

Ready, Set, Move!

We had a big week this week—Summer Experience or Summer XP. So much of what we've witnessed is from the camper side of what has taken place. But I don't want to miss the gratitude we have for so many of you leaders who are here and who served this week. We had hundreds of kids here, and then on top of that, we had dozens and dozens of leaders who've been here helping to pour into the next generation. So thank you for giving up your week as well.

You know, our mission at CPC is To Make and Mature More Followers of Christ, and this is one of those weeks where we get to see that at all spectrums. As Daniel and Erica shared, this whole week has been centered around this idea of how do we learn to follow Jesus here, there, and everywhere. It's really been emphasizing this idea of the journey. And all of us are at different places on the journey of faith, but all of us are, in fact, on a journey of faith, on a journey to discover who Jesus is, to wrestle with what the implications are for you and me.

So this theme of Ready, Set, Move, follow Jesus here, there, and everywhere is for these campers, but it's really a theme for all of us. It connects; it resonates with each and every one of us because we're all on this sort of journey if you will. Each day we looked at a different aspect of what it means to follow Jesus.

Day One

On day one, we learned what it means to do what Jesus says. We looked at some of the teachings of Jesus and the end of the Sermon on the Mount when he asked, what are you building your foundation on? On what are you placing or constructing your life? Is it built on the sand, or is it built on the rock?

Day Two

Then on day two, we talked about how you must believe who Jesus is, and we looked at that text in which Jesus is with Peter, and he says, "Peter, who do you say I am?" We looked at that not long ago in this room where we're asking that question of, "Who do we believe Jesus is?" Well, that's a crucial step in the journey of faith to believe in who Jesus is.

Day Three

On day three, we looked at what it means to love who Jesus loves. It's the text we'll look at today, but it wrestles with this question, Peter receiving forgiveness, and then being sent out to continue to do the work of ministry.

Day Four

On day four, we looked at sharing what Jesus did, and we looked at Acts 2, and we talked about the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost and how now we are sent out, but we are not alone. We have the Spirit dwelling within us, leading us to share all of the things that Jesus shares with us to share with others.

Day Five

And then lastly, we talked about going where Jesus leads, and we looked at how in some ways, we are still in the middle of the story of the scriptures. We haven't arrived at the end of the story yet because the end of the story is still in process. You and I, and we, as the church, have a role to play in this story.

So we are sent to go where Jesus would have us go to be led, where Jesus would have us lead. Hebrews 12:2a, it's a little bit different translation than we're used to, but it says, "*Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the one who started this journey of faith. And he is the one who completes this journey of faith*" (Heb. 12:2a).

Your Bible might say something like, "he is the author and perfecter of our faith." And I love that because wherever we land on this journey of faith, it begins with Jesus. He is the author, the one writing the story, and he's also the one who brings it to its fullest completion. So the story begins with Jesus, and the story ends with Jesus. It's important that we remember that because we're going to look at a text where we find Peter, this character who is immensely likable, maybe because he stumbles around much like me through life, oftentimes jumping before he looks, saying things before he thinks, making declarations that he realizes later he probably can't uphold.

But Peter is this character in which you see this sort of spectacular failure. You see him just make these statements and then completely do the opposite thing. But

yet Jesus, in this moment, invites him back into the story. And in so many ways, Peter is this perfect example of what the journey of faith is. It's a story that helps us understand what the journey of faith looks like. And so, as we look at this text, one that we looked at with the campers this week, I hope you hold in your mind this verse from Hebrews that Jesus is the one who is the author and the perfecter of our faith.

I want to unpack a little bit more about this character Peter. You know, one of the beautiful things about the gospels is that Jesus uses very ordinary characters. Peter was simply a fisherman, someone who was probably at that point uneducated and maybe had a successful business. We see he owns a boat, so he is done okay for himself. But in many respects, he's simply an ordinary guy who's just going about his life.

Jesus tends to use the ordinary for something far beyond that. So as Jesus is starting his ministry, he's going around and inviting people, saying, "Come follow me." So Peter, whose life was quite ordinary up to this point, receives this invitation from Jesus to follow him, and it says in the text that he drops his nets and he leaves everything behind to begin to follow Jesus. He's zealous. He's ambitious and exuberant. He pursues this call.

