

SERMON GUIDE

The Gospel of John - Bowing to the Prerogative of the King

John 21:20-25



11.26.2023

SCRIPTURE:

John 21:20-25

SERMON NOTES:

The R&B group Boyz To Men sang a song called "End of the Road." Those of you over 35 years old are now singing it in your head and nodding. The chorus to the song goes:

"Although we've come
To the end of the road
Still I can't let go
It's unnatural
You belong to me
I belong to you"

That's the song in my head today as we come to our last message in the Gospel of John. That's how I feel about the Gospel of John. It's going to feel strange being finished with it. We are completing this book today having preached through every single verse of it over the last several years. My prayer is that you've grown in your love for God's Word, that you've caught how to read your Bible and hear God speak through it, and that you've seen the value of why we preach through books here at church.

Our final verses today are not simply a closing of the book, but they confront us with a few more challenges to the heart. We're going to see how dangerous it is to compare ourselves to others. We're going to remember the divine prerogative of Christ over our lives. And we're going to marvel at the majesty of King Jesus.

Exegesis of John 21:20-25

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" 23 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.

After breakfast on the beach, Jesus is sitting with the seven disciples and he starts asking Peter if he loves him. The scene with Peter is an act of restoring Peter to fellowship and to the mission. At some point, they get up and start moving because we read in verse 20 that Peter turns and sees John walking behind them.

The scene is Peter and Jesus walking and talking. John is trailing behind them. Jesus just told Peter that persecution and death awaited him. Jesus tells Peter he will be crucified (stretch out your hands). This prompts Peter (verse 21), who sees John trailing them, to ask Jesus, "What about this man?" What about him?

Let's pause for a moment and consider the nature of this question and what it reveals about Peter, and us. Peter has just heard about the suffering and struggles that are coming to him. At this point, he's willing to follow Jesus and face the tribulations. He's reaffirmed his love for Jesus and accepts the reality and cost of it. But he still wants to know "what about John?" Am I the only one that's going to face this? Is he going to go through it too?

What does Peter's question reflect about his thinking? He wants to know if he's being treated fairly. He wants to know if everyone is going to get equal outcomes. He's willing to suffer, but are others going to as well?

Do we not suffer the same kind of struggles as Peter? Do we not have a lot of the "what about him?" kind of attitude in us? Peter displays a desire to know if his fate will be different than John's. There are the seeds of envy, covetousness, and discontentment in the question.

Envy - when you don't want someone else to have something they have (job, spouse, promotion, home, children, skills, intellect, etc.)

Coveting - when you want to possess something that belongs to someone else that God hasn't given to you

Discontentment - when you lack satisfaction in what God has given you (ambition is not discontentment, being content doesn't mean being lazy or giving minimal effort; good ambition seeks to maximize gifts and time for God's glory and the good of others, to do things with excellence) **my body: discontentment would be to sinfully fixate on what is not mine to have: I'm not 6'4, my skin is pasty white and burns easily. Ambition is to take care of my body in such a way that maximizes the body God DID give me**

- Have you ever compared your circumstances to others?
- Have you been envious of someone else's lot?
- Have you struggled with your trials and crosses when you look at the ease of others?

- Have you found yourself with more only for it to never be enough for you?

The virtues we need to develop to counter these things are: love for neighbor, gratitude, and contentment. We need to want the best for our neighbor. We may desire similar circumstances and outcomes, but we should be happy for the Lord's goodness to others. We should learn gratitude and thanksgiving for all God has given us. Others look at you (even though you don't realize it) and want what you have. But we often don't see our own blessings. And contentment is learning to live at peace with where God has put us. We sow seeds and water, but we trust God for what He gives. Yes, work hard at your job, seek to do your best, strive to get ahead, but trust what the Lord puts in your hands.

Jesus' response to Peter (vs 22) is fascinating. He asks a rhetorical question to Peter, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" There is so much here.

First, notice that Jesus unapologetically asserts that his will is the determinant factor in people's lives. If He wills John to live, he will. If He wills John to die, he will. This shouldn't surprise us. The Lord is over life and death. He holds each person's life in His hands. This is why we pray, "If it be your will." We are acknowledging and submitting to His sovereignty. We are acknowledging His divine prerogative.

Romans 9:15 -- For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

We live in a world filled with people who think they can demand things of God or believe they are owed from Him. God is under no constraint. We are in no position to demand anything from Him. Jesus' statement to Peter highlights this. Only God can talk this way. Jesus' statement reveals His divinity.

Second, notice that Jesus asks Peter why it's any of his business. This is startling, but only because it is a reminder to Peter and us that we're not God. Imagine God saying to you: what is it any of your business what I choose to do? This is exactly what Jesus does here. It reminds me of God's questions to Job when asks him where he was when he laid the foundations of the world. He insists Job tell Him where all his wonderful wisdom was when God was creating everything since he, a little creature, is so wise. Job shut his mouth.

There is a Creator/creature distinction put on display here. It exists today too. The proper response to this distinction is humble submission. The answer to Jesus' question, which Peter doesn't say (but he does do), is to quietly submit to the will of the Lord.

