

Follow Me
Bethany Assembly of God
6.9.2024

Central Proposition: Don't just believe Jesus; follow Him.

Introduction

We started studying the Gospel of John back in September of 2023, and we've learned a lot about the nature of faith. We've heard about the results of faith: new birth, living water, fellowship with God and, throughout the story, we've seen pictures of what real, growing faith looks like. But there are still a couple of issues that need to be wrapped up, and that's where John chapter 21 comes in. John isn't trying to convince us of the resurrection; he's wrapping a couple loose ends up and propelling the story into the future. He looks back and then he looks forward. Here in the epilogue of John's Gospel, John reinforces the point and in Peter's interactions with Jesus, we find a couple of key concepts that can help free us to follow Jesus.

1. Trust Jesus with your past. See John 21:15-17.

This will be painful. In fact, if trusting Jesus with your past isn't painful, you may want to consider whether you've really trusted Him with your past. And this involves your life after you've known Him and said you trusted Him and would follow Him. Faith in Jesus doesn't just mean we generally ask Him to forgive all our sins and then we go on, trying to bury the hurts and pains of our past. Jesus wants us to have life in His name, to drink of the living water. And so, He confronts us with the truth. He doesn't want our past to hang out in the dark recesses of our souls from where it will one day emerge to destroy us or will simply eat us alive. He wants to heal us and that means bringing our past and present failures into the light. We all have past and present failures. If you will trust Jesus with yours, Jesus will restore you.

2. Trust Jesus with your future. See John 21:1-14, 18-22.

I don't think it was a denial of Jesus when the disciples went fishing that night, but it did provide the backdrop for Jesus to reaffirm their call for the future. He hadn't just called them to follow Him while He was preaching in Israel; He called them to leave their past and follow Him after His resurrection as well. Jesus is continually calling us forward in our life with Him and the life of faith is a life of challenge and sacrifice. When we follow Jesus, we don't just take our past and put it into Jesus' hands and say, "Forgive me," we also take our future and place it in His hands and say, "Lead me." Your future may be 60 years or 60 minutes—none of us knows for sure—but faith puts the future in God's hands. Each of us should follow Jesus as He directs our lives and the diversity of our walks serves to glorify God all the more.

Conclusion

Because the Son of God loved you by becoming flesh, dying on the cross, and was raised from the dead, you can have life in His name by faith. That faith is not a contract you sign; it's following Jesus. And before we close, think of the motive of faith. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" Love can be the motive of faith. When we see how much Jesus loves us and we receive His love, we love Him. And the trust in Jesus that propels us to follow Him grows out of that love. So, perhaps we can close our series through John by asking this: having heard who Jesus is and what He has done for you, do you love Him?