I have two 2-year old girls and I might have started a new tradition last week. On Easter weekend, I decided that I would give the girls a gift. So, I was thinking about what to give them, and it was pretty easy to decide because they had been talking about it around the house and we decided it was time to get them their first bike. Now you might say that they don’t make bikes for 2 year olds, but that’s not true. They are called balance bikes, and they have no pedals. Instead, they use their feet to balance and propel them Fred Flintstone style.

This is how the gift went down. It’s Saturday morning and I had told the girls all day Friday “tomorrow you’ll receive a surprise.” I just love giving them surprises, I love surprises. Dads love to give their kids good gifts. So, I was helping them anticipate this gift. Friday night I put Quincy to bed; she loves surprises and her eyes were really big and dancing. As I was putting her to bed, I told her “tomorrow you are going to get a surprise” and she whispered “surprise.” So they woke up and I tried to hold them off as long as possible, and I did this ornery thing. I thought I would give them their bike helmets, and just see how long they would play along. So, I gave them the helmet, put it in their hand and I was like…well? They put it on, and they were playing nice, but then they said, “Daddy, I want bike, I want a bike.” So I went out to the garage and I got the two bikes and I gave them to them.

We proceeded to play and I was trying to show them how to ride their bikes. But, they were not riding these bikes. They were, what I would call, walking the bikes. From a distance It looked like they were riding the bikes but really they were just walking along. They were looking at me saying “Look dada.” But I was thinking “Honey, you have to get your rump roast down on the seat and you need to lift your legs up.” I would actually be walking along with them and say “OK, dad is pushing you now, so lift up your feet.” “Whee! Isn’t that fun when you lift your feet up and let the bike carry you?” What I was trying to get them to do was to trust in the seat. To have faith in the bike seat, and to have faith that the bike seat was actually going to hold them up. You need to depend on the bike, if you are going to ride the bike the way it ought to be ridden. Otherwise, you are just walking a bike, which maybe looks cool from your own point of view, but that’s not the point. The point is to ride the bike.

This morning, we are going to see two big ideas from John. The first is this: you have got to depend on Jesus. Otherwise, you are missing the point of what this Christian life is and what the mission is. And the second point is you need to follow Christ.

Before I jump in to John 21, let’s make sure we are all on the same page. We have been spending 8 months walking through the book of John. And we have watched as Jesus set his eyes on that which he was to accomplish on the cross. And he goes to the cross, and he goes to the tomb, but Sunday is coming, Sunday is coming, the empty tomb. The tomb is empty and we hit this climax, the crescendo of John chapter 20. If you understand literature, you know that there is usually a thesis statement to a book or a letter and there is a purpose. We know his purpose statement from the last verse of John chapter 20, verse 31 “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." That’s it! Right? Isn’t believing the Gospel the finish line? Now, if you are sharing the gospel with someone, they believe the gospel and then you let them go and move on to someone else until they convert and isn’t this the point? It’s not. Chapter 21 is in this book of John and it is there to help us understand “Now what?” That’s the title to this morning’s sermon. Now what? You believe the gospel? Now what are we to do? We are to be about the mission. Let me help you see how John 21 shows us this point.

John 21:1-15 (ESV)

1After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 3 Simon 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.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” 6 He 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. 7 That 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.

8 The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So 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. 11 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 12 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. 13 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

14 When 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.” 15 He 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.” 16 He said to him the 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. 17 Truly, 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.” 18 (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.”

19 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” 20 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” 21 Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” 22 So the saying
spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

DISCIPLES DEPEND.

Let’s consider this first point, Disciples depend. Jesus revealed himself to the disciples by the sea of Tiberius, also called the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Gennesaret. It would be this sea that Jesus walked upon; when Jesus fed the 5,000 they would have been looking over this sea. The same sea where Jesus called Peter.

