men instead of fish.¹ After Peter had told Jesus they had toiled all night and caught nothing, they listened to Jesus, who told them again to cast their nets, and this time, they caught so many that their nets began to break.

Jesus and Peter had a little over three years of history between them since that last great catch of fish. During that time, Peter had learned a lot about himself. Some of it was pretty good, and some of it was not so good. Like how Peter had learned that he had a bad habit of talking before thinking. Take the following example: Peter had given one of the best confessions of the nature of Jesus Christ when he had said, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus answered him, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 16:16-17). But before the day was out when Peter had made that confession, he would mess up so much that Jesus would say to him, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man*" (Matthew 16:23).

How did it come about for Jesus to speak these harsh words to Peter? Because "*Jesus began to show His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem, suffer greatly at the hands of the elders, Chief Priests and scribes, be killed and be raised on the third day.*"²² However, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, "*May God in His mercy spare You this, Lord! This will certainly not happen to You*" (Matthew 16:21-22).

Then, of course, there is Peter's great promise of loyalty. When Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples on the night of His betrayal, He had warned that they would abandon Him. Peter answered Him, "*If they are all going to take offence at You, I shall never take offence.*"³⁴ Jesus told him, "*Truly, I tell you that tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three*

¹ Luke 5:10

times.”³⁵ Peter told Him, “Even if I must die with You, I shall certainly not deny You” (Matthew 26:33-35).

It didn’t take long for Peter to fail. “Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came to him, saying, “You too were with Jesus of Galilee.”⁷⁰ However, he denied it in front of them all. He said, “I do not know what you are talking about.”⁷¹ While he was going out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him. She told those who were there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: “I do not know the Man.”⁷³ After a little while, those who were standing there approached Peter and said, “Surely you are also one of them. For your accent gives you away.”⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the Man.” Immediately a rooster crowed,⁷⁵ and Peter remembered the statement that Jesus had made, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” He went outside and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:69-75).

Peter’s track record is none too good. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, Peter had confessed his sin to Jesus, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”² Now, after a little more than three years, Peter had no reason to change his assessment of himself.

Despite this track record, Jesus still wanted Peter to become an Apostle. Listen to this account between Jesus and Peter: “**When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”**

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus told him, “Feed My lambs!”

¹⁶ **Jesus asked him again, a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”**

He answered Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus told him, “Be a shepherd to My sheep!”

¹⁷ **Jesus asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”**

Peter was saddened because He had asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

He answered Him, “Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.”

² Luke 5:8

Jesus told him, “Feed My sheep!”

Three times, Jesus had asked Peter, “**Do you love me?**” Three times, Jesus told Peter to care for His sheep. Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now he heard Jesus restore him three times. Jesus not only wanted Peter in His family, but He also wanted Peter to serve the rest of His flock.

Jesus knew that Peter was carrying the painful guilt of his denial around inside of him. He knew that Peter had to confess his guilt and get rid of it. Jesus asked one question for each time that Peter denied Him. Jesus brought Peter to the grief that he felt that night when Peter went out outside and wept bitterly.

Jesus didn’t leave Peter in that guilty grief. He comforted Peter by restoring him. As He worked with Peter, He called Peter to be the under-shepherd of His flock. This is a great restoration to grace.

Jesus can give this grace because of His great work - His perfect life that fulfilled all the Law - His innocent suffering and death on the cross that made the payment we owed for our sins - His resurrection that opens the way to heaven for all believers. All these things make up Christ’s great work that freely offered grace to Peter. This grace is so great that Peter, *who denied he even knew Jesus*, eventually became a leader of the church.

This grace is not for Peter only. In our First Reading, we encountered Saul on the road to Damascus so that he could arrest the Christians that he had found there. Jesus came to him in a great light and a great voice saying, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*” And, “*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*” Saul also had to go through grief over his sins. Saul had to come to grips with the fact that when he persecuted the church, he was persecuting Jesus, the Son of God. The grace that Jesus had earned with His life, suffering, death, and resurrection was for Saul as well. This time Jesus administered His grace to Saul through His disciple Ananias. Ananias came to Saul and laid his hands on him and said, “*Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, even Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, that you may get your sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*”¹⁸ *Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised.*¹⁹ *Then he had something to eat and regained his strength.*” Jesus Christ’s grace is so great that

Saul, who persecuted the church, eventually became Paul the evangelist to the gentiles and author of almost half of the books of the New Testament.

There is incredible comfort in this, for God does not change. The grace that Jesus has earned for us on the cross is not just for people long ago. It is for people of all times and places. The same Holy Spirit who had brought Peter to bitter tears also brings us to grief over our sins. In this way, He makes us aware of our need for a saviour. Then the Holy Spirit works to show that saviour to us. The grace that Jesus has earned with His life, suffering, death, and resurrection comes to us just as it came to Peter and Saul. Just as the Holy Spirit worked through Ananias to bring grace and forgiveness to Saul, so also the Holy Spirit works through the pastor to bring grace and forgiveness to you.

The grace of Jesus Christ *is very great.* It will not leave you unchanged. All people who believe in Jesus Christ have their sins forgiven, and their relationship with God restored. All believers become heirs of eternal life in heaven. The grace that Jesus Christ has earned offers us forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Every one of us has fallen just like the apostles. There have been times that we, like Peter, have been afraid to confess our faith. We have wanted to fit in and so denied that we knew Jesus. We have all made promises to God that we haven't kept. Like the disciples, we often focus on ourselves instead of God. We know that our sin has earned the eternal wrath of God.

