

# Turning Cowards Into Crusaders

John 20:19-21:25

## Introduction

One of the common misconceptions about Jesus Christ's teaching ministry is that it ended with the cross and the resurrection. We have the idea that the disciples got all they were going to get by the time that Jesus died. The truth is far from it.

As a matter of fact, if Jesus had not come back and spent His last few appearances with the disciples, I think we could have said that Christianity began and ended with the resurrection, or the empty tomb – that was it. Why?

Take a look, for a moment, at the disciples. One had already ended his life. Ten were in hiding. The most vocal spokesman of the entire group, Peter, was now silenced with shame. Another disciple, named Thomas, had already deserted the group, disillusioned and unbelieving.

Yet, we will have revealed to us today, in John, chapters 20 through 21, just a few more beautiful facets of the character of Jesus' love. This begins where the Gospel of Mark leaves off, as we have concluded our study through that "Gospel of Action".

While studying these two chapters in John, I discovered a fascinating thing. Jesus Christ says some things that are not only designed for first century believers, but obviously for twenty-first century Christianity, as well. He had you and me and our own church in mind, as we will discover together.

## The Three Final Appearances of Christ

I have divided our study today into three different appearances of Jesus Christ. These are His final three appearances.

### To His frightened followers

Let us begin in John 20, where Jesus appears to His frightened followers. Look at John 20:19a.

*So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, . . .*

The ten disciples who were in hiding were together, not to pray, but because they were afraid of the Jews. Continue to the next phrase in verse 19.

*. . . Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, . . .*

. . . "Shame on you cowards, you sniveling group of runaways. I can't believe I ever chose you."

If the text had said that, you and I would have said, "Amen! Preach it! That's exactly what they need, that bunch of lousy cowards."

We could have studied this for a while. However, Jesus comes on the scene and His first words, in John 20:19b, are,

*. . . "Peace be with you."*

This is the Greek word "eirene". It is the same idea as when Jesus stood at the bow of the ship and said to the waves and the water and the wind,

*. . . "Peace, be still." . . . (Mark 4:39)*

The elements obeyed Him. Now, Jesus uses the word “peace” to bring peace and calm and stillness to the hearts of His troubled followers.

Note a couple of other things about this passage. Look at John 20:20a and notice the miracle of the resurrection body.

***And when He had said this [peace], He showed them both His hands and His side. ...***

Jesus showed these disciples the tokens of His peace; that is, “His hands and His side.” He still had scars on His hands and His side. Luke 24:39-40 tells us that there were still scars on His feet, as well.

Notice, however, that it is implied in this verse, that everything else is whole. Obviously, it is a bloodless body. In fact, the wound in His side is open for someone to observe. The fascinating thing about Jesus when He rose from the grave, is that His glorified body had everything fixed and healed and put back together. There were no more thorn prints on His brow. His bloodied face is now whole. His scarred back is like it was at birth. Yet, Jesus left marks in His hands, in His side, and in His feet.

What a beautiful picture this is of His sacrifice that He wants you and I to remember for all of eternity. In fact, one day we will look on Him, whom we pierced, and we will notice that those wounds were for us.

So Jesus comes in and says,  
... ***“Peace be with you.”***

How in the world could there be peace? He shows them how,

***... He showed them both His hands and His side. ...***

Notice also, the recommissioning, in John 20:21.

***So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”***

This must have been a shock to these disciples. They probably said, “You mean You’re still going to use us? You’re still going to send *us* ?!”

“Yes, just as the Father has sent Me, with all of the authority and all of the power to do His bidding. Now, with all of that authority, I’m going to send you.”

It is no wonder that John 20:20b says,

***... The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.***

How they must have rejoiced!

Now notice John 20:22.

***And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”***

This is a pre-Pentecost libation of what will happen; this is the aroma of the day to come. It is a fresh glimpse of all that which will be theirs one day soon, at Pentecost. It must have greatly encouraged them.

Jesus then says, in John 20:23,

***If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.***

This is the power of the Kingdom call. If you forgive the sins of any and you are preaching, their sins have been forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they rebel against what you will have to say and they will still hold their sin.

So, in Jesus’ first appearance, He encourages His disciples. It is interesting that although the disciples had abandoned Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ had not abandoned them. Although they were floundering in their commitment to Him, He was not floundering in His commitment to them. It is obvious the disciples were ready to quit it all and go back to fishing. However, Jesus Christ persisted in His teaching; in His reshaping; in His molding; in His changing them from cowards into crusaders.