Now Simon Peter, Thomas (the twin), Nathanial, sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two others were together. Simon Peter says “I’m going fishing,” they say “we’ll go with you.” They went out and got into the boat and that night they caught nothing. They fish at night. This is a call back to when Jesus first called Peter at the Sea of Galilee in Luke chapter 5. Jesus is teaching to a multitude of people and they keep pressing in on Him and pressing in on Him and He is like “Whoa, I am in the water now.” So, instead of standing in the water he gets into the boat, Peter’s boat. Peter has been out on the water for a bit and Peter is cleaning his nets because he had been fishing all night and he had caught nothing. I was telling this to a couple of guys I meet with, and one of them said, “Boy, for being professional fisherman they don’t catch much.” I think he has a good point.

Back to the story, Peter is sitting there cleaning his nets and it’s the morning and they had been fishing all night. Jesus finished teaching and he said “Put your nets out.” It doesn’t capture this in the Scripture but I am guessing that Peter said “Say what? You want me to do what? We just finished fishing all night, give me a break.” But he does put his nets out. “Because you said to, I will.” And he does and if you know the story from Luke 5, there are so many fish in the net that the nets begin to tear and he actually says to another boat “Come over here, I’ve got a bunch of fish.” So, the other boat comes and they start putting fish in the boat. So they have all this fish in two boats, so much fish that both boats start to sink. That’s cool. Jesus knows how to catch some fish now. He should be the professional fisherman. We read in John 21 that they caught nothing and that just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore and he says “Children do you have any fish?” They said “No!”

At this point, Jesus refers to the fishermen as children. Initially, I thought that when he is saying children here, he has a condescending tone. Kinda like, “Dummies.” I have come to realize as I was doing some homework, it’s not that he is talking down to them, it’s actually colloquialism. Imagine we are playing basketball together. Sometimes Byron West and I play in the morning, and he is the king of the mid-range jump shot. When he makes the shot, I will sometimes excitedly run down the court ready to play defense and I say “Yeah boy! Way to hit that shot!” Now, you know Byron and he is not a boy, but that’s my way of being friendly and excited in the moment. If you come over to the Outpost, and by the way, my wife gives me a hard time about this, but if I see guys I will say “Hey dudes.” They say “Thanks Jer, 1990s called and they want their little colloquial term back.” I still use it. Or sometimes I will say “Brother!” And that’s me
They cast it and they aren’t able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple who Jesus loved, that’s John, the author, refers to himself in the third person. He says to Peter “It’s the Lord!” John shows this spiritual discernment. He says to Peter “That’s Jesus.” And then Peter does what you might expect Peter to do. He says “That is Jesus? Give me my clothes. And I am going to jump in.” What is Peter doing throwing clothes on and going for a swim? If you have ever swam, you know the fewer clothes the better. Jesus is blowing Peter’s mind and Peter is saying give me my clothes I have to swim to Jesus. He throws himself into the sea and the other disciples come in the boat dragging the net full of fish.

When they get out on land they see a charcoal fire with fish laid out on it. That’s cool, there’s already fish on the fire. Jesus is like “I died for the sins of the world, I can feed 5000, and I also can cook a good breakfast. I don’t have fish for you. Go and get some of the fish I just helped you to catch and bring them over here.” So Simon Peter goes aboard and hauls the net ashore full of large fish. I like this, we know how many. I see Peter in the boat, a long night of not catching a thing, and he might have felt frustrated. If I know Peter like I think I do, he is probably giving one-line snarky comments to the other disciples in the boat that night like “I if it weren’t for you I would be catching all kinds of fish” and “I’m so good and it’s probably y’all’s fault!” And he is sitting there counting “One, two, three” all the way up to 153! And though there were so many the net wasn’t torn.

Jesus says “Come have breakfast.” The disciples knew not to ask “Who are you?” They knew it was Jesus. So He took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. And this is the third time, Jesus reveals Himself to the disciples. At this point we are halfway through the chapter. The first time I read this I thought, “Of all the things John is going to tell us, at the end of this book, why a story about fishing? What’s this all about?” Well some of you know that Jesus has called disciples to be fishers of what? Men. Fishers of men. We see that in Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17, Luke 5:10, and so this fishers of men is actually a story with two meanings. (John loves to do this by the way). On the surface, it’s about fishing. But there’s this other meaning underneath the surface, and it’s this: You are to be about the mission of Jesus Christ. The mission, in case you haven’t heard this before, is to be disciples that make disciples. To use His imagery, be fishers of men. You see, Christ literally controls the catch. By His word, you catch fish. We see here that Jesus does have dominion literally over the fish. He controls the catch. At His word the fish respond. But, it’s not just literally, it is also figuratively.

