



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



Are you willing to abandon your comfortable life to follow Jesus?

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John 21. That should be familiar for you, because that was our Sunday school lesson. If you are in our adult class, you know that we didn't get through but a part of it. Tonight, I want to finish the rest of it. I thought today I am glad that we didn't get through it all because there are some things in this lesson that I didn't see Sunday, and I didn't see until I studied some more and prayed some more and looked at some things here. There is an awesome lesson here that I want us to get tonight, the Lord being our helper.

John 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not.

John 21:19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, **Follow me.**

John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

John 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?

John 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, **If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me.**

John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?

John 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

This is part of the story, part of the lesson, part of the event that is happening after Jesus has died and He arose from the dead. We know that as we spoke on Sunday, we know that Jesus told the disciples that He was going to die. They were going to bury Him. He was going to be raised from the dead. He also told them that He was going to meet them in Galilee after He rose from the dead. So, we know that these fellows here, as we talked about, Peter is here and some of the rest of the guys are here. They are in Galilee. They have come. They are waiting on the Lord. They are waiting on the Lord to appear. As we do sometimes, these guys got a little impatient probably. We know that seven of these guys that He had called to be apostles, disciples; we know they

were fishermen. Here they are. They are on the Sea of Galilee. They are here. Peter says, "Hey, I'm going to go fishing. The other guys say, "We are going to go with you." They go fishing. We know that they didn't catch anything all night. We know that Jesus is on the bank the next morning. We know that He has a fire built. He has some bread and fish thereon. He hollered and asked the guys, "Have you caught anything?" They say, "No. We haven't caught anything." Again, He said, "Cast your net on the right side and ye shall find." They did that. John said to Peter, "Hey, it's the Lord." Peter got his fisher's coat and jumps into the sea and goes to over where the Lord is at. We know the story. They caught 153 great fish. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish that you have caught over with you." We know that they ate breakfast.

I thought many times what they sat there and talked about. The questions, no doubt, that the disciples may have had for Jesus. How was it to die? Where did you go? What did you do? There were probably a lot of questions that these guys asked. I don't know what they were. However, I know something that happens here. I know that after they get through eating their breakfast on this day, Jesus said, "Hey, Peter we need to have a chat. We need to have a conversation."

As we talked on Sunday, just briefly, we know that as we read 1 Corinthians 15 and the book of Luke; we know that Jesus had already appeared to Simon. We know that no doubt, they have had a conversation here about Peter and his denial. He has been restored and no doubt, has done some repenting. However, something needs to happen here. Something more here that Peter needs to know and understand as he is about ready to go out into something that is way bigger than him. Into a ministry that is so much greater than him; things that he could never imagine that he is going to get to do. Peter is going to do some great things.

We know the Lord asked him three times, "Do you love me?" He also said, "Do you love me more than these?" Now there is something I didn't see, something I hadn't thought about before. No doubt, he could have been talking about the disciples. You know, we know that Peter said on the night that Jesus was betrayed, when the Lord said that "...they are going to smite the shepherd and the sheep are going to be scattered." We know that Peter says, "Lord, the rest of them may run off and leave you and they may be offended; but Lord if it comes to that I will die with you." No doubt that he meant that.

We also know that just a short time after that Jesus told him, "Before the cock crows...you are going to deny me three times that you even know who I am." Peter says, "Lord that is not me. I will never do that. They may kill me, but I will never ever deny you." However, we know that is exactly what he did. He denied that he knew who He was. He did some things there. No doubt, Peter was very torn up. We know that he was filled with sorrow as I feel, and as we should feel when we mess up.

When we do things that are not right and we understand that they are not right. We shouldn't be happy about it. When the Lord convicts us, the Holy Spirit convicts and

convinces us that we have sinned, do you know what we shouldn't do? We shouldn't be happy about it at all but we should be very sorry about it. We should want to repent.

He asked him. He said, "Peter, do you love me more than these?" He could have been talking about the fellows. I thought about this today. I have made this statement before. But I don't think I really understood the depths of what I think Jesus is really saying until I studied on that this week. "Peter do you love me more than these?" May be the disciples, but I don't think that is what He was talking about.

Peter was a very successful business man. He was a fisherman. He owned a business. He probably, there is no doubt; Peter had a plan for his life. He had it all laid out. "I've got these boats. I've got these guys working for me. We live right here in Capernaum. My family is right here. My wife is right here. My mother-in-law is right here. Everything is going fine. I'm going to live here. We are going to fish. We are going to provide for the family. I'm living a comfortable life. Everything is going good." He had it all planned out.

