



“Restored by the Risen Lord”

John 21:1-19

April 26, 2020

Will you please join me in John Chapter 21? This morning we will conclude our Alive Again series with an amazing picture of restoration. This was an encounter between the Risen Lord Jesus Christ and a number of His disciples, but it zeros in on a man that many of us have come to know and love through our study of Scripture. That man being Simon Peter.

Peter was a man who I would understand to be in the days following the resurrection of the Lord, a man still wracked with guilt because of his trifold denial of Christ the night before Christ was crucified. Peter was a man who had been questioning himself and his suitability for service in leadership of the Kingdom of God.

As we prepare our hearts to dig into the Word this morning, I wonder how many of the people watching or listening to this sermon know what it is to blow it. I wonder how many of you know what it is to have your talk exceed your walk often. I wonder if you know what it is like to have a very thin filter between your mind and your mouth, so that you say big things sometimes, but you don't always follow through on the grand intentions that you communicate. If so, I think that we have a story this morning that you will be encouraged by. And praise Jesus, He has mercy and power for frailties even such as these.

As we enter the scene this morning, let me begin off by saying this: John Chapter 21 has been recognized as one of the anticlimactic chapters of the Bible. It seems to many, me included, that John Chapter 20 would have been such a good conclusion to this Gospel account in a number of ways.

You will recall that we were studying this last week. If you were a part of that you will remember how Jesus met His disciples. They were behind closed doors, and Jesus appeared to them, declaring peace upon them. He breathed out His breath saying, *Receive the Spirit*. So even this living breath of God was being provided to them to renew them; to clarify their thinking; to empower them. It is such an amazing picture.

In addition to that, it would seem that John Chapter 20 provides such a wonderful summit for the story as we see the so-called doubting disciple, Thomas, declaring the Lordship and deity of Christ after a period of unbelief in the resurrection. Jesus appeared to him and Thomas said, *My Lord and my God*. What a wonderful statement that was.

With John Chapter 1, that statement would have made such a good ending to the Gospel book, because remember how John Chapter 1 opens about Jesus, describing the Christ:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God

¹⁴And the Word became flesh

So we have Jesus presented as God in human form. Then at the very end with Thomas, Jesus was being declared as such. Isn't there a symmetry with John Chapter 1 and John Chapter 20? Then John Chapter 20 concludes with these statements that would have seemed a very natural way to end the book, where it says in John Chapter 20 and Verses 30 and 31:

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in the book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Praise God for those truths. That is a wonderful purpose statement of the Gospel of John and it seems like it could have been a great conclusion to the Gospel of John. There is the statement of purpose. End of sentence. End of paragraph. End of book. Seal the scroll. Spread it abroad. Tell the Good News.

No. That is not the end of the story. There is more for us in the Gospel of John. John Chapter 21 comes next. I remember being at the Shepherd's Conference several years ago. John MacArthur was preaching this passage to thousands of pastors, encouraging them in their work. He said, *After John Chapter 20 and all that we took in, John Chapter 21 comes to us with a thud.*

Here we find another chapter and we have the disciples. They had gone to Galilee to wait for the Lord as instructed, but we don't find the disciples worshiping and praying. They might have been but that is not what we see. Instead, it seems that we find them drifting back into a former pattern of life, with Simon Peter being the unintentional leader of it.

Let's see how this appearance of Christ opens up for us in John Chapter 21 and Verses 1 through 3:

¹After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

So the picture is presented to us. Peter, at the head, and the disciples had gone fishing again. The big question is: what is the nature of this fishing expedition? Different solid Bible teachers and commentators have their different perspectives.

Some see it just as a simple necessity. They were waiting for Jesus and they got hungry, so they went fishing because they needed something to eat. Possibly, but I think about it and think that there was a fish market where they could have went shopping just like anybody else. Instead they went through the process of regaining all their boats and fishing supplies. But it could have been the case.

Some see it just as a simple necessity. Others see it as a lack of patience. They were waiting for the Lord. The Lord tarried. A week went by. Possibly more than a week went by. You know how hard it is sometimes to even wait a day for an email. The time stretched on and the disciples grew impatience and thought that might be it, so they went out to resume a life of fishing together.