### **To a doubting disciple**

Now someone missed the meeting. Notice John 20:24.

***But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.***

“Didymus,” by the way, means “the twin”. Evidently, Thomas had a twin brother or sister.

It is fascinating that Thomas is like many of us. When we are faced with great sorrow and disillusionment, some will find comfort around other people, while others, like Thomas, will retreat to a hidden corner somewhere – they build a wall and want to be alone. Thomas was not with the ten disciples. He had perhaps, gone into hiding.

Thomas was disillusioned. Look at John 20:25.  
*So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, . . .*

. . . “Fantastic!”

No, he said,

*. . . “Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”*

Thomas was so disillusioned. He said, “I can’t believe. That’s too good to be true.”

We always condemn Thomas for doubting, but I think his doubt came from a genuine heart of love. He probably said, “You mean He . . . No, it can’t be . . . it couldn’t be true. Until I see it, I can’t believe.”

The disciples had spent over three years with Jesus Christ and had thought He would instigate and bring in the kingdom. Then, their hopes were shattered. Thomas, evidently, took it harder than anyone else. He said, “Well, I want to believe, but I won’t until I see it with my own eyes.”

So Jesus Christ appears to him. It is fascinating that Jesus is not only interested in the disciples as a group, but as individuals, as well. This is a great picture of the way the church should be.

Continue to John 20:26a.

*After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. . . .*

This time, Thomas was with the group of disciples. Maybe they convinced him to join them again, perhaps by encouraging him. He was there anyway, but did not know that Jesus would appear. The doors to the room were shut. Continue to the next phrase in John 20:26.

*. . . Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst . . .*

Jesus just evaporated through the wall and came into the room. After they regained their composure, Jesus, in the last phrase of John 20:26,

*. . . and said, “Peace be with you.”*

Jesus is repeating Himself. Why? Because Thomas had not heard Him say it the first time. He missed it, so Jesus repeats, “Peace be with you.”

Then, look at John 20:27.

*Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here with your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”*

Jesus carbon copied Thomas’ statement of doubt. If you look at verse 25 and then at verse 27:

- Thomas said, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, . . .

Jesus said, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; . . .

- Thomas said, “. . . and put my hand into His side, . . .

Jesus said, “. . . and reach here your hand and put it into My side; . . .

- Thomas said, “. . . I will not believe.”

Jesus said, “. . . and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

Jesus came on the scene and in just a few sentences, I am sure, wiped Thomas out. He was amazed that Jesus was saying everything that he had said he would need to see and do in order to believe. Jesus reappeared just for him.

However, ladies and gentlemen, Thomas did miss something. He missed the breathing of the Holy Spirit on the other disciples – that special libation of pre-Pentecostal power.

There is a tremendous thought in this for us. It is the individual who is diligently staying with it that receives the encouragement. It would be like going to a track race; an endurance race competition and sitting on the sidelines to watch. Then, upon leaving, thinking, “I’m never going back. I didn’t get a second wind.”

Of course you did not get a second wind – you were not running!

It would be like a football player who sits on the sidelines during the game and complains that his uniform does not get muddied and dirtied up. Of course he is not getting dirty – he is not playing!

So there is a real challenge for us in this. Jesus gave peace to Thomas and He took care of Thomas’ unbelief, yet Thomas did miss something by not staying with the rest of the disciples.

Now we call him, “Doubting Thomas,” yet in all the New Testament, no one made a statement that

declared the deity of Christ more strongly than Thomas. Notice what he says in John 20:28.

***Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”***

Then, in John 20:29,

***Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”***

We could insert, “Blessed are they – in this year; at this time – who did not see, and yet believed.”

You and I today, rely on the invisible power of Jesus Christ, not His visible presence.

The Christian community today, is searching for something visible; something tangible, whether it is a splinter from the Ark, or the Shroud of Turin, or a vision of Christ. That is our nature. Yet, Jesus says, “You are more blessed, if you believe without seeing, than those who see and then, because they saw, believe.”

Do you realize that you and I are more fortunate that Jesus is not here with us, than were His disciples whom He was with in the flesh? We have the idea that the disciples were really the lucky ones. Any question the disciples had, they could take right to Jesus. He is the encyclopedia of all the answers! They had Him right there with them, yet they were filled with doubt. However, the writer of Hebrews would say that our faith has become the substance – the literal, tangible substance – of things we cannot see. In other words, Thomas could see Jesus, but doubted, while we cannot, but have faith. According to Hebrews 11:1, that faith gives us something.

***Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

Jesus, in fact, kind of tilts the scale. He says, “You, who do not see and yet, believe, you are more fortunate; you are more blessed – happy are you.”

If there were visions of God today, I would not want one. God says that I am more blessed by not having it and yet, continuing to believe.

John then, kind of ends quickly in a short verse. Look at John 20:30-31.

***Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .***

## **To a future shepherd**

Now Jesus makes His third appearance. Notice John 21:1. We will look at this briefly because we are covering so much today.

***After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, . . .***

The disciples are out there fishing. They should not have been. They should have been out preaching, but they were not. They had gone back to their old occupation. In fact, they had been fishing all night. And, guess what? They did not catch a thing.

So Jesus appears on the shore. Look at John 21:3b-5a.

***. . . and that night they caught nothing. But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, . . .***

***. . . “Boys,” – literally.***

***“. . . you do not have any fish, do you?” . . .***

Do you fish? If you are a fisherman, then you know that this is a cruel question. I do not fish, but I have enough sense to know that if someone has been fishing all night and has not caught anything, they are not going to tell you. If they catch something, they will tell you. Jesus stands on the beach and says, “You didn’t catch anything, did you?”

In John 21:5b, we read,

***. . . They answered Him, “No.”***

They probably muttered under their breath, “Who’s that smart aleck?”

Now, not only do you not want to ask someone who has been fishing all night without catching anything, whether they caught anything, but if they say, “No,” the last thing you want to do is give them advice. You do not want to say, “Now look, if you throw your lure on the other side of the boat, you’ll catch something.”

However, in John 21:6a, we read,

***And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.” . . .***

The amazing thing about this, is that the disciples did not know this was Jesus. They must have been beaten men because they did what He told them to do! We do not even have an indication that they complained. Look at John 21:6b.

*. . . So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.*

This is now a different group of disciples. Two months earlier, I could see Peter standing up and saying, “Son, I don’t know who you are out there, but I happen to know fishing. And I know that moving my lure three and a half feet is not going to catch anything. So keep your advice to yourself.”

They did nothing like that. They just threw the net over and then, they could not haul it in. They had literally, one hundred fifty-three large fish, as we will be told in a later verse.

Continue to John 21:7-8.

*Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.”*

Now look at John 21:9.

*So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.*

It is fascinating that when the disciples get to the shore, Jesus already has a fire going and He already has fish on it. There are several miracles in this that we could spend a lot of time discussing.

Jesus has made a fire out of charcoal. I don’t know where He got the charcoal from. Maybe He snapped it into existence. Then, He lays fish on the fire, so He is not even going to use the disciples’ one hundred fifty-three fish. That is another thing He did that was wrong to these fishermen – He brings His own fish. That means they cannot brag, “Oh, look at that one. Let’s eat this one. Peter caught that one.”

Continue to John 21:11.

*Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

This is another miracle in itself. Look at John 21:12.

*Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples ventured*

*[dared] to question Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord.*

You probably wonder, “Why in the world are they hesitant?”

They are hesitant because the last time these disciples saw Jesus, He was being led away by the mob. They had heard the stories that His face was beaten, that His back was scarred, that He was a bloody mess. Yet, this man is standing there and it is as if He had never been in a fight. He had been crucified. So they were a little hesitant, “Is this who we think it is? Well, yes it is.”

However, they do not dare ask Him.

Then John 21:14 tells us,

*This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.*

Now, this is a beautiful picture that I want to spend the rest of our time on. This appearance, I think, was designed just for Peter. The second appearance was designed for Thomas. The first one was designed for the disciples as a whole.

Look at what happens in John 21:15a.

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon . . .”*

Now, this is a little bit of an insult. His name is not Simon anymore, as you may remember. He has been renamed Peter, or “Petros” in the Greek, which means, “rock”. Jesus calls him Simon, his old name, the name that signified the failing of the flesh. Yet, with all tenderness, I think, He says, in the next phrase of John 21:15,

*. . . “Simon, son of John, do you love [“agapao”] Me more than these?” . . .*

When He says, “more than these,” I think He is referring to the rest of the disciples. I do not think He had the fishing boat or nets in mind because Peter had so quickly dropped those. However, Peter was always comparing himself, “Oh Lord, compared to all of the other disciples, I’m at the top of the heap. My love for You is incredible.”