You see this characteristic continue to trace through him. Remember that scene where Jesus is out on the water, and there's this big storm, and everyone's freaking out, and Jesus comes literally walking on the water? And as he's walking out there, Peter thinks he could probably do that. So he jumps out because he wants to be with Jesus. He understands this idea to follow. So at one point, Peter just hops out of the boat walking on water, and it says that he begins to actually take a few steps, but once he takes his eyes off Jesus, he begins to sink.

Peter is this character with immense faith, but again, in so many ways, he jumps before he looks. He speaks before he thinks. That's a little bit, maybe, like you and me. We have that same sort of moment. There's a scene later in the story in which Jesus, a few hours before he's going to be arrested and taken to the cross, is having a final meal with his disciples, and he's looking at them, and he says, "Where I am going, you can't go with me." And Peter's like, "Wait a minute, we're following you. I'm walking on water for you. I'm doing everything I can to follow you." So he blurts out, "Jesus, I will lay down my life for you. Of course, I'll follow wherever you go." Luke 22:34 says, "*Jesus*

answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Most of us are familiar with the story as it unfolds. Jesus is arrested, he's taken to the cross, and at that moment, Peter is confronted by a servant girl and a few others around a small fire as they're trying to keep warm. They asked him if he knew Jesus. And Peter is fearful. He's scared of what the implications would be if he said yes to that. And he says, "No, no, no. I'm not one of them. I don't know who you're talking about." Then as the night unfolds, Peter denies three times even knowing Jesus. It's a spectacular failure.

It's Peter in this moment where he seems to want to have this immense faith, but what comes to fruition is there's really not nearly as much faith as he thought he had. Again, another place where you and I can resonate with Peter's faith. I mean, have you ever been there where you were gung-ho in following Jesus wherever he leads? I'm going to do this and pursue that. But then, in the moment when the rubber meets the road, you watch your faith fall apart a little. Have you ever been there? I've been there. There are multiple times in my life I can look at when everything external to me seemed to be pressing in on me. It slowly started to break apart because I couldn't quite muster the courage. But I am not the author and perfecter of my faith; Jesus is.

So what you see in this moment, in John 21, is the end of the story, and it's after Peter's spectacular failure. It's after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It's the scene in the movie right where the credits are about to roll. The climax is resolved, but there are still some loose ends. So it's like everything all of a sudden gets quiet after the chaos of the film, and it zooms in. And the scene that we see is Jesus on the shore around a small fire, similar to one that Peter had been around a few nights earlier. Jesus is having this discussion with his disciples after having a good meal, which is always a good thing.

When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." Jesus spoke to him a third time. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" John 21:15-17, NIV

Now, with all that backstory of Peter, imagine the scene inside. It's an interesting dialogue and an interesting back-and-forth. Notice that it's happening right amongst all the disciples. It's a moment of tension, to be quite honest. Everyone had watched the moment transpire. They had seen things they'd never seen before. They'd watched Peter's, or at least certainly had heard of Peter's spectacular failure. They've watched Jesus die, get hung on a cross, buried, and then resurrected, and it's this quiet moment in which Jesus, in some ways, confronts Peter.

He says, Peter, do you love me? Now, imagine that question for Peter. How does that strike him? Here's his teacher, his rabbi, and his Savior. After everything he's been through and watched, he hears this sort of penetrating question, do you love me? Then he says, do you love me more than these?

There are all sorts of debates about what "these" are. My guess is there's probably a moment where Jesus is saying, do you love me as much as these? He's sitting with his disciples. He says, do you love me more than these? It could be that he's sitting by the boat and Peter's fishing supplies and he says, "Hey, do you love me more than these? Do you love me more than your means of living, your means of success, and career?" In some ways, the answer is really superfluous. It doesn't necessarily matter what he means by these. What Jesus is asking is the searching question that all of us, as disciples of Jesus, have to ask. Do we love Jesus more than these, whatever those other things are?