Some people see this as an indication of something else. This being an indication of Simon Peter's discouragement of heart. Yes, he had seen the Risen Lord and, yes, he knew that it was true. Perhaps the magnitude and the majesty and the power and the holiness of the Kingdom started to manifest itself, evidenced by the resurrection of King Jesus Christ from the dead.

Peter took all that in and the more time that he had to think, the more he came to the conclusion that he was unfit to be a part of the leadership of this movement. Peter was thinking to himself, *I have blown it time and time and time again*. Perhaps the memory that loomed largest in his mind took him back several weeks to the courtyard of Caiaphas the High Priest.

After making such bold proclamations to Jesus in the hearing of the other disciples, Peter said, *Never ever under any circumstances will I ever disown You. Whatever the other guys do, I'm with you through thick and thin until the very end*. Those were his statements, but then over that fire in the court yard of the high priest, Peter denied knowing Christ—not once, not twice, but three times, and the third time with curses.

So now we have Peter thinking to himself, *Who am I kidding? I'm out of place in spiritual leadership, but there is one thing that I know how to do well. I know about fishing. I'm going back. I'm getting my gear, and going out to catch some fish*. Then Peter went and like ducklings, the other disciples followed his lead, Peter being a very natural leader and an influential man.

Given what comes during the apex of John Chapter 21, I would agree with the understanding of this passage of Scripture that Peter was a discouraged man. Peter is a brother in the Lord who was questioning himself. Now Jesus is going to come on to the scene. He is going to let Peter know that He had work for him to do and intended for him to do it.

Some will read this and ask how could have John Chapter 20 included any real provision of the Holy Spirit when a scene like this follows after it in John Chapter 21. I think what we have here in the sequence of John 20 into John 21 is something glorious.

I think that it presents some reality because how many born again Christians have there been in the age of the resurrection, in the era of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who have faced serious bouts with discouragement, not only for hours or days, but sometimes for ongoing stretches of time—Spirit filled men and women of God with their hearts getting heavy?

I have been listening to the life of Martin Luther, the great reformer, who experienced great spells of feeling defeated and discouraged. You read that in the life of D.H. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers there in London.

More and more I am listening to and reading about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a man carried by the Holy Spirit to challenge Nazi Germany. He experienced these moments of discouragement and disillusionment. Martin Lloyd Jones even has a whole volume that is written on the topic of spiritual depression that is experienced by men and women of God.

So even in the era of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in which we live, there are going to be times when we come face to face with our frailties. I have experienced those stretches. I'm pretty confident that a number of you have too.

Praise God that He has grace and mercy not only for our sins, but also for our frailties and our infirmities. Some of you don't like to think of yourself as frail. Some of you men and women alike, you are pursuing strength. But the fact of the matter is, even with a man like Simon Peter, a rugged and strong man in so many ways, we see his frailties.

Not just in the Gospel but we see it throughout the New Testaments stories we see Peter going up and down, up and down, up and down. Even later on when he was a man indwelt by the Spirit, he needed to be severely corrected by the Apostle Paul for compromising in the presence of Gentiles and some of the Judaizes.

Praise God that Jesus has mercy for us in our frailties. Here in this passage of Scripture as we look at this awesome story that is set before us, I hope that we will be those praising Jesus. And I pray that we will see this glorious picture of restoration in the life of Simon Peter. I want for us to be praising God for the gift that He gives and the provision He has for us when we have those moments where we too languish spiritually.

Let's walk through this story together. Let's see some of the things the Risen Lord provides for us. In view of our frailties, we can praise and thank God and live according to the fact that we have:

1. The Guidance of Christ (20:4-6)

We can be thankful that by His Spirit, He is present with us and that He is moving us. I just see a picture of His guidance right here. Getting back into the story, it was early morning and the disciples had been fishing during those prime hours for fishing. They came up empty. They caught nothing.