One of the passages Pastor Nick and I quote a lot when it comes to this scenario is 1 Samuel 3:18. The Lord tells Samuel about the fate of Eli's two sons. They are going to die because of their rebellion. The next morning, Eli asks Samuel what the Lord told him during the night. Samuel told him. This had to be crushing news for Eli. It had to hurt deeply. It had to scare him. But his response to Samuel, and ultimately to God was, **"It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him."**

What does that mean? It means, "I'm not God. The LORD is God. I trust what He plans. I trust what He wills." This is humble submission. In a world where God's plans play out for each person differently, all according to His sovereign power and wisdom, we must humbly submit and trust.

Third, notice that Jesus references His Second Coming. He is coming back. The resurrected Savior is coming to make all things new one day. Do not let His delay sway your confidence. It is as certain as His empty tomb.

How does Jesus' response speak to us? It reminds us that He is God. He is the Lord Almighty. He wills according to His plans and purposes. We should revere Him for that. But we also remember that we are not God. It is not our business to judge God or put Him on the witness stand to give an account to us. He is the Lord.

Jesus tells Peter, "You follow me!" In other words, "Don't worry about what my plans are for Him. He has to follow me in whatever those are. You worry about following me and the plans I have for you." This is true today. We must be faithful with what the Lord has given us and called us to. We can't live someone else's faith out. We are not called to carry other people's crosses. We are called to carry our own.

Now John makes the statement (verse 23) to us that a rumor had circulated because of Jesus' statement to Peter, and because John had outlived everyone, that John wasn't going to die, but he'd live until Jesus returned. But that wasn't what Jesus said. John did in fact die. John is believed to have died of natural causes in Ephesus, sometime around 98AD. It is believed he was in his eighties.

John reminds us again (verse 24) that he is bearing witness about these things because he saw them. His testimony is true, and therefore, worthy to be received and believed.

John opened his Gospel with a big majestic view of Jesus. He introduces Jesus to his audience as the Eternal Word, the One who always existed with God. He is the Second Person of the Triune God. The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. That's who Jesus is. He then writes his Gospel to tell us all about Jesus so that we might believe He is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing have life in His name. That's how John opens the book and proceeds to tell the story.

Then John closes the book by telling us there are many other things that Jesus did (verse 25). He didn't write everything that could have been written. Why not? Because the world couldn't contain the number of books it would take.

Do you see what John is saying? He's not saying there's not enough paper and pen to capture Jesus. It's not a supply problem. It's that His greatness and glory are beyond capturing. This is a spotlight on the majesty of Christ. The King of Glory. I love that John spends an entire Gospel telling us about the mercy of Christ, but He wants to make sure we leave remembering the majesty of Christ.

This is meant to leave a mark upon our hearts. Jesus is merciful to sinners and sufferers. He is that kind of Savior. But He is also filled with majesty and glory. He's the King of kings. His greatness is beyond measure. This is why we say around here that our job is to show Jesus as incomparably glorious. We can't capture it fully. We can't even get close. But we can point imperfectly to His greatness and implore you to set your eyes on the King. The world doesn't contain the books that would be written. Our words and best efforts can't capture it either. But like John, we strive to put Him on display and lift Him up, that He might draw us and all others to Himself.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
 - Read John 21:20-25 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - Galatians 5:26
 - 1 Peter 2:1
 - Luke 12:15
 - Matthew 28:18
 - Job 38:1-7
 - 1 Chronicles 29:11
 - Jude 1:25
 - Psalm 145:5
- **REFLECT:**
 - Why does Peter ask Jesus about John in verse 21? What does this question reveal about him?
 - What does Jesus mean when He tells Peter, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you. You follow me!"? What does this response reveal about Him?
 - What was spreading among the brothers in verse 23?
 - What does John mean in verse 25 that the world itself couldn't contain the books that would be written about everything Jesus did?
- **RESPOND:**

- Have you ever compared your circumstances to others? Have you been envious of someone else's lot? Have you struggled with your trials and crosses when you look at the ease of others? Have you found yourself with more only for it to never be enough for you?
- What are some ways to cultivate love for your neighbor, gratitude, and contentment?
- **MEDITATE:**
 - John 21:22 - *Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"*
- **MEMORIZE:**
 - 1 Chronicles 29:11 - *Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Associate Pastor - **Brandon Sutton**
 - Ministry - **Re:generation**
 - **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Arabized Harasi in Oman**



- **Population in country:** 2,400
- **Global population:** 2,400
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Arabic, Omani Spoken

- **Summary:** The Harasi are a small, isolated tribe of Bedouins who raise camels and goats in the Jiddat il-Harasiis desert of central Oman. As modern-day nomads, most use SUVs to move their herds to seasonal grazing lands. They pride themselves on being robust and independent and having the ability to survive without much water.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for the Lord to raise up his chosen ambassadors to take the gospel to the Harasi. Pray for the hearts of the Harasi to be awakened to the truth and be receptive to the gift of God in Jesus. Pray for God to establish his church among the Harasi and for them to become a light to other nomadic tribes.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>