

Life in His Name – Part 52
Follow Jesus - John 21:18-25
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – March 24th, 2024

Intro:

- It has been a privilege to see Jesus through the eyes of His dear friend, John the Apostle. If you have been here through the whole series or have come in some time along the way, I hope that the Holy Spirit has spoken to you and that your love, honor and commitment to Jesus has deepened, strengthened, and been expanded.
- Today, we come to the last words of this book and how beautiful and satisfying they are. Next Sunday, the plan is to put a “bow” on this series. I look to wrap it up in summary as we celebrate Easter because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we will also celebrate with those declaring they believe in Jesus through baptism.
- Last week, we saw how Jesus welcomed and restored another close friend, Peter, in His sovereign grace and love. The message was for all of us, especially those who came forward for prayer. I have asked Don Reed if he would share a bit of his story from last week.
- Let’s turn to the last page of the book of John as we see how Jesus continues to interact with Peter, with the final message to him and to us all, to “Follow Me” at any cost, with our eyes fixed on Jesus and joining Him in His ever-expanding story.
- Right after Jesus questioned and recommissioned Peter, Jesus told him this:

John 21:18-19 NIV

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.” 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Follow Jesus at any cost

- We hope that when we grow older, we will have greater freedom in our lives to do what we want as a reward for our labor. After Jesus reinstated Peter to his calling and place in ministry, Jesus then told Peter that at the end of his life, instead of having greater freedom, he would have less, that other people would dress him and lead him to where he did not want to go, that he would “stretch out your hands,” which is another way of saying that he would be crucified. The main thing that Jesus wanted Peter to do was follow Him.
- This statement right here flies in the face of Western American thought and theology. Through deceptive and even demonic teaching, so many think that if they have committed to follow Jesus, then God somehow owes them “your best life now,” defined as riches, comfort, favor, and ease. The Bible does not teach this. What it teaches is that in this life, “you will have trouble” (John 16:33). That we will have “trials of various kinds” (James 1:12). That there will be “hardships, persecutions, and calamities” (2 Cor. 12:10). And that people will “hate you because of Me.” Just because you believe in Jesus does not exempt you from difficulty. The truth is that because of your faith in Jesus, you will have difficulty, hardships, and suffering (Rom. 5:3, 2 Thes. 1:5, 2 Tim 2:3, 1 Peter 2:19). Jesus said

Matt 5:10-12 ESV

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and

utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- This is true blessing, and there is a true reward, which is the kingdom of heaven, a reward that can never be taken away or diminished, a reward to be with Jesus and those who love Him in His eternal kingdom. Let us define success and blessing as Jesus defined it. Success is following Him in all things, regardless of where He leads us, and recognizing it is better to be with Him in suffering than to be without Him in ease and comfort.
- Jesus said to Peter, “You follow Me.” this is where it will end for you, and you will not like it, but it will be worth it, and it will glorify Me. This, Peter, is where your following of Me will lead, and I will be with you in it all. And if you fail, know that failure is not fatal. Peter struggled at times with the fear of what others thought of Him (See Gal. 2:11-14). He was confronted and repented and continued to follow Jesus.
- And notice in this passage that this ending and this death of crucifixion was how Peter would “glorify God.” In your decision-making, let this be the deciding factor: what choice will best glorify God? In the end, this choice will benefit you as well; however, this does not mean it will not be difficult for you now. Make your decisions as a mature Christian and look to glorify God and not satisfy your flesh.
- You and I must choose to follow Jesus at any cost – believing that this is the best course of action to take, regardless of the path it will lead us down or the difficulties we will endure to get to the end. History tells us that Peter’s life ended how Jesus said it would end. Peter was crucified under Emperor Nero around 60 AD.
- After this part of the conversation . . .

John 21:20-22 NIV

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) 21 When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

22 Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” 23 Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

Follow Jesus focused on Him

- After hearing about how his life would end, Peter wondered what was going to happen to John. Jesus answered Peter with some truths we need to pay attention to. First, Jesus has a direction and desire for our lives. “If I want him to remain.” Jesus is sovereign over our lives and directs them as He desires. Second, He said, “Until I return.” Again, this is a promise that He will return. It is not just the hope of the “religious fanatics.” It is a statement by Jesus Himself, which He gave time and time again. So, know two things: Jesus directs the lives of His children, and second, He is coming back. There are no two ways about it.
- Another thing we need to consider about this statement is that what Jesus decides to do with other people's lives is none of your business. He can do with them and all of us as He deems best. Each one has their work to do as assigned by the Lord.
- Comparing our lives and our lot with the lives and lot of others does not promote love and only leads to dead ends. If we compare our lives with those who have more difficulties, we feel better

about ourselves, which leads to pride. If we compare our lives to those who have it better than ourselves, it leads to envy, jealousy, and self-pity, which is not a good place to be. To love is to stop comparing. It is better for us to love all people, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep and trust God in and for what He has given us.

- The best thing we can do is do what the Lord has given us. Jesus will not judge us according to our superiority or inferiority over anybody. He will judge us against what He has called us to do. Measure the right things – It is an unhealthy habit to measure one's lot with that of others. Learn to be content and do what you are created to do (Phil. 4:11, Eph. 2:9-10). Regardless of the paths of Jesus' other followers, you must follow Him down the path He has laid down for you. Follow Jesus focused on Him, and Him alone. This is the best way forward.

John 21:24-25 NIV

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Follow Jesus in His ever-expanding story

- The story of Jesus is an ever-expanding story. John could not write down all the things that Jesus said and did. For this book, he selected what was most needed for us to believe. John wrote this book so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, we may have life in His name (John 20:31). John testified to what he heard and saw, and his testimony is true.
- The story of Jesus continues to this day in your life and mine. He continues to work among us, and His work and His story continues all over the earth and in all time. We have the opportunity to see and witness His story. What will Jesus speak to me and do next? What has Jesus already spoken and done in your life?
- We have an opportunity to testify to these things, to tell others of His goodness, and to tell His ever-expanding story. Tell your story of Christ and follow Him. Let His story be interwoven with your story, and we will continue to behold His glory.

Conclusion

John 1:14 NIV

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Jesus is the Word that became flesh and lived among us. He came from the Father full of grace and truth. Behold His glory.

John 1:1-5 NIV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, nor will ever overcome it. Jesus is God, the one in whom all things were made. In Him is life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
- Follow Jesus regardless of where He takes you, regardless of where He takes others. You must follow Jesus. He is worthy of it all.
- Next week, we will recap the entire book of John as we celebrate Easter and baptisms together.

Benediction

May you go in the strength of the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Him be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

Questions for Growth Groups

- How has the comparison game affected your life in your past? Or how is it affecting you now in your present?
- How does knowing Jesus has a plan for your life help and comfort you? How does this help you to keep your eyes on Him?
- How will committing to do what will best glorify God affect your decision-making for the future?
- Where have you seen Jesus working in your life, both now and in the past?