I imagine that they were frustrated. I don't fish, but I surf. The ultimate failure or defeat in surfing is when the waves look pretty good from the beach. Then you get your wetsuit on and paddle out, and the conditions change so that all the set waves that were coming in so frequently just stop.

Your sitting out there waiting and waiting, telling yourself that you are not going to paddle in but will wait for a wave to take you to shore. But, alas, that wave never comes and you hang your head down and paddle to the shore, shoulders slumped while walking back to the car.

I don't know if the experience of not catching any fish is similar to the experience of not catching waves, but those disciples were probably pretty frustrated at their lack of catch. But then Jesus showed up. Verses 4 through 6:

⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

To me this seems like déjà vu all over again. Do you remember that a similar story occurred earlier? It is recorded in Luke Chapter 5 and elsewhere in the Gospels. Peter had been frustrated after a night of fishing and not catching anything. Jesus told him to go back out and cast his net on the other side. What happened? This massive, massive catch of fish came in. And here, Jesus was telling the disciples to cast on the other side, and look at what happened. There was a miraculous catch that took place.

We read this and we can be reminded that the catch of fish is one of the great New Testament metaphors for Gospel ministry. Jesus calls His people to be fishers of men, to go out and spread the Gospel, reach people with the Good News, and, by the work of the Spirit, as people come to faith in Christ, confessing their sin and looking to Jesus, they are brought into the Kingdom.

Here in this text we are reminded of the power and the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see His sovereignty over nature as He caused this catch to occur when it had not occurred earlier. This was a miracle that took place. We see His sovereignty over nature.

As we read this we are also reminded of His sovereignty in salvation; how He is working according to this master plan, gathering His chosen, gathering His elect into the nets, bringing them into the Kingdom and using people like us to reach people for Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we need His guidance. We need Him to direct us. We need to be going back to the Lord time and time again, saying, *Lord, open my eyes to see the people that You have providentially placed into my life. Open my eyes and move and guide me where You want me to go to represent you and to touch people with the love of Christ and to share with people the*

Gospel of Christ. Lead me and guide me to where You want me to be. We are those who need the guidance of Christ, and, praise God, He gives it to us. The Lord guides us.

It was Friday morning and I was up reading the Bible in Romans Chapter 15 and one of the Psalms. Reading Romans 15, I was so encouraged by Paul's heart, where he talked about how he was the apostle to the Gentiles and he wanted to go preach the Gospel where Christ had not yet been named. He wanted to spread the Gospel and knew there would be works of mercy to the church in Jerusalem.

Paul was so stirred to reach people for Christ. I prayed, *Lord, use me today. Lord, use me. Guide me. Give me this heart to reach someone for Christ.* It is kind of hard to do that under restrictions. I realized that in Orange County the beaches are now open and I hope you won't think less of me when I declare unto you that I went surfing. I was really glad to do so. I was at Sunset Beach and there are trails between the houses where you go from the parking area to the beach. Up ahead on one of those trails was a woman with dark hair and tweaked hip and her walking stick. She was slowly making her way down. There were a couple other guys with their boards, but we were not getting too close because of social distancing.

Finally, she got to the end of the trail. This woman was feisty. She turned around and said, *Can you believe all that is going on in this land? This is ridiculous. We are being confined. How is this the United States? This virus was built in a lab and they are using it to harm the population! It is part of a bigger plan. They put fluoride in our water and preservatives in our food.* This woman just kept going. Then she started saying, *I am an ex-new ager. I am ex-catholic, but I believe in God. I don't belong to any church because churches are corrupt. They are impure. They don't use the King James Bible.*

There were people around her that were waiting to get through. Once I heard her start talking about the impurity of churches and King James Bible only, I said a thank you to the Lord. Finally I said, *Ma'am, you have been talking to me for about ten minutes straight. Can I get a word in here? Would that be okay.* I said, *I hear what you say and I have some concerns too about all that is going on. We are trying to eat clean. We are concerned about preservatives too. But I have concerns about what you are saying about King James only and the churches across land being impure. I am a follower of Christ. I believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My faith is real. I am a sinner. Christ died for my sin. He is risen from the grave. By the work of His Spirit I have looked to Him in faith.*

I was giving my testimony, going through the Gospel with her. She responded, *But you don't use the King James Bible, so it is impure.* There were people walking by while I was getting impassioned. I knew she was not listening to me, but I am so thankful because other people heard me preaching kind of like I do in the pulpit.