It's the question. It's a penetrating question. Jesus is pushing to the very heart and question of discipleship. Do you love me? And Peter responds, and he says, "Well, of course, Jesus. Yes, I love you." Again, a similar reaction to what we know of Peter. Very similar like, yes, yes, yes. I love you. And Jesus then says again, "Well, Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said do you love me a second time. And Peter now is like, "Jesus, did you not hear me? Is the sizzling bacon too loud? Like, what's happening here? Jesus, I love you. I love you."

But then Jesus looks at him one more time, and he asks the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" The text says Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him a third time, do you love me? And listen to his reply. This time you can almost sense the change of tone of voice. He says, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." What's going through Peter's

mind at that moment? Certainly, it would've been brought to mind just days before the three denials, and Jesus now asked him three times if he loves him.

See, it's a moment in which Jesus is confronting his failure, but he's doing so in a way that is both a bit haunting as well as comforting because Jesus is confronting him and saying essentially, "Hey, what happened here? We saw you fall to the wayside. We saw your faith crumble. Do you love me?" It's a genuine question of did Peter really love him more than these. But it's comforting because what Jesus is also doing is he's giving Peter the chance to essentially absolve those three failures saying, "I'm bringing you once again before me. I'm giving you another invitation," which you see at the end of this. When Jesus responds with "Follow me, follow me," the invitation is still there for Peter.

I can't help but think and meditate on what Peter is experiencing at this moment. Is it shame? Is it fear? Is it comfort? Is it some sort of mix of all of that because he's been trying to follow Jesus wherever he's been, but yet he continues to misstep? But here's the beautiful thing. Jesus continually over and over comes to him and invites him back into relationship. It's at this moment that Jesus, with all the tenderness and care of a loving father and a loving rabbi, says, "Peter, do you love me? I'm with you."

Notice where the text goes. Jesus continues after inviting him to follow again and says,

"What I'm about to tell you is true. When you were younger, you dressed yourself. You went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands. Someone else will dress you. Someone else will lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to point out how Peter would die. His death would bring glory to God. Then Jesus said to him, "Follow me!" John 21:18-19, NIV

Notice what's happening here. Jesus is giving Peter a little bit of insight into what the next step of his journey is. He's giving Peter a little vision out over the horizon. He's saying there is coming a time, very truly I tell you, when you were young, you'd dress yourself, you'd take care of yourself, but when you're older, you won't be able to do those things.

Now, think through the lens of what Jesus just went through. Do you remember when he was taken to the cross? They took his clothes; they crowned him with a crown of thorns. They did all of these sorts of things

Jesus is indicating, and the text says the death which Peter would endure would near the very death of Jesus. History tells us that Peter was crucified at one point. He did, in fact, endure that death.

It's a moment in which Jesus is looking at Peter and says, "Peter, do you love me? Do you love me?" And Peter says, "Yes, Lord. Yes, yes." And then what happens is Jesus actually assures Peter and says that a day was coming where he wouldn't want to go to the cross, but he would. A couple of nights before, Peter did not want to associate with Jesus, and he ran. Jesus is saying that he won't want to go, but he will continue and be faithful. It's a moment in which Jesus is encouraging Peter to say, "Your faith will sustain you. This time I am now writing your story." He says, "Follow me."

The beautiful thing about this story is that when we stumble, Jesus continually picks us up, whatever the moment on the journey of faith that we have, wherever we are at with it. If you are like Peter sitting there on the shore, Jesus invites you yet again and again—do you love me?

There are three things that I want to close with that happen with this interaction with Peter that presents us with the same sort of hope as well as confrontation.

Jesus Saves

The first seems so basic, but yet we often forget it. It's that Jesus saves. Remember, Peter's spectacular failure happened before the cross. It happened in the midst of it. It's what Paul in Romans 5 would say. "*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" See, we get this backward. We tend to think that we have to perform; we have to fix our life. We have to get everything set and in the right order, and then we can come to Jesus. Then maybe he'll save us. But that's not the case at all. Jesus went to the cross in the midst of the sin.

