

Hospitality - John 21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 October 2025

Preacher: Robin Silson

[0 : 00] Before we look at it, I'm just going to pray for us and ask for God's help. Lord God, we thank you for the Bible and we thank you that this is how you speak to us.

You speak to us through your amazing word and so I pray for our hearts now that we'd know you really clearly, that we'd receive the spiritual food, the word that you have for us and that you'd teach our hearts about you and about ourselves.

We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're in John 21. This is the last in our four-part series, if you want to say that, about hospitality and we've touched on the goal of hospitality to deepen relationships.

We looked at kind of the holiness of hospitality. Last week, Simon was here and you looked at the meal that Jesus had with this woman who came in that wasn't invited but she came into the meal. And this is the last week. And this week, we're looking at the central character trait of hospitality, which is love. Which is love. The central character trait of what is needed is love.

[1 : 17] And before we read it, I just want to set the scene, what we're going to read. The scene that we're going to read is, it's after, we've just talked about resurrection, this is after Jesus has been raised.

But it is before he's ascended into heaven. So Jesus is risen. He's already appeared. Before we get to this, he's already appeared twice before to his disciples.

He spent time with them. And yet, knowing that that's all happened, the scene that we have is that there's one man, Peter, who, even though Jesus is raised, and even though he spent time with him, Peter still feels shame of the night he denied Jesus.

The night before Jesus died, where he denied him, though he read it in John 18. That is an important detail, because what we're going to see here is how Jesus' love for Peter restores him. And how his love for Peter, in many ways, prepares him to show that same love he's received to other people. And the reason it's in this, in a sort of hospitality series, is because it all happens in the context of breakfast.

[2 : 33] It all happens with Jesus' hospitality as the backdrop. But the emotion that we notice is shame. There is something very familiar about that emotion, isn't there, about shame, the shame that Peter feels.

Shame, we say it's familiar because we've all experienced that emotion. You think when you look back at your life, or when we look back at our lives, we all have those moments, don't we?

Those moments that make us cringe. Memories that make us want to hide. Memories that we'd rather forget, either from embarrassment or from regret.

We all know how shame makes us feel. And whatever it is in our past, we would do anything to avoid thinking about it. We would do anything to avoid it becoming the top of conversation. And we would do anything to avoid others finding out. We want to keep that part of our life hidden and locked away. We might even avoid people that would drag those shameful emotions to the surface, preferring to keep them at arm's length.

[3 : 49] Well, Peter here can't shake how he feels about the night before Jesus died. There is mixed emotion in him. On the one hand, this mixed emotion, on the one hand, he's delighted.

Jesus is risen and alive. Yet on the other hand, seeing him just brings up the memory, the pain and the shame of what he's done, his denial.

What we're going to see this morning is how Jesus' love has a radical impact on Peter. The same Jesus that is present with Peter on this resurrection encounter is the same Jesus that is present with us here this morning by his spirit.

And the same offer that Jesus makes to Peter is the same offer that he makes to each of us. The opportunity for us today is twofold.

The opportunity for us is that we could, we can stop hiding in our shame. And like Peter, accept this specific, personal invitation of Jesus.

[5 : 04] The invitation to exchange our shame for his love and be restored. But it's twofold. The offer is to do that, but then also to continue living as a restored person, offering that same love of Jesus to other people.

It is a twofold opportunity. Let's turn to John 21 then and read from this passage. Starting at verse 1.

After Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee, it happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Didymus, Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together.

I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them. And they said, we'll go with you. So they went out and got into the boat. But that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. He called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish?

[6 : 13] No, they answered. He said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you'll find some. When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it's the Lord. As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, it's the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment round him for he had taken it off and jumped into the water.

The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about 100 metres. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish you just caught. So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153.

But even with so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord.

[7 : 15] Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, 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. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted.

But when you're old, you'll stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

[8 : 27] Then he said to him, follow me. Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. This was the one who'd leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, Lord, who is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he asked, Lord, what about him? Jesus answered, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what's that to you? You must follow me.

Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die. He only said, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is it to you?

This is God's word. So we have an amazing encounter this morning that we see between Jesus and Peter.

And what we see is the principle, the kind of thing that I want us to see is that Jesus' invite, this invite, this breakfast invite, is where love is really experienced.

[9 : 35] It's where love is really experienced. That's the thing that I want us to see. And what we see straight from the off is Peter is in deep need of that experience. He's in deep need.

The shame, the guilt of his actions means that Peter is living in a cloud of doubt. That Jesus will ever love him again.

That's the reality of it. I mean, you just jump into Peter's world. You think of what it would have been like for Peter. Jesus is one off, if not the closest friend that Peter has ever had.

Imagine the times they'd had together. Times of confiding, sharing, chatting to the night, but also sharing jokes and making happy memories. Make no mistake, Peter is ecstatic that Jesus is risen. Yet the grief, the sorrow, the shame over the consequences of what he'd done just hang over him. You remember, we've read it, what's happened.

[10 : 36] Three times Peter is quizzed on his relationship to Jesus, and three times he replies, I don't know him, that he's not one of disciples. In many ways, that kind of initial shame and that sense of guilt is the right response.

Shame and hiding was the emotion given by God to Adam and Eve in the garden, as how you respond to how people would respond to sin. The danger with shame is not that initial feeling. The danger with shame is when it persists, when it won't leave. When instead of being a doorway to repentance, it becomes a wall that's impossible to hurdle.

Peter assumes Jesus is always going to keep him at arm's length. And what it leads to, what shame leads to, is self-sufficiency.

Because Peter assumes he's ruined his relationship with Jesus, he goes back to the one thing he can control. Fishing. When we feel shame, we do the same.

[11 : 42] When we feel like that, when we feel that emotion, we turn ourselves, don't we, to busying and distracting ourselves. It's an attempt, when we do that, to place that awful emotion in a box, hidden away, so we don't have to confront how we feel.

Perhaps keeping at a distance from that part of our lives, or maybe keeping people who we fear bumping into at a distance. But spiritually, we can even go one step further.

We pull back from Jesus, even. Turn to our work, our hobbies, our distractions. Anything to manage the guilt, to manage the shame on its own.

We distance ourselves from Jesus, assuming and fearing that we won't be welcomed by him again. And we pull back emotionally and spiritually. The reason is because shame feels irreversible.

It feels like breaking an egg. You break an egg, you can't put it back together. It doesn't matter how hard you try putting the egg back in the shell, and then the shell back together. It's impossible. It's irreversible.

[12 : 55] Shame feels irreversible. Like a broken relationship that'll never be fixed. A broken trust. A broken love that can never be put back together again. You just wish you could go back, replay it all, take it all back, and start afresh where you messed up.

Maybe there's things in our own lives today where this is touching a nerve and you feel like that about something in your own life. There are things that perhaps we've stored away in the recesses, the nooks and crannies of our hearts, hidden them away, and we believe to bring it up would just create distance.

And we still feel that the reason we won't go there is because if we do, we'll never get as close to Jesus as we'd really like.

Because that thing will always be there. We need the love Peter experiences as much as he does. We must live and breathe this passage and what it teaches us. We must live and breathe it. Jesus' invite is where love is experienced.

[14 : 12] Just look with me. Look at the passage. Even before the invite arrives, before the disciples even recognize who he is, where is Jesus? He's there on the beach. He's providing and preparing for them when they've tried to provide for themselves all night.

You can imagine how they've felt up all night, tired, nothing to show for it, isn't it reminiscent of the time when Jesus called them for the first time they were fishing and they couldn't catch?

Verse 5, we see he calls out to them, friends, haven't you any fish? He instructs them to fish on the other side of the boat and the disciples obey. They don't know he is, but they obey his word and they're desperate and it brings in a huge catch.