So Jesus says, “Peter, do you really love [“agapao”] Me more than these men?”

Was there a change in Peter? Yes. Look at his answer, in the next part of John 21:15.

*. . . He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love [“phileo”] You.” . . .*

This is a different Peter. The old Peter would have said, “Oh, Lord, need You ask? Of course I love You more than these guys.”

However, Peter had failed miserably. I do not think he will ever get over it. In fact, there is no doubt that the greatest thing that ever happened to the apostle Peter is that he failed. That failure revolutionized him more than a million sermons. He failed and as a result, he took a good look at himself and said, “Peter, you’re nothing but a big bag of hot air.”

So when Jesus comes along and says, “Simon, do you really love Me?” Peter says, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love [“phileo”] You.”

The Greek word “phileo,” is used for the relationship between God and Jesus.

A lot has been said about the fact that Peter says, “Well, Lord, I like You.”

Then Jesus asks, “Well, do you love Me?”

Peter responds, “Well, no, I only like You.”

That is not really correct. Peter is using a very strong Greek word “phileo,” which means all the affection of the heart.

However, Jesus had asked him, “Do you ‘agapao’ Me?” That means, “Do you love Me with the will?”

Jesus is asking Peter, “Have you made up your mind now, Peter, that you will love Me, no matter what?”

But Peter could not say that because he had failed. He also could not say, “Lord, I’ll never fail You again. This time, I’m going to the cross.”

However, he does come back with a very strong Greek word. He says, “Yes, Lord, You know that I have all the affection of my heart for You.”

Notice what Jesus then says, in the last part of John 21:15.

*... He said to him, “Tend My lambs.”*

The literal translation of this is, “Tend the little ones.” In other words, “Take care of the immature believers. Take care of the new believers. Take care of the little ones that need nursing; that need taking care of; that need their diapers changed; that need watching after.”

Now wait a second! Jesus is telling big, burley, strong Peter to take care of the little babies? Yes. How can He ever hope that Peter will nurse the lambs? Because Peter has affection for Him.

We are going to discuss this more in a moment but the basis; the motivation for serving people is not because you love people, but because you love Christ. So Jesus says to Peter, “Tend My lambs,” which means, “Take care of the little babies.”

Caring for little babies takes a special heart. Our littlest one has now entered the slobber stage. Do you know what that is like? Constant drooling. When I pick her up and hold her, she, with mouth wide open and slobbering, goes for my chin. Am I going to let her do that? Absolutely. Why? Because I love her. If she wants to show love and affection that way and she is slobbering while she doing it, that is fine and I will let her.

The Lord is telling Peter, “Look, you’re going to deal with 3,000 babies in just a few months; 3,000 new infants to the church in Jerusalem. You’re going to be the pastor; the shepherd. You’re going to lead them. And they’re going to slobber; they’re going to get messy, but I want you to love them. Tend My lambs.”

How can Jesus ever hope that big, burley, oppressive, obnoxious Peter will not step on babies, but will tend them? I will tell you how. Peter failed, and with that failure, gained compassion and graciousness that will allow him to tend the lambs.

Then, the Lord speaks a second time. Look at John 21:16.

*He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love [really “agapao”] Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”*

The Greek word for “shepherd” is “poimaino,” from which we get our English word, “pastor” or “feeder”.

Jesus says, “Peter, I want you to feed the sheep.”

When He says this, He has the whole body in mind. He means to feed the sheep collectively.

So, in other words, Jesus is saying, “One day I want you to stand with all of the infants and I want you to do one thing – I want you to feed them. That’s the commission.”

Did Peter forget? Absolutely not. In Acts 6:1-6, as you may remember, the disciples were beginning to be pulled away from that major direction because the widows were not being looked after. So they decided

to set aside the “diakonoi,” the deacons. Why? Acts 6:4 tells us, so that,

*. . . we [can] devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

The Greek word for “ministry” is “diakonoi,” in this verse. So they were, in fact, “serving” the word.

The commissioning was that they would study and serve the word like a meal. That is what the Lord is telling Peter to do, “Shepherd My sheep,” or “Feed My sheep,” and He is speaking collectively.

Then, notice in John 21:17,

*He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love [phileo] Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” . . .*

Why was Peter grieved? Why would the fact that the Lord asked this question a third time bring grief to Peter? Because it was a remembrance of his three-fold denial and all of that agony. Peter is thinking, “I’ve denied Him three times. I’ve said I don’t know Him three times. And now, the Lord has repeated it three times.”