Finally I realized this would not go anywhere and I wanted to go catch a few waves, so we agreed to disagree. Then when I was leaving, walking back to my car, a woman taking out her trash said to me, *Ah, you got the Jesus talk, didn't you?* I responded, *Listen, I love Jesus talk. Jesus is the Lord. I am concerned about that lady.* Once she heard me say that she said okay and turned around and walked away.

Earlier that morning I was praying for the Lord to guide and lead and direct me. We need to be praying about the Lord's guidance in our lives, asking Him to move us and to use us. I saw a quote that was posted by Corrie ten boom that said, *Is prayer your steering wheel, or your spare tire?*

Do you turn to prayer when you need a last resort, when you don't know what else to do? Or is prayer a daily request for God to guide and lead you? We need to pray and Jesus guides us by the teaching of Scripture, then the Holy Spirit prompts us. The presence of Jesus within His people is real and He will be urging you, bringing people to heart and mind. We need the guidance of Jesus Christ.

Returning to the story, Jesus told the disciples to put out the net on the other side of the boat. He was guiding them. That is just a reminder to us all that we need to be guided by Jesus. In view of our frailties, let's also praise God for:

2. The People of Christ (20:7-8)

For the people that are surrounding us in the Lord; how we are to do ministry together; how we are to give each other wisdom and insight. Look at a picture of that in Verses 7 and 8:

⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from land, but a hundred yards off.

Here in this text, not only do we see another example of Peter's impulsive nature by diving in to get closer to the Lord, but we also see a reminder of how we need partnerships in the work of the Lord together.

What a picture we see here of how different men are wired in different ways. The Bishop, J.C. Ryle, back in the late 1800s, a pastor in England, he said this about this passage and making an observation about John and Peter, *John was the first to see but Peter was the first to act. John's gentle, loving spirit was quickest to discern, but Peter's fiery impulsive nature was quickest to stir and move. Both were believers and both were true hearted disciples. Both loved the Lord in life and were faithful to Him unto death. But their natural temperaments were not the same.*

We have two men wired differently, gifted in ways that were comparable even as they served with those gifts in somewhat different ways. It is an interesting picture to see. As we carry on the work of the Lord together, we must remember the body of Christ. There are people that are designed by God differently who are intentionally given different gifts and areas of focus in Christian service. This is how we all come together cohesively with one heart to worship the Lord and serve Him.

This passage is a picture of partnership and their friendship that I think is so beautiful. We continue. In view of our frailties, we praise God for the guidance of Christ. We praise God for the people of Christ. And we praise God for:

3. The Kindness of Christ (20:9-14)

We see this as we continue in Verses 9 through 14:

⁹When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

What a picture of Christ! What a picture of Christ in His kindness. He knew He had some frustrated men after an empty night of fishing, and He had the coals going. He had the fish already getting cooked and the bread ready. He told the disciples to get some more fish. They were going to have a whole lot of fish.

They were going to have a meal together. It such a wonderful picture. As I look at what is here, it occurs to me that Jesus picked up right where He left off prior to His crucifixion there in the Upper Room.

Going back to John Chapter 13, we see the love and the kindness of Christ as He was serving His disciples. Some of them were continuing their disputation among one another as to which one was the greatest. What did Jesus do? He removed His outer garment and He got a basin and with those hands He began washing their feet.

Then as the evening proceeded, Jesus served them the Passover meal. In so doing, He made a transition where He initiated the Lord’s Supper, Communion. He told them the meaning of the bread and the cup, His body and His blood. With His hands He was serving them the bread and the cup.

We have this servant-hearted nature of King Jesus. Then it was not long after that that those hands and arms were stretched out when Jesus was nailed to the cross. He went to His atonement on the tree. He was nailed to the cross by His hands and His feet.