He controls the catch. He controls the fruit of our mission. We must be fishers of men. That’s the spirit of this story. Here’s the point. Christ is all powerful. We must depend on Him. We have got to rely on Him! We’ve got to trust in Him, and to put our hope in Him. We bet everything on Jesus Christ and say “If I am going to be productive in this mission it is only because you have allowed it King Jesus.” So what? What’s the application?

For the first main point it would be this: Are you a disciple? There might some of you sitting here this morning that aren’t, maybe you have come to church here your whole life, or maybe this is your first week. If you haven’t had a moment in your life when you were on your knees
begging God for mercy, then I suggest you do just that. Get on your knees and acknowledge to God that God is good. Understand that He has established a good kingdom and God is on the throne. You have rebelled against God. Tell God, “I have been a rebel. I have sought to dethrone You, and to put myself on your throne. You have caught me and I am guilty. You are right to punish me for this great sin for I have not made you King. Instead, I have chosen to make much of myself and when you caught me you have justly condemned me to death.” And yet God’s Son, in His great love, has offered to be the substitute for me. If you haven’t had a moment when you were on your knees saying “Hey God I get it, I believe it and I choose now to surrender to you completely,” then based on the authority of the Bible, I don’t know that you are a Christian. You have to believe the Gospel to be a Christian. I want to encourage you that if you have never done that before, you don’t need to get anything else out of this sermon. This is the most important thing you need to do. Before you leave, I beg you, talk to me or talk to the person who invited you or someone you trust who actually believes the Bible so that you may make this decision once and for all. For you will face judgment one day and you will have nothing to say, you will have no way out unless you rely upon Jesus.

Now, some of you are disciples but you didn’t realize that there is actually a mission. I don’t know what you learned about the mission. I’m not sure who taught you, but the Bible is clear. If you are a Christian, our great General has given us a mission. He wants us to be disciples that make disciples. He wants us to be fishers of men. And so I wonder, do you know that there is a mission? That there is actually a real battle going on? That we are at war and you are to be on the front line fulfilling the mission? We are not to be tending some garden over on the side. No! There’s a war and you are supposed to be a soldier. That’s the point. The General has given us marching orders. Are you about the mission?

Ultimately the primary application from the passage is this: If you are about the mission, is your mission fruitful? Is your mission successful? The success of your mission is directly tied to your dependence on Jesus Christ. If you believe the gospel and you are about the mission to be disciples that make disciples but you have nothing to show for it, I would guess that you are not depending on Him. You must depend on Him. If you are trusting in your strategy, if you are trusting in your work ethic, your natural ability, your past successes…you will fail. Jesus Christ controls the catch. He is what we depend on for a fruitful ministry. He is the definition of success. He will provide success if we are about the mission. Now then, if you are a disciple and are about the mission, is your mission fruitful? If it is not Jesus have mercy. Repent of that, fall on your knees and depend on Christ.

**DISCIPLES FOLLOW.**

Now onto the second point: Disciples Follow. Here we are at this campfire, seven disciples plus Jesus. They are sitting around and it must be cold and wet. After a night of not catching anything, their bellies are filled up with breakfast and I imagine they are enjoying each other. The sun is coming up and my guess is it feels good to be with Jesus. And it feels good to have all these fish that they caught and things are going well. I imagine Jesus is enjoying the moment and then His eyes hone in on Peter. He looks at Peter and says “Simon son of John, Do you love me more than these?” Maybe you are wondering more than these what? Some people have speculated more than these fish. If you have ever been fishing, or cleaned fish very often, I don’t think it’s hard to get over your love for fish. That’s just my guess. Some people want to make it the point here. I don’t think Peter is like “Oh no! I really love staying up all night and working
and not catching anything so I am really conflicted about what to surrender my life to!” Rather, I think it is something else. Could it be that Jesus is saying “Do you love me more than you love the other disciples?” I guess it could be, but that doesn’t make sense contextually. The answer that makes sense contextually is Jesus is saying “Do you Peter, love me more than these other disciples love me?” But why would Jesus say that? Well you might already know that Peter has this tendency to open his mouth and put his foot in it. He likes to say things like “I don’t care what everybody else does, Jesus. I will die with you.” Jesus could reply “Really? Hum…teenage girl and you denied me, I mean, that is what happened.”