What grief for Peter. Perhaps there was grief even in the fact that Jesus now changes His word from “agapao” to “phileo”. He says, “Simon, son of John, do you really have affection for Me? Do you really have a heart filled with love and affection and closeness for Me?”

Continue to the Peter’s response in John 21:17.

*. . . And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”*

Peter, however, does not mention any evidence. Before, Peter would have given the Lord five points as to why he loved Him. He would have said, “Lord, number one, this. Number two, that. Number three, this. . . .”

Peter did none of that. He simply said, “Lord, You know . . .” – “You know my heart. You can see all things. I didn’t realize that before when I was boasting, but You could see my pride and selfishness. Now, Lord, I know that You know. But even though You know, You can see affection and love from Me.”

Then, the Lord gives a three-fold command, in the last part of John 21:17,

*. . . Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”*

He did not say, “Tend My lambs,” but “Tend My sheep.” The Lord is speaking of the entire body.

There are the little lambs and there are the collective sheep – and there is the need to teach all of the sheep. That is the most difficult because, in teaching the sheep, not only should it be done in such a way that the little ones can learn, but also, that the older ones can learn. That is the challenge that Peter is given.

The Lord then continues, in John 21:18, to prophesy or predict Peter’s martyrdom.

*Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; . . .*

In other words, “You did anything you wanted, impulsively.” Peter was so impulsive.

*. . . but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, . . .*

This is a picture, in the original language, that talks about someone holding out his hands to be handcuffed or bound.

*. . . and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.*

This is a reference to the cross. In other words, “One day, Peter, as a result of feeding the sheep, you’re not going to be popular, you’re going to be unpopular. You’re not going to be received, you’re going to be rejected. You’re not going to have an easy life, you’re going to have a very difficult life. And one day, Peter, they’re going to bind your hands and take you to the cross. Are you sure you love Me?”

Remember, this is what kept Peter from really following the Lord before.

Then, look at John 21:19.

*Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”*

“All right, Peter,” the Lord says emphatically, in the original, “follow Me!”

I am glad the next few verses are here because this is Peter again – good old Peter. He has changed, but only so much. He is still a little concerned about everyone else. So, in John 21:20-21, we read,

*Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So Peter seeing*

*him said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"*

In other words, "You've just predicted that I'm going to be martyred; I'm going to be crucified on a cross. Well, here's this guy and he's following You, what about him? What do You have in store for John?"

You may remember that John had asked to sit on the throne in the kingdom. Peter may have been thinking, "Well, maybe I'll miss that. Maybe I'll be martyred and John will be able to usher in the kingdom and sit on the throne with Jesus. I couldn't take that, Lord. What about him?"

Jesus' classic response is in John 21:22.

*Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"*

Jesus says, "I don't care what kind of response you have, Peter. And I don't care what kind of response John has. It isn't up to you. Look, I've got My plans for him and I've got My plans for you. Don't worry about him. You just follow Me. You just feed the sheep. You just tend the flock."

We know that John lived longer than all of the other disciples. He finally died in exile on the island of Patmos.

One of my heroes is Adoniram Judson, who went to the field as a missionary to Burma. Perhaps you have read his story. He preached and he taught and he served and he worked. He cracked a mission field out of solid stone. After seven years, guess how many converts there were to Christianity? Zero.

One thing that we get caught up in, ladies and gentlemen, as we serve the Lord in this church or in this mission field, is results; responses. Yet, Jesus said, "I don't want you to even be concerned about the response that people will give John. You just follow Me!"

Did Peter get the idea that he was not supposed to be a busybody? Absolutely. Later, he wrote, in I Peter 4:15, that God does not want us to be "a busybody in other men's matters."

I have an announcement to make to you, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior. You have entered the ministry. You have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to make disciples. You have been commissioned to be a feeder. You have also been uniquely gifted to fulfill that commission.

Now do we go looking under every stone for a new disciple? Do we say, "Let's see, where's a disciple? Where's one?" or, "I'm going to come to church looking for a disciple."? No. Do we pull out the magnifying glass and say, "I'm going to track down my spiritual gift."? Absolutely not.

The point Jesus was making is simply this, "Follow Me! And as you follow Me, you will be able to disciple and you will be using your gift."

### **Two common misunderstandings in ministry**

There are two common misunderstandings in ministry that I would like to point out. These create a lot of problems.