When He was on the cross Jesus took upon Himself our sin. He received upon Himself the judgment due our sin; the wrath due our sin. Sin is serious. It is dead serious. Jesus died and suffered wrath for our sin.

In that great moment of redemptive service unto His people, His bride, He provided the one and only way of salvation. Jesus is the Lamb of God who died for our sin. When a heart turns to Him in humble repentant faith, confessing sin and saying, *I am a sinner before the holiness of God. He is the Savior. I need Him.*

That is when a person enters into life. That is the only way to enter into eternal life. There is Heaven and there is Hell. Jesus experienced wrath on the cross, judgment and justice that your sin deserves so that you could be forgiven; that you could be released; that you could be cleansed; that you could be made new, and that you could enter into the life of Christ.

Then we have this picture. With those hands He washed feet. With those hands He served the Passover meal. Those hands were nailed to the cross and now with those hands, I would understand with the nail marks still in them, He was not serving the Lord's Supper but the Lord's Breakfast.

Jesus was providing for them in His gesture of love and kindness. It is a beautiful picture for us to behold. I read this and was thinking about what Jesus said in Mark 10:45.

⁴⁵For even the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. At this point, giving His life as a ransom for many, that had been accomplished but the servant-heart continues on. This is the kindness of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, He is upholding us. He is holding on to us. He is seeing us through in ways that we don't always perceive or know. But the same Christ, He is interceding for us before His Father. He loves us.

Now this same kindness of Jesus is to fill our hearts and lives by the work of His Spirit that we might serve others with similar humility and love and kindness. Now we are to be the hands and feet of Jesus. He guides and leads us along, prompting us to serve others in His Name.

We see this beautiful picture of the kindness of the Lord. There is one last section, a very important section for us to take in. Now we come to:

4. The Grace of Christ (20:15-19)

We see the grace of Christ in the restoration of Simon Peter. In view of the frailties of people like us, we praise God for the grace of Jesus Christ. It seems that Peter was drifting. Now Jesus put him right back on to the right path.

Let's see what is before us in John Chapter 21 and Verses 15 through 17:

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to 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." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

You read the account and see what took place in that amazing passage of Scripture, and it would seem that all along, Jesus had been setting the scene for the reinstatement of Simon Peter. We remember that it was over a charcoal fire in the courtyard of Caiaphas that Peter denied Jesus; not once, not twice, but three times.

Now we have another charcoal fire on the shore at the Sea of Tiberias, also known as Galilee. And Jesus asked a question three times, giving Peter the opportunity to affirm his love for Him three times. It is an amazing picture that is here.

Not only was Peter being reinstated, not only was Jesus telling him that he was going to be a shepherd of His flock, but there was a humbling that was taking place and being made evident as well.

Now, John was writing in the Greek. We are reading in the English translation, but what is so amazing is that John used two different Greek words to help capture the nuance of the interaction that was taking place. Two Greek words for love.

One of them is *agape*, which speaks of self-sacrificial service that is given unto the object of love in an unconditional way. It is denying self to serve the other. Self-sacrificial love is Agape love. Then there is *phileo* love, which is brotherly warmth and affection.

So there is this interplay between these two words throughout that dialogue. First, Jesus asked Simon Peter, *Simon, son of John, do you have a profound, self-sacrificial, agape love for Me that is greater than the love that these other men have, as you earlier proclaimed by saying that whatever they do, I won't deny You.*

Jesus posed that question, but Simon Peter answered, *Lord, I have a genuine, deep phileo affection for You.* Again, Jesus posed the question, *Simon, son of John, do you have a profound, sacrificial agape love for Me?*

Peter said, *What I can tell You is that I have such a true and deep fondness and affection in my heart for You. I am not going to comment on whether I will provide these ultimate sacrifices.* Peter kept taking it to phileo.