In life it is good to make plans. However, sometimes we need to allow God to override our plans. Because the plans we make sometimes, don't fit into God's plans. However, he is looking at these boats, I think, and these nets that Peter has. I don't know how much owns. I don't know how wealthy Peter may have been. I don't know any of that. Jesus looks at him and says, "Peter, do you love me more than this? What you are doing today Peter, the plan that you have for your life; do you love me more than that?"

I think that is a good question that we need to ask ourselves. It is good to have plans. I think we don't make enough plans sometimes. I think we may not spend enough time in praying and asking God for direction in life. I think that is probably true. However, He looks at Peter and says, "Peter, do you love me more than this job? Than these boats? Than these fish that you have caught? And all the plans that you have had in life, and all the plans that you have; Do you love me more than all of that?"

The reason that is so important for us, love is a great privilege that we have. Love, loving God, and loving God's people is a great privilege that we have tonight. It is something that is not automatic. It is not automatic at all. When we get saved, our way of thinking changes and things like that. However, loving God and loving God's people and loving what God has to do with us and for us and through us and with us—is a tremendous privilege.

He says, "Peter, do you love me more than all your ambitions? All your plans? Everything that you got laid out for your life?" Again, we do that. We do that. We should do that. However, when God speaks and God calls; do you know what we should do? We should follow Him instead of following what we want to do.

Peter says, "Lord you know I love you. Lord you know I love you." Do you know what Jesus knew? Jesus knew exactly how Peter felt. He knew exactly how much Peter loved Him. He knew exactly everything that was going on in Peter's mind. The Lord

knew that. The reason the Lord, I think, is bringing this up to Peter is because Peter was going to have to make a decision whether he was going to totally and completely follow Jesus Christ or go back to fishing. Peter do you love me more than your profession. Do you love me more than these boats? Do you love me more than the comfortable that you have? And he probably had a comfortable life.

Sometimes we get real comfortable in life. We get a few dollars. We get this. We get that. The home is paid for. We have a car too. We have stuff. We get real comfortable in where we are at sometimes. I think we need to ask ourselves a question. Do we love God more than we love this stuff? Do we really love Him more than we love this stuff? Sometimes I think we spend more time with it than we do with Him. Do you know what it does? It never works when we do that.

He says here, "Peter, do you love me more than these?" Again, loving is a wonderful privilege. It is a wonderful thing for us to be able to love. The question is Peter—get this, this is a question for you today—are you willing to abandon your comfortable life to follow Him?

Listen folks. Following the Lord is not always comfortable. Following the Lord is not always easy. Following the Lord, when He leads and where He leads is not going to always be comfortable. It is not going to always be exciting. It is not going to always be times that you are always going to be laughing and joking. He asked Peter, are you willing to abandon this? Are you willing to abandon this? Do you love me enough to abandon this and leave this behind and come and work for me and work for my people; are you willing to abandon and put all of this behind? God doesn't call everybody to do that. He calls everybody to salvation. But He doesn't call everybody into full time ministry. God doesn't do that.

Do you know what He does do? He does and He has a job for everyone of us. Our job, whatever it is, it doesn't matter what it is; God has a job tailored specifically for you. An area, a place and sphere; He has a place specifically for you. He wants you to work there. He wants to put you there. He wants to place you there. However, we have to be willing to abandon some other stuff to be able to get to the place that God can use us to change the world.

Just in a few days, the Holy Ghost was going to come and he was going to fill the people, 120 Jews that were gathered in the upper room. He was going to come as a mighty rushing wind. He was going to fill these guys. They were going to speak with new tongues. Amen! Miracles were going to take place. Peter was going to preach. Thousands of people were going to get saved. Do you know what some of them were going to say? These guys were drunk. These guys are drunk. They are acting like they are drunk people. Do you know what? They were not drunk. Do you know what it is happening? The Bible is being fulfilled. The Bible was becoming alive in these guys. They were doing some things here that they could have never done had they not completely abandoned their plan for their life and followed Jesus Christ. Amen!

That is a big step. It doesn't matter what it is, whether it is singing, or doing something, leading a group, praying, standing up in church and praying for the first time, or testifying. That is a big deal. It is. Here is the thing. Do we love Him more than we love other things? Do we love Him more than our jobs, homes, and cars? Jesus made the statement, "Hey, if you don't hate your father, mother, sisters, brothers, stuff and your old self then you cannot be my disciple." Jesus made that statement. Didn't He? Jesus also said, "If you are going to be my disciple you are going to have to deny self. Put self aside. If you are going to be my disciple, if you are going to be a student of mine, if you are going to follow me, then you are going to have to deny this other stuff and yourself. Then you are going to have to come and take up a cross and follow me." Amen! That is the Bible. Isn't it?