Verse 6, they can't even haul it in. Jesus' word and their obedience to it seems to be the means where Jesus makes himself known and the cogs begin to turn.

Perhaps it's the large catch that sways them, the miraculous amount. Just from putting the net on the other side of the boat, perhaps it was that this had all happened before, that this was no ordinary instruction, it was their Lord calling them.

[15:19] The disciple whom Jesus loved, that's John, is the first to make the connection. Verse 7, he says to Peter, it's the Lord. No sooner have the words left John's mouth, Peter throws himself into the water.

He's literally throwing himself towards Jesus. He's desperate, desperate to close this distance between them, to close it kind of physically as a metaphor of that he just wants to close it spiritually, to get that relationship back.

Perhaps, perhaps, he senses Jesus' grace is coming. Perhaps he anticipates that the one he denied might still perhaps be holding out an olive branch.

And he's right. Jesus meets him, not with a lecture about what he should have done, not with a list of mistakes so Peter can hang his head.

Jesus meets him with a meal. The action itself speaks loving forgiveness louder than saying the words.

[16:33] This is how Jesus' love works, isn't it? It invites us in before it actually deals with the issues. And isn't that right? Isn't that true with relationships?

When, when, with my own children, when they've messed up, when they've run off and done something wrong and there's times Naomi's not here but she will hide because she knows she's done wrong and she feels shame.

they don't need me to lecture them. She just needs a hug. She needs connection, not condemnation.

Needs to experience love as well as being told. Jesus doesn't just leave it there. Rather than telling Peter, invites him close.

As they eat together, Jesus talks, provides Peter with this amazing opportunity in what is clearly like a reversal of the denial. Three times Jesus denied and yet this time Peter's love for his friend, we get this confirmation because three times he says, do you love me?

[17:45] Three times denied, three times do you love me? Now, in the Greek language, we've only got one word for love, love, but in the Greek language there's four words for love. In this passage we get two.

The first word we have for love is agape. Agape love is the love of self-sacrifice. It's the love that chooses rather than reacts. It's the love that's directed by devotion rather than emotion and it's the costly kind of love.

When Jesus says, look, verse 15 and verse 16, he says, do you love me? He's saying, do you agape me? That's the kind of love. He's saying, would you choose to love me?

Are you directed to love me by devotion? Will you love me even when it's at a cost to you? But Peter doesn't respond with that word for love.

This is the amazing thing that's going on. Peter responds with a different word for love. Peter responds with the word phileo. Now phileo love, that's different to agape love.

[18:50] Phileo love is the love of affection, of fondness, of warmth, and friendship. It's not love that costs. Now, this isn't just a Greek lesson.

It's the key to Peter's restoration because what, Peter can't bring himself to see agape. He's too broken because it was agape love, it was costly love that was needed on the night of his trial for Jesus.

Jesus. That's where Peter failed. Peter couldn't love Jesus agape at a cost. When it was a cost, he just failed to love him in that way. He knows that's where he failed and so he can't bring himself to say the words.

He can only offer his wounded friendship phileo love. And what does Jesus do? He doesn't rebuke him.

He meets Peter there. The third time of asking, do you love me? He changes his word from agape to phileo. Jesus says, well at least do you phileo me?

[20:03] The third time Jesus changes his word to match Peter's, you didn't love when it would cost you? Do you love me with affection as a friend Peter? Is that what you have? Is it your friendship love that you have for me?

If it is, that's enough. Jesus steps into Peter's shame and accepts the love Peter has to give wiping his shame away.

What seemed like an impossible wall to hurdle, Jesus shows Peter, it is the door is opened for repentance. repentance, it is Jesus' love that restores Peter.

Whatever shame you carry on your shoulders, it might feel like a weight that can never be lifted, it might feel like a broken egg that can't be put back together, but right here we learn that it's not, because we're just like Peter.

