

THE FEEDING OF GOD'S SHEEP

I. John 21:15-19 Acts 2:42-47 1 Peter 5:1-11

A. Our first text today takes place between Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Peter and some disciples go fishing so they head back home to familiar waters. Some suggest they're off mission. Perhaps they just went fishing. So they fish all night, just like old times, and catch nothing. (Just like old times.) Then thru the morning mist they spy a Stranger on the beach. He's got a little fire going. The Stranger calls out, "*Catch any?*" "*Nope*" comes the answer. (Wow--honest fisherman!) Then the Stranger shouts, "*Throw your nets on the right side of the boat.*" They do. And these dudes experience their second miraculous catch, similar to when Jesus first called them!

B. Here's what happens next: With fish flopping in the nets all around them, John suddenly realizes the Stranger on the beach is Jesus. Peter dives in and swims for shore. The guys catch 153 fish. As for the significance of the number, I'm clueless. Meanwhile, Jesus already has fish on the grill and tells them to bring some more. Fish for breakfast? Yes, it's Biblical! Maybe we should make it a thing. Maybe not. Then Jesus and Peter talk.

C. John 21:15-19 (ESV) tells us about an important conversation between Jesus and the one who'd betrayed Him 3 times: *15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" (These brothers? These fish?) He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."* *16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."* *17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" and he said to Him, "Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. (Some interpreters make much of the text's words for love; others insist they're interchangeable. I make much of Jesus' questions, Peter's answers, and what Jesus charges Peter to do.)* *18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (No Peter's not headed to a nursing home, but to a cross!)* *19 (This He said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow Me." (In John 14:15 Jesus said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Just so you know, Peter does. And Peter becomes both a pillar and a martyr.)*

D. Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) is Luke's summary of the early Church right after Pentecost. That day, not long after his beach encounter with Jesus, Peter preaches and 3,000 souls are saved. Here's how those lambs are fed: *42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* *43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* *44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.* *45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* *46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* *47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

E. Last March I shared: *The apostles' teaching* is God's revealed Word. *Fellowship* is the gathering of God's people to worship Him, hear His Word, while building up of one another in this most holy faith. *The breaking of bread* points beyond eating meals together to the sacramental ordinance of the Lord's Supper (Communion). *Prayer* is calling upon the Lord to intervene in our lives, grant us help and understanding--His leading, guidance, strengthening, provision, healing, and protection from the evil one. While *Baptism* isn't mentioned, they just baptized 3,000 folks on Pentecost. These represents the *means of grace* by which the shepherds feed God's sheep...

F. In high school I sometimes had to do the feeding at Grandpa Slocumb's sheep farm. He was in his 80s. I'd scoop the grain into the long feeding trough then call in the sheep. I'd mimic Grandpa's call and the sheep would scurry to the barn. Rams would butt and shove smaller sheep away but eventually they'd all find a place at the trough. None starved. And each time they'd lick the trough clean. Every pastor wants to see his people devour the Word of God just like that...

G. 1 Peter 5:1-11 (ESV) also features Peter, the feeder of sheep, writing to other feeder of sheep. The once brash disciple now exhorts with a softer humility: **1** *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (Then Peter shifts to addressing the sheep.) 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Proverbs 3:34) 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, (exalt you back to grace!) 7 casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. (He cares for you!) 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. (Why?) Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (Back to grace! Peter's writing from firsthand experience. He'll also need his own words before he dies. But these words are for us all. Humility is still ours to wear. Grace is still necessary for each day. Casting our anxieties on Him is still the current word. The devil is still prowling and roaring. Sufferings are still happening. But His promise to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish still stands.) 11 To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

H. So let's hear the Gospel. It's communicated a thousand different ways. No matter how it's proclaimed, it's the Good News for you. Jesus puts it this way in John 10:14-16 (NLT): **14** *I am the Good Shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me, 15 just as My Father knows Me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock with one Shepherd. (The Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, has laid down His life for you! You were a lost sheep, but He's always known where you are. Spiritually you were starving, but He is the Bread of life. You were prey for wolves and other wild beasts, but He's come to your rescue. His*

name is Jesus! He knows you and loves you! He proved it by laying down His life! Receive Him with all your hearts!)

*** Close with Prayer...**

*** Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT) is a Blessing Verse to take you all home today: **20** Now may the God of peace--who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with His blood--**21** may He equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen.**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

John 21:15-19 (ESV)

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Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)

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therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. **8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

John 10:14-16 (NLT)

14 "I am the Good Shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me, **15** just as My Father knows Me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice My life for the sheep. **16** I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock with one Shepherd.

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT)

20 Now may the God of peace--who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with His blood--**21** may He equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen.

Bonus Goodies

Mesmerizing Mass Sheep Herding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDQw21ntR64>

The Means of Grace Explained in 3 Minutes - Rev. John D. Payne - Media Gratiae

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLWa-PJ1zas>

Extraordinary Holiness Through Four Ordinary Means - Kevin DeYoung

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRHKMbuTIBc>

The Only Way is Ordinary - Samuel D. James

https://samueldjames.substack.com/p/the-only-way-is-ordinary?utm_source=url&s=r

Jonathan Edwards on The Means of Grace - Jordan Mark Stone

<https://jordanmarkstone.com/2014/01/15/jonathan-edwards-on-the-means-of-grace/>

More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras

John 10:1-21 (ESV)

1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. **2** But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all

his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. **5** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” **6** This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. **7** So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. **11** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **12** He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13** He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **14** I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, **15** just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. **16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17** For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.” **19** There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. **20** Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to Him?” **21** Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Quote by Charles Swindoll

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42) In this one verse we have the lowest common denominator of a church. This is ground zero. It would help greatly if God’s people reminded themselves of this single verse of scripture every day. When the first body of believers gathered together, they devoted themselves to four essentials. Did you notice them? Here are the four essentials: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. This verse is not only descriptive of what the early church did; it is prescriptive of what the church must do.”

- Charles Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, FaithWords, © 2010, p.p. 14-15.

Quote by Ray Ortlund

"God does not limit Himself to His wonderful means of grace. Jesus said that the wind of the Spirit "blows where it wishes" (John 3:8). But if we are wondering where we can be sure to find the Lord, the answer is His standard means of grace, made effective by His own living presence. His chosen means are not intended to restrict His availability, but the opposite. His chosen means identify where He has concentrated His availability, like a gushing fountain of mercy for sinners who are so desperate that they are finally coming to Christ on His terms... Awakening or revival occurs when these ordinary streams of divine blessing flow out with unusual power, and the benefits of the gospel pour out upon us with wonderful impact that is clearly of God and not at all of ourselves."

John Wesley on The Means of Grace

“The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures; (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon;) and receiving the Lord’s supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of men.”

- John Wesley, *The Works of Wesley*, Vol. 5; *Sermons on Several Occasions*, sermon 16; “Means of Grace” 251.

Means of Grace - Westminster Shorter Catechism

Question: "What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?"

Answer: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

- Westminster Shorter Catechism on the Ordinary Means of Grace, Question 88.

Of Saving Faith - 1689 Baptist Confession

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word; by which also, and by the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Prayer, and other Means appointed of God, it is increased and strengthened. (2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 10:14, 17; Luke 17:5; 1 Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32.)

- 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 14.1. See: <https://www.arbca.com/1689-chapter14>