Peter here is asked the question; "Do you love me more than these?" Are you willing to abandon, are you willing to turn this stuff, abandon this stuff and put it all behind you Peter and come follow me and to worship me and teach my people?

Here is what happens. Love will do something for you. Here is a thought that I never had before. Love will do something for you if you really love. Love will bring you something. Love will bring you something that you would never have if you don't love. If you are willing to put everything aside in life; I'm not telling to you abandon your home, your children. I'm not telling you to do that. But I'm telling you to put God first in your life. Love Him supremely. Love the Lord, thy God, with all thine heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. If you will do that tonight, love will bring you something. Did you ever think about that? Love will bring you a lot of stuff.

Get this. Love will bring you a job. It will bring you a task. It will give you something to do. When you love Jesus Christ and you love people then love will bring you a job. Do you know why a lot of people don't do anything? Because they don't love. Truth! You can answer that question that for yourself. I'm not that smart to know who does what. I can't see into your heart. I can't do that. I do know this. Love will bring you something.

Peter here—He said here, "Peter if you love me, feed my lambs. If you love me, feed my sheep. If you love me, shepherd my sheep." Peter was going to have the job, love was going to bring him a task of being a shepherd. Shepherd over God's people. Now if that isn't an honor then I don't know what an honor would be. Amen! Love. Peter was going to abandon all this other stuff. He was going to put Christ first and love was going to bring him a task, a job, a responsibility.

Everybody wants authority. Everybody wants a job to tell everybody what to do. Listen. It doesn't work that way in this realm of Christianity. Responsibility comes with a task. Amen! It may not be much authority with it, but responsibility comes with it.

Peter was going to have the responsibility the task of teaching, shepherding, feeding and protecting God's flock. Don't you think that is a pretty good task? I think that is pretty good.

Get this. The thing I want you to see also is this. You don't have to be perfect to love.

Peter made all kinds of mistakes. Didn't he? Peter made all kinds of mistakes. We know that he repented. We understand all of that. You don't have to be perfect to have a task. Do you know what you do have to have? You have to have L-O-V-E. Love Him first. Love God's people as yourself. That will bring you something to do. Something to do that will change your life. Something to do that will change people's lives around you. Amen!

Do you think Peter could have preached and all these people got saved had the Holy Spirit not been upon him? That wouldn't have happened. Peter wouldn't have had no power; Peter had no power in his life at all apart from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost that indwelled him. He had no power.

You don't either. I don't either. We cannot do anything that is going to glorify God, apart from the Spirit of God that dwells within us. If He is not in us then we are not glorifying God. We are just beating the air. Doing religious things, we are just beating the air. Sometimes...may not be a thing we are doing...may be under the heading of a church. What we do; we are being led by the Spirit of God, as God empowers us and as God speaks through us; then those things not only will change my life; it will change the life of people around me and it will glorify the God of heaven.

Here is what is going to happen. We know that this is the conversation they are having.

John 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

Think about something here. If you remember, in Matthew chapter 16, when Jesus and the disciples were at Caesarea Philippi; He asked the question, who do men say, I, the Son of man, am? We know that the disciples answered that some say, John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. He looked at the disciples and said, "Who do you say I am?" We know that Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Do you remember reading that story? We know as you read on down through here, it talks about binding, and loosing and so forth. If you go on down, Jesus is telling, on down in that chapter, "I'm going to go Jerusalem and I am going to die. They are going to take my life. I'm going to die." Do you know what Peter does?

"Lord, hold it. That's not going to happen. You are not going to do that. We are not going to let you die. You are not going to do that. You are our king, our Savior; you are not going to die." Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind me satan." Do you remember that?

Now when we get here to this verse, Jesus is telling Peter something is going to happen, Peter. "When you were young, you went where you wanted to. You girded yourself. You put your clothes on. You went where you wanted. You did whatever you

wanted to do, Peter. Peter, I'm going to tell you something, when you get old, things are going to be different. When you get old there is going to be somebody else that is going to gird you. They are going to take you to a place that you don't want to go."

Get this. I want you to understand something here. When Jesus, He just told Peter; He just asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter says, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you. You know that I love you." Then the next thing Jesus is saying, "Peter, here is how you are going to die." Do you get that? There is a reason for that. There is a reason that Jesus is doing that.