Think of the story of Exodus, that colors much of the Bible. The Israelites were enslaved, and all they could do was say, "Why God?" What did God do? He went in and saved his people. It was not the initiation of the people of God; it was the initiation of God himself. Jesus is the author of our salvation. He is the beginning. He is the start. He is the one who orchestrates the story. Jesus saves. Jesus moves closer. This is the first and most fundamental step of the journey of faith: Jesus saves.

So for you and me, we have to understand that when we stumble, Jesus saves. When we sin, Jesus saves. It's not in spite of that; it's not because you figured it out

and you cleaned yourself up. It's simply the fact that Jesus is a saving God. It is the very character of God, and Jesus saves.

Jesus Secures

Secondly, what you watch unfold in this story is that Jesus secures. He secures Peter's relationship, and he secures Peter's future. Notice in the midst of the failure after the resurrection, they're having breakfast, and Jesus says to Peter, "Listen, do you love me?" He is the one creating the environment in which Peter can rest secure in his relationship with Jesus.

And not only that, Jesus spoke of his future and said that there was coming a day where his faith would be strong. Jesus would empower him. Jesus said, "I will walk with you." Certainly, if you've read the book of Acts, you see the transformation of Peter from a bumbling coward in the gospels to the very rock of the church in Acts 2, where he stands up and preaches the message of Jesus boldly before whatever audience God gave him.

So you see this strength. It's built on the idea that Jesus secures our relationship with him. He secures our future in such a way that we can then live from that place. As humans, we need that security; we need that safety. It's what helps us to flourish. If you're uncertain about your attachments to your loved ones, it's hard for you to really flourish in that relationship. But when there's a secure attachment with those who are around you, you begin to flourish because you can take more steps of faith, understanding their care and support is there.

This scene is about Jesus securing the relationship so Peter could flourish, which really leads to the third and last thing. Not only does Jesus save and secures, but lastly, Jesus sends. Throughout the question of do you love me was a follow-up. "Well then, feed my sheep, attend my lambs. Feed my sheep." And what does Peter go on to do? He becomes the rock of the church.

Jesus Sends

A very fundamental role was him feeding the sheep. You see, Jesus not only saves, he not only secures, but he also sends, which is Jesus' way of saying, "Listen, that spectacular failure is not the end of your story. It is not the thing that defines you." Peter didn't live from that identity forever. He became the rock of the church. He became the founder. That is the identity that Jesus honed in on and said, "It is from that identity that I'm sending you out.

Church, where are you in that journey of faith? Maybe for you, you're still figuring out that Jesus-saves aspect. Maybe you're sitting with Jesus on the shore, and he's asking you, "Do you love me?" Maybe you've made that step, but you're wrestling with your past. You're wrestling with the brokenness you bring to the table. You, too, have failed spectacularly, and you're bringing that before Jesus, and you need to remember that your relationship is secure with him. You've been living from shame. You've been living from brokenness, and you need to remind yourself that Jesus secures you. You are safe in the very hands of Jesus. His forgiveness is available and open for you. Or maybe, for some of you have grown pretty stagnant. You've got the Jesus-saves-and-secures thing, but you've grown comfortable just week in, week out, going through the motions and going about your life.

You need to remember that Jesus also has work for us to do. He sends us. You have been placed in a neighborhood next to neighbors and people around you to love and care for, to carry on this work of the kingdom of God. You've been placed in your office building, in your classrooms with your teachers and your classmates and your sports teams, and all of those things, not accidentally, but rather God is sending you into the world to continue the message of the gospel.

Church, Jesus saves us. He secures us. He sends us. And the commission for all of us is similar to the very theme that's on these walls here—we are ready, we are set. Now it's time for us to move; it's time for us to take that next step, whatever that looks like for you. So I invite you this week, as we have with all of you campers, to say, where are you at in the journey of faith? What is it? Is it the next step you need to take? I invite you to take that. Maybe for you, that's receiving prayer. Maybe that's talking to a pastor, or a community group leader. Maybe that's having lunch with a friend.

I don't know what the next step is, but you might know what the next step is. You might know what that little inkling is. Jesus is waiting on the shore patiently, our loving Savior, and he's asking you and me that question. He asks it more than once in our life. "Do you love me?" It's a good question for us to close with. Do we love him more than these?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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