1. Number one, there is a misunderstanding toward those who serve more capably or effectively.

We have our eyes on John over here. He serves more capably and more effectively and that tears us up.

So what is Jesus' point about this? The point is that God is sovereign. He has designed every one of our ministries down to the "t". He has designed who would respond. When you share Christ at the job, for example, God has already determined who will respond.

Why are you serving Him? Are you serving Him because someone will respond or because you love Him?

There are a lot of preachers who preach because they love to preach. There are a lot of teachers who teach because they love to teach. They would rather be up front than out in the congregation or the classroom. There are a lot of people who serve just because they want to serve and they want to be out front.

One of the tragedies is, we miss the uniqueness and the effectiveness of the ministry because we do not serve with the proper motivation. In other words, we do not serve simply out of our love for Christ.

2. A second misunderstanding is toward those who serve differently, not only more effectively, but differently.

Do you remember in Mark 9:38, the disciples come to Jesus and say,

*. . . "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to*

*prevent him because he was not following us.”*

In other words, the disciples say, “Lord, somebody over there is casting out a demon in Your name and he’s not following us; he’s not part of us. Go over there and silence him. He’s not part of our group. He doesn’t look like us. He doesn’t smell like us. He doesn’t sound like us. We can’t have that, Lord. He’s not part of the twelve.”

Jesus gives basically the same answer to the disciples that He gave to Peter, in Mark 9:39. He says, “What’s that to you? Let him alone.”

Now there is one way to God, as Jesus said in John 14:6. These statements that are a double positive in the original.

*. . . “I am the way [the only way], and the truth [the only truth], and the life [the only life]; . . .*

Although there is only one way to God, there are as many methods and men and ministries and women pointing people to *That* way as there are personalities in the body. So do not be overly concerned when someone is doing things differently than you.

God has designed it all. When you see those who serve differently, you need to realize that God is not only sovereign, He is flexible.

How can God move in the heart of a man to start a school because everyone needs to be educated? Yet, God can move in the heart of a man like Charles Spurgeon, who would never went to school because God did not want him to.

Can you figure that out? If God would burden one man to start a school, why would God not burden everyone else to go to that school?

God does not plan that way. He is so flexible in His design for bringing people into the kingdom. The disciples needed to learn that because the church would grow, Peter would head it up, and there would be so many different ministries going on in Jerusalem. Peter needed to learn the lesson, “Don’t worry about that. You follow Me!”

## **Application – Two Timeless Truths**

Let me give two timeless truths, by way of application.

1. First, servants realize that God does not use perfect people, He uses dependent people.

This realization was the whole purpose of this fishing expedition. Jesus was telling the disciples, and us, “You can cast your net all day and all night, but without Me, you won’t catch a thing. Now, you’re fishing for men. You can do it all day and all night in the power of *your* flesh, but until you learn dependence on *My* word, you will be absolutely ineffective.”

Jesus is not looking for perfect people. Is that not great? As a result, He can use us. He is desiring dependent people.

2. Secondly, servants recognize, foremost, that love for Christ produces, in their hearts, love for people.

So if you are sitting on the sidelines and your uniform is not dirtied or your have not experienced the second wind, then the point is not to say, “Oh, you’ve got to get involved in some kind of ministry. Let’s put you in somewhere in here. Let’s fit you in. We’ve got something for you to do.” The point is, how is your love relationship with Jesus Christ?

How do you develop a relationship with Jesus Christ? The same way that I do with my daughter. I spend time with her. My wife and I spend time with her. I talk with her and listen to her.

That is the way you develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. You talk to Him in prayer. You listen to Him through His word. You spend time with Him alone. And you will never be without a ministry.

Let me read to you, in closing, a prayer written by an anonymous author.

*Forgive me, Lord, for I size up other people in terms of what they can do for me.*

*How they can further my program, feed my ego, satisfy my needs, give me strategic advantage.*

*I exploit people, Lord, ostensibly for Your sake, but really for my sake.*

*Lord, I turn to You only to get the inside track and obtain special favors.*

*I turn to You for direction for my schemes, Your power for my projects, Your sanction for my ambitions, Your blank check for whatever I want.*

*Change me, Lord. Make me a person who asks of You and of others, how can I serve You?”*

That is changing from being a selfish person to  
becoming a servant, from being a coward to becoming

a crusader by falling in love with the person of Jesus  
Christ.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/10/1988 by Stephen Davey.

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