It’s like if I say to Pastor Josh, “I don’t care what anybody in our church service says Josh, I like you!” I’m insulting all of you and elevating myself. That’s what Peter likes to do. So here Jesus understands Peter needs public correction. The big idea of this whole 2nd point is that the disciples must follow. Jesus has this all-knowingness and He asks Peter to follow Him.

Christ knows what Peter needs. Peter needs public correction in front of everybody. Since you Peter, are going to punk everybody out, I am going to ask you in front of everybody, do you love me more than all these other people love me? Peter says “You know that I love You” then Jesus says “Feed my sheep.” Those of you who are struggling with being too literal might think there is a flock of sheep behind Jesus, but indeed there is not. This is shepherding language to Peter that indicates Peter’s need to be a shepherd. Jesus says to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” “Yes Lord, you know that I love you” Peter said. Jesus responded “Tend my sheep.” Jesus says to him a third time “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter is grieved. Why is Peter grieved?

Well, we know that there is this threefold denial and here Jesus is bringing Peter back, reinstating him and saying “No matter what you’ve done I will love you. I will forgive you.” Jesus knows that Peter needs public correction and he needs public reinstatement in front of all the other disciples. Jesus wants to make things right with Peter. Jesus is driving in a point that my friend Wes Penner shared with me from a book he is reading. Here’s the quote: “God does everything through people who understand they are nothing and nothing through those who think they are everything.” Christ knows what Peter needs and he also knows the heart of Peter. Notice how Peter is answering. Notice what Peter says. His evidence is actually Christ’s omniscience. He says “Jesus, You know,” so it is ironic that Jesus is asking the question and Peter’s evidence is “You know the answer to the question You are asking me, because You know everything. You know my heart.”

Look at verse 18 to see that Jesus also knows the end of Peter, “Truly, 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.” What’s that mean? John helps us understand. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. Most believe when Peter died, he was crucified. He was crucified upside down. That’s the legend. By the time this book was written, chances are that Peter was already dead. So, there’s this validation that Jesus offers Peter when he says “Do you love Me? Do you love Me?” Peter says “You know, You know my heart.” Jesus affirms him “Yeah I’ll validate you, I do know. You will pay the ultimate price. You are going to get martyred for me. You will glorify me by dying on a cross.” My guess is that Peter is bittersweet at this point.
At this point of the story, I’m thinking “Oh good! It is almost done. I’m so glad we got this whole thing with Peter resolved because I was kinda uneasy about Peter and Jesus. But now they have been through this reinstatement. Good. Peter don’t mess it up please. Please don’t do anything stupid.”

And we look at verse 20. After Jesus said “Peter follow me. Follow me, be a shepherd.” Peter looks back at Jesus and says ‘What about John?’ Peter might be thinking “Hey if I have to go die on a cross at least throw me a bone here, Jesus. Maybe John will go with me and we can commiserate together about how we really love you, but we are going to pay the ultimate price.”

Jesus, who has a total sense of humor, answers him “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” Or to use modern language it would be like “It’s nunya! None of your business what John does. You follow me. You let John take care of John!”

See, Peter needs to hear Christ give him clear commands like “you shepherd” and “you follow me.” Christ knows the end of Peter and He knows what Peter doesn’t need. “You don’t need to know everybody’s business Peter. You focus on you and you do what I have called you to.” There’s this freedom that Jesus offers Peter, a freedom in that he doesn’t have to know everybody else’s business. You don’t have to be tied down by knowing what everybody else is going to be about. You’re free just to follow me. See, this is the point. **Christ is all knowing, knowing our hearts and our response.** He knows Peter’s heart. He knows Peter’s response.