Get this. I think this important to you and me. We got to deal with this thing called death. If we are going to follow Jesus Christ and follow Him wherever He leads us; do you know what I have to be able to do? Do you know what I have to come to grips with? I know if I die tonight, I know where I am going. I know if I follow Jesus Christ wherever He takes me to; I know it is going to be right. I know it is going to be a place I am going to glorify Him. I am going to do that wherever death comes, whenever it happens; whether it is early, or late, now or tomorrow; I am going to accept the fact that my life is in His hands and I am going to go and follow Him.

Peter had to deal with that. Peter had to deal with this death question. "Peter, things are not always going to be the way they are tonight. They are not always going to be the they way they are on this morning." We know that things are going to change. We know that as we read the next verse that John is telling us here how Peter was going to die.

We don't know how he died. I know we have traditions. I know we have all kinds of theologians that said all kinds of different things. If you read much—these guys are intelligent people—but Peter probably was crucified. He probably was crucified. I don't know that for sure, nor do you, nor do the greatest men that have ever lived, on this earth today, know that. However, we know that he is going to stretch out his hands, and another was going to lead him. We know that Peter was going to die a death that he was not going to want to die. Jesus was getting Peter to look at the fact that his task and where love was going to take him to and where it was going to lead him to in life was not always going to be a good ending.

Here is the thing folks. Get this. It may not be a good ending the way that we look at it. but the most important thing in life is that my life—get this—and my death, glorify the God of heaven. That is all that matters. That is absolutely all that matters.

If you look at John the Baptist, we would think that he got a rough deal. He comes on the scene and tells everybody that Jesus Christ was God and He was the Messiah. He was the king of Israel. He was the lamb of God and then he gets his head cut off. We would think that would be a tough deal. Wouldn't it? The way we look at it; it was. But do you know what John's life did? John's life had a purpose. John's life and what he did glorified God while he was living. John glorified God in his death. Amen! That is where we should be.

Peter had to come to the grips of the fact and understand that hey, Jesus was telling him, you have done all of this and you have gone, but there is going to come a time that things will not be like this. There is going to come a time Peter—verse 19 says.

John 21:19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, **Follow me.**

Get that. Peter's death was going to glorify God. Amen!

John 21:19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, **Follow me.**

“Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep, lambs and so forth. Peter do you love me more than all this stuff, and these boats. Peter are you willing to abandon all this stuff and completely, totally leave it all behind and come and follow me?” He said, “By the way, Peter, hey, you are doing okay now, but here after a while, it isn't going to be so good. You are going to die a death that you don't want to die. You are going to go to places that you don't want to go but people are going to lead you. Peter, follow me. Follow me.”

When you read that in original, do you know what it means? It means, “Keep on following me.” Day in and day out, “When they throw you in jail Peter, keep on following me. When they beat you, Peter, keep on following me. Peter, when they do all the mean stuff that they are going to do to you and chase you around, and do all the stuff; Peter, keep on following me.”

Folks in this day and this time we live in today; there is no greater admonition that I could tell you; keep on following Jesus. I know we have to work. I know we have to do stuff. I know we have to live and pay bills. I got all of that. I understand all of that.

I do know this also. God has a plan for your life. I know that sometimes when God speaks—and I know this personally and I have dealt with many people over the years; I know this for sure—I know that sometimes God speaks and people understand where God wants them to go and to do and the responsibilities that God wants to lay upon them. I have seen people accept that and struggle with that; yet they embrace that. In a week or two, or a month or two, or a year or two, five or ten years down the road they become somebody that God is using in a great way. I have also seen people that God has spoken, and God has called. God said this is what I want you to do. This is where I want you to be at and this is what I expect out of you. I have seen them go the other way. I don't want to do that. That is too much responsibility. If I do that then I am not going to be able to do all this other stuff. Do you know what happens? They make shipwreck. Their life becomes a disaster. Do you know why? It is because they are not following Jesus Christ.

If we are going to be His disciples then we have to follow Him. He is the master. He owns it all. Amen! He is the boss. We are just the servants. That is all that we are. So many times, we want to tell Him what we are going to do and what we are not going

to do. It is no wonder sometimes that we get ourselves in a mess. It is no wonder we get ourselves in a mess sometimes.

Get this.

John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

We know that when we go back to the Last Supper, this is John, he is talking about here. It was John that asked question.

John 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?

Get that. Amen! The Lord just told Peter, “If you are going to follow me, if you really love me then you are going to have to abandon this stuff. Life is not going to always be easy. When you get, come time to die; it is not going to be fun at all.” The next thing Peter says is “Hey, what about this dude, man? What is going to happen to him? You tell me all this stuff is going to happen to me. What is going to happen to him?”