Jesus holds out more than an olive branch, he holds out himself, and he invites you close, his invite is just like what it is to Peter, it is forgiveness experience first hand, and he loves you agape, and he loves you phileo, he loves you with deep affection as a friend that wants you to confide in him, to laugh and have joy, but it's the gospel where he demonstrates his costly agape love.

[21 : 27] It's the love of self-sacrifice where Jesus chooses to love you at a cost to himself. You see, the truth is, not Peter nor any of us could ever love Jesus really, truly, agape at a cost.

We never could. It's Jesus who loves us with that type of love at a cost to himself. That's the good news. It's the means where he takes away our shame.

we all feel like that broken egg. In our own power it's irreversible. But the good news of the gospel is that Jesus took our shame when he hung on that tree with his hands pierced with nails, demonstrating a sacrificial love that breaks through our hiding and restores us.

it's the events of what happened in between these two passages, isn't it? Peter's denial and we've got the cross and the resurrection, then we've got this post-resurrection moment.

It's what happens in between that is the means of his restoration. crucifixion, the most shameful way to die. You know, it wasn't designed just as a method of execution.

[22 : 43] I mean, they could have executed Jesus anyway, couldn't they? There's a much more, you know, he could have been executed behind closed doors with just nobody, hardly anybody watching.

But this method of execution was the most embarrassing, shameful, public, humiliating way possible. Jesus stripped practically naked and mocked at, laughed at, lifted high for the whole of the society to see and see the embarrassment and the shame.

He's shamed in the public eye as a picture of what is actually happening to him on a spiritual level.

He's taking on, as he's shamed in public, he's taking on the shame of our sin.

We can't imagine how Jesus felt as he hung there. You know, that feeling of shame which we've talked about, which we've all experienced of wanting to hide because of something we've done, how Peter felt, well, as Jesus hangs there, he feels the shame, not just of one person, but he feels and experiences that shame for all the shame that he takes away from us.

Imagine that is, that emotion must have been so oppressive. He feels God's divine displeasure. love, and he feels love, and everything to curl into a ball and just make it all go away, but he doesn't.

[24 : 09] He stays willingly hanging there. This is divine transfer. Jesus takes on the full weight of Peter's shame, your shame, my shame.

He feels that awful wanting to hide so that we don't have to hide anymore. he takes it so he can give us his love and forgiveness and restoration.

He's the lifter of the head. You know that when you feel shame and the head's down and when, maybe you remember this when you're young and you don't want anybody to see your face, but the person that loves you comes and lifts your head.

Jesus is the lifter of the head. When you stand before the living God, all your shame is removed, your head will be lifted as you look into the eyes of Jesus.

He pays for all your shame. He is practically naked so that he can clothe you with his love, forgiveness and acceptance.

[25 : 19] He's broken by your shame and guilt, but it is not irreversible. It's not like the egg. No, Jesus is put back together. The impossible happens in Israel. Jesus agape love.

And so, this is what it means for us, that we are restored and accepted and as restored people, what happens to Peter is the same as what happens to us.

You see, in the same moment, Peter is commissioned to extend this same hospitable love to others. And this is what happens to the church.

As the church has received, we're now free to give. The church's invite becomes Jesus' love experienced first hand. So, we see at the same time as Jesus restored, he's commissioned straight afterwards.

It's the final piece of the jigsaw. Just look with me, how Jesus follows up Peter's response of love with what continued love for him will look like.

[26 : 28] You see when he says, do you love me? And then he spheres up with verse 15, feed my lambs. Verse 16, take care of my sheep. Or we have shepherded my sheep in other places.

Verse 17, feed my sheep. Jesus, Peter receives love and straight away he's told, give that love away. Feed my sheep.

First and foremost, feeding, when it comes to Peter, he would be feeding them the word of God, the gospel itself. But as Jesus just showed Peter, that spiritual feeding happens in the context of tangible real world hospitality.

We don't just tell people they're forgiven. we show them they're accepted by inviting them to our table. The meal becomes the place where the gospel is not just heard but experienced.

Freely is received, now he's freely to give. Peter's shame has been