Here’s the implication for you. He knows your heart, and He knows your response and He knows your end. So, as we sit here at this 2nd big idea, disciples follow. I wonder, are you following Jesus? I want you to ask yourself, “Am I following Jesus?” Are you focused on Jesus, this laser-like focus that you are so tuned into Him that nothing else in all the world is going to distract you. Your heart says “I want to make much of You! I want my life to bring maximum glory to You, God! I want to be focused on You, Jesus! Do whatever You want! Take me wherever You would like! Kill me however You would like to! I want to bring glory to You.”

Is that your heart this morning, following Jesus with laser-like focus? Or, do you sit here this morning focused on your failures? Peter has this moment where he has to choose to actually believe Jesus forgives him. He really failed God and my guess is that some of you this morning have too. Whether it is all the sins accumulated in your life that become this heavy burden, or it might be that one sin that you continue to confess, but you can never seem to beat it and it just beats you down. You walk in with this little rain cloud that follows you around like “I know Jesus forgives everybody else but I don’t know that He forgives me.” I want to tell you, based on the authority of Scripture that there now is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! How dare you allow your sin to eclipse the cross!

Now, I don’t want to beat you up if you come in already with this raincloud and you are like “Well now I can’t even get my forgiveness or this condemnation piece right. Woe is me!” I want to invite you to an oasis where Jesus perhaps is sitting at a campfire and He is looking at you and He says “I forgive you.” There is actually faith that happens as a response. You have to believe Him what He did. Jesus went to the cross and He beat sin with an ugly stick and He wins and He forgives you, if you repent. Believe it! Are you focused on Jesus or are you focused on your failures?
Or perhaps you are struggling with comparison like Peter is. You are focusing on everyone else 
“Look at them. Look at all the gifts God has given them! I wish I had those gifts. I am just little 
old me. If I had those gifts I could do so much. Did you hear what they did with those gifts? Oh, 
I can’t believe it.”

Focus on you. I don’t know how God has gifted you, but you have to be responsible with the 
gifts Christ has given you. So, if you want to burn for him with every fiber of your body say yes 
Jesus. “I know you gave them that, but I am not going to worry about them and that. I am going 
to worry about You. I am going to focus on You. I have all these gifts and all these talents that 
You have given me uniquely and I am going to be about Your mission.”

Please don’t focus on your failures and don’t focus on everybody else. Follow Jesus. Here is 
what I am wanting you to understand. Based on John 21, Jesus is all-powerful. We as disciples 
must be dependent on Him. He is all-knowing so we demonstrate our love for Him by following 
Him.

Why would we follow Him? Verse 25 gives us this picture. The last verse of this great book says 
“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I 
suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” I have been hanging 
out with some people this last week and I was asking them “What do you love about God? What 
is your favorite attribute about Him? Or what about God is really sweet to you?” Some of them 
said “His grace.” Maybe today God’s grace is sweet to you. If we could each get a pen, and we 
could get a whole thing of paper, and we could write all day, and all week and all month, we 
could not fill up enough pages to describe God’s grace.

Some others have said “I love how Christ is a servant.” In Philippians 2, I love how He continues 
to serve. We could do the same thing with this attribute. We could write, write, and write and 
John tells us there is more to be said, we cannot fathom the depths of our good King. He knows 
all.

Just try for a minute to understand that. Really. I mean, put it in your head that God is all- 
knowing. Just consider that He knows everything. Everything of everything. He knows it all. It 
makes my brain hurt.

He is also all-powerful. He can do anything he wants. He controls everything, all powerful. 
Lately I have been thinking about His kindness. At the cross, he beckons me and he draws me 
sweetly to my knees, and I am sweetly broken, fully surrendered. Some of you know that song. 
That has been sweet to me. I could write the rest of my days and have more to say. This God is 
beautiful. He is loving. He is kind. He’s a good father who wants to give His children the best 
gifts! Jesus is actually loving us by saying “I want you to have the best gifts, Happy Easter. I 
want to give you the best gift, here is the best gift. Me! I am the best gift and I will give Myself 
to you. You can fulfill your purpose in life by making much of Me.” And this is the King that we 
have the opportunity to worship. Though we have rebelled so severely, He has been kind and 
loving to us. So I encourage you this morning to think on Jesus. You need to depend upon Him 
and you need to follow Him.