That is just like us. You know that. That is absolutely just like us. God has told us what He wants us to do and if we don't really like, it doesn't fit into our plan and we turn around say, “Hey, Lord what about him?”

John 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*

In Kentucky English do you know what He said? “Peter, mind your own business. You take care of your business. What is going to happen to John, doesn't have a thing to do with you, Peter. What you need to do is just simply follow me.” That is what He was telling him. That is pretty good. Don't you think? Especially, if He just told him, this is how you are going to die and all this other stuff. Actually, what He said is just mind your own business Peter.

If we could ever get a hold of that in a church—today, worldwide—if we could ever get a hold of the fact that if we would just mind our own business and take care of the ministry and the place that God has put us; you talk about having a revival. We would have a revival that we could not contain. We would have a revival that there wouldn't be enough seats in Lawrence County to sit everybody down in. If we would ever get to the place that we would just take care of self.

Now I have a responsibility that you guys don't have. I have that. A pastor has a responsibility that you guys don't have. You guys are my responsibility. I look after you the best I can. There are things that I have to talk about and deal with and do that you guys won't have to do. That is truth. That is the Bible.

But if we ever get to the place that we would just take care of ourselves, and what God has called us to do; do you know what would happen? Things would change. Things would be so much better.

He says, “Peter, it is not a thing to you that what is going to happen to John is none of your business.” Again, He says, “You follow me. Keep on following me. Peter, when you get up of the morning, keep on following me. Peter, when thousands of people are being saved; keep on following me. When they want to throw you out, when they want to kill you Peter; keep on following me. Don’t worry about John. I’ll take care of John. Don’t worry about him. He belongs to me. I will take care of him. You take care of yourself.”

John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?

Do you see what happens? The story went out then—that is just how things work. Isn’t it? The rumors started. Hey, John is not going to die, till Jesus comes. Amen! That is what he says. That was the rumor going around. John isn’t going to die till Jesus comes again. Jesus didn’t say that. Did He?

I have said this many times. Jesus Christ was the most misunderstood guy that ever lived on planet earth. What He was trying to do, what He was teaching was very misunderstood by so many people, by the world.

John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?

That is what He said. He didn’t say, he wasn’t going to die. He said, “Hey, if he does tarry till I come, it isn’t none of your business.” Amen!

Here are two things then I am going to close.

John says...

John 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

Get that. Peter, the love that Peter had for Jesus brought him a great task of being a shepherd, to watch over the flock, to watch the little ones when they started wandering around. To go get them when they did wander off, when they got hung in the brush and the briars. To lead the sheep where they could eat and drink clean water. That was Peter’s responsibility. Do you know what he was going to do? Peter was going to do an absolute awesome job in doing that.

Peter preached for I don’t know how many years. I don’t know how long exactly, how old exactly Peter was when he died. I don’t know. As I read the book of Acts, I know that several years went by and Peter did some great things.

There is something else I want you to get is this. John says...

John 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

Do you know what John was? Get this. John was not a Peter. John was not Peter. John was not someone that spoke before they thought. That was not John. John, as I read about John; John was somebody that was more laid back. Here is what John was. John is writing in this book. We are talking about 2,000 years later. John is witnessing unto the fact of the things that Jesus Christ did while He was here.

Peter was the great shepherd. John was a great witness. Peter preached. He oversaw the church. He oversaw the young, the old. He led people. He did all kinds of things that a shepherd would do. Peter did that. John, we know that he spent a lot of time in Ephesus. We know that John lived to be an old man. Because the book of Revelation, if we understand things correctly; was written somewhere around 90 or 95 AD. Some 60 years after Jesus died; John is still yet alive, or there about. Peter was a shepherd. John was the witness. He witnessed to the goodness and the greatness and the wonderful works of Jesus Christ, all of his life. For a long, long, long time; Jesus Christ...he witnessed.

Do you know what? We can do the same thing today. We can witness of Him today. He loves us. He wants to use us. He wants to bless us. He wants to do great things for us. We can be a shepherd. We can be a witness. We can do some great things for Him if we just follow Him.

Where are you standing at with God tonight? Are you reading to meet Him if death should come this evening? If life would come to an end tonight, are you ready to meet Him? He loves you. Jesus died for you. He went to the cross. No. He may not call you to be a shepherd.

I'm going to tell you what He is calling us all to be. He is calling us all to be witnesses, witnesses for Him. We can be witnesses for Him. We can be servants for Him.

Come and pray—