Nevertheless, Jesus works in us through the Holy Spirit to *re-instate us* - to bring us back into the family. In His love, He has suffered and died for you and for me. He has taken our sin onto Himself and given us His righteousness instead. His resurrection tells us that His loving sacrifice *was successful.* He has opened heaven for all people. All those who have the Holy Spirit's gift of faith will live in the presence of God forever.

Jesus reinstated Peter, a fisherman who couldn't seem to get his foot out of his mouth. Jesus went out of His way to meet a man who arrested Christians and brought them back to be punished for their faith in the true God. In the same way, Jesus is here now with us today to give His gifts to us. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have sent Your Son into the world, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life to redeem all people. After He had offered His life as the one sacrifice for all sins for ever, You raised Him from the dead by Your glorious power. Give us a living faith in Him, so that we may possess the sure hope of eternal life through Him. We thank You for all Your kindness in our lives. Do not let us forget that every good gift comes from You.

We thank You for taking away the darkness of our minds and spirits, and for revealing to us Your Word of truth in Jesus Christ. Pour out Your Spirit on us, that He may keep us spiritually alive through Your Word in our hearts. Give us deeper understanding of Your truth, and of Your great love for us.

We thank You for the fellowship of believers that we have in Your church. Protect your church from enemies without, and keep us all in the unity that the Spirit gives. Prevent disunity, party spirit, and discord from giving Satan a foothold among us. Keep us all in Christ Jesus by faith and joyful obedience, and in loyalty to Your infallible Word. Shower Your blessings upon Your Church everywhere, and give it success in all Your work.

Give us opportunities to tell the Gospel to others who need to hear it, and give us the wisdom and the courage to use them. Enable us to draw people into Your Word, through which Your Spirit works faith, and fill us with the message of Jesus' resurrection and the ability to tell it forth.

We thank You for giving us Christian homes. Surround every family with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, that love, peace, forgiveness, comfort, joy, and moral purity may fill our lives.

We thank You, Lord, for the blessings we enjoy in our rich land. Defend it, both within and without, from all who would harm it by sin, undermine it by strife and rebellion, or destroy it by war.

We thank You, O Father, for the gifts of our daily bread, for health and healing, education and social joys, friends and companions, and all the beauties and wonders of Your creation. Give us weather that is appropriate for our needs. Alongside all the blessings that you give us daily and richly, give us, as well,

joyful and thankful hearts, and the willingness to use what You give us to serve You.

We commend to Your gracious care those among us who are ill, lonely, or depressed. Comfort them with the good news of their redemption and the hope of life eternal through Jesus' sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

Surround us with Your love, and finally receive us into perfect, unbroken fellowship with You and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Hear the prayers we bring You in His precious name. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:1-22

¹ Saul was still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the High Priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners. ³ On his journey, as he was coming near Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting Me?"

⁵ Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" He said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ However, get up, go into the city! You will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men who were travelling with Saul were standing speechless.

They heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground. However, when he opened his eyes, he could not see anything. So, they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he could not see and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰ There was a certain disciple at Damascus by the name of Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision: "Ananias!"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, here I am."

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Get up, go to the street called 'Straight,' and in the home of Judas ask for a man from Tarsus by the name of Saul! For, you must know, he is praying.

¹² He has also seen in a vision that a man by the name of Ananias has come in and laid his hands on him, that he may get his sight back."

¹³ Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much wrong this man has done to Your holy people in Jerusalem,¹⁴ and here he has authority from the Chief Priests to arrest all who call on Your name.”

¹⁵ However, the Lord told Ananias, “Go! For this man is My chosen instrument, to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel. ¹⁶ For I shall show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name.”

¹⁷ Ananias went and arrived at the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, even Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, that you may get your sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁸ Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised. ¹⁹ Then he had something to eat and regained his strength.

Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All who heard him were amazed and asked, “Is he not the man who made havoc among those in Jerusalem

who were calling on this name and has he not come here for this purpose, to take them as prisoners to the High Priests?”

²² However, Saul became stronger and stronger and was causing consternation in the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Revelation 5:1-14

¹ In the right hand of Him who was sitting on the throne I saw a scroll with writing on the inside and on the back, which had been sealed with seven seals. ² Then I saw a mighty angel, proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break the seals on it?”

³ No one in heaven, on the earth or under the earth could open the scroll or look at it. ⁴ I was weeping bitterly because no one had been found who was worthy to open the scroll or look at it. ⁵ Then one of the elders told me: “Stop weeping! Look! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has won the victory, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶ Then I saw, in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the middle of the elders, a Lamb standing, looking as though it had been slain. He had

seven horns and seven eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God, who have been sent into all the earth. ⁷ Then He went and took the scroll out of the right hand of the One who was sitting on the throne.

⁸ When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb. Each held a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's holy people. ⁹ They sang a new song, with the words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because You have been slain, and by Your blood You have purchased people to be God's own out of every tribe, language, people and nation.

¹⁰ You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders. Their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. ¹² They were saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who has been slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature that is in heaven, on earth, under the earth and on the sea and all that are in them, saying: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing, honour, glory and power for ever and ever!"

¹⁴ The four living creatures were saying, "Amen!" and the elders fell and worshipped.

John 21:1-19

¹ After this, Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how He showed Himself: ² Simon Peter, Thomas, who was called "The Twin," Nathanael, who was from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples of Jesus were together. ³ Simon Peter said to the others, "I am going fishing."

They told him, "We too are coming with you."

They went out and got into the boat but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ When morning had already come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

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None of the disciples dared to ask Him, “Who are You?”

They knew that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and the fish as

well. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after He had been raised from the dead.

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