Finally the third time, Jesus said, *Simon, do you have a deep fondness, that affection, that brotherly connection to Me?* Now Peter was grieved because he kept getting asked and he said, *You know that I have a deep and genuine affection and fondness for You.*

To me this is just so interesting, because if it had been just a few weeks earlier and Jesus asked Peter if he had agape love for Him, self-sacrificial love that would lay it all down, and even pay the utmost price to walk with Him and to represent Him, I think Simon Peter would have said, *Lord, I agape You. I will sacrifice myself for You. I will die ten deaths for You. I will never deny You. These guys might, but I won't.*

That is how Peter might have gone with it weeks earlier. But now Peter was saying, *I'm not going to make these grandiose claims about my love for You. But what I can tell You is that You are important to me. I have so much in my heart. I love You. I have the desire to be close to You.* That is the nature of phileo.

There is this humbling that took place. In so many ways, Peter was being reduced. Even in the midst of being humbled, Peter was being reinstated. He was being installed as a shepherd in the flock of God. It is an amazing dynamic that took place here in this text.

What is so amazing as we continue to the conclusion of this exchange, is that when Peter was not making big, giant claims about his own love for Christ, Jesus went into a word of prophecy where He looked to the end of the life of Peter. In the end, the fact of the matter is, such agape would be produced in Peter's life, by the work of the Spirit.

Peter would sacrifice all. In the end, he would die for Christ. In the end, Peter would have that kind of agape love. Verse 18, Jesus speaking about Peter's later years:

¹⁸Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

That imagery stretching out of your hands, that is used all throughout the years of the early church as a picture, a way to portray death by crucifixion, as some in the early church were martyred by crucifixion.

What we are seeing here is that Jesus was telling Peter that the time would come at the end of his life, when all the mobility so easily taken for granted earlier in life, subsides. Later when Peter was an older man, he was going to be dressed for his death. His hands would be stretched out. It says that Peter would glorify Christ in his death.

It is not stated in Scripture just how Peter died, but we know from the writings of the early church and the writings of some of the church fathers that under the persecution of Nero, when Peter was well into his 70s, he in fact died by crucifixion. You can read about it in the *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

And if the story passed on is true, Peter was not willing to be crucified right side up. He felt that he was not worthy of dying in the same as Christ, so he insisted upon being crucified upside down. He died for Jesus as a testimony to the Gospel of Christ and without fear to display the fact for all those who watched that life in Christ is everlasting. In the end, Peter died that sacrificial death for Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, we live in a world that wants to avoid the whole concept of death. We don't like to think about dying. But in the pages of Scripture we are admonished to look death straight in the eye; to think about the brevity of this life and the people of God are to be those who look to the end of their days on this earth with the ongoing prayer that they will die a death that brings glory to the Name of Jesus.

We need to be praying like that. So, whether we die in old age from natural causes or whether we die from some infectious disease or whether we die at the hands of people who are violent against the Christian faith, we die naming the glory and the grace of Jesus by His power and Spirit working within us and that the name of Christ would be glorified, not only in life, but also in death.

Let us pray that He will be glorified, not only in death, but also in life. Let me remind you that the call to come and walk with Christ, to be joined to Christ, and to be united to Christ in faith, it is a call to die. We are to die to ourselves. We are to die to a life of selfishness and self-centeredness.

We are to live for Christ. We are to live for His Kingdom. We are to die to self that He might rise up and live in us and through us. That is the way of Christian discipleship. Brothers and sisters, this is not something that we do by the power of our flesh. This something that happens as the Risen Christ is raised up in us; as He lives through us, and as He produces things in and through us that we could never produce ourselves.

I think this story is here as a reminder for us that in the end, the Great Commission and the work of the Kingdom in his people have been deposited into jars of clay. It has to be God's work in us. So, brothers and sisters, wherever you are I pray that you would understand that we are weak but He is strong; that we have frailties but He has power; that He is the One who will do these

things in us.. We can't do them by ourselves. It is the Spirit who lifts us up to this plane of living.

He has guidance to see us through. He has people to help us along. He has kindness to comfort our hearts, and He has grace to strengthen our souls. Jesus is the One who was dead but He came forth from the grave alive again. And He is the One who reigns over a Kingdom that is eternal, that will last forever.

It is through faith in Christ that we have a place in that Kingdom of Everlasting joy. With that, I will close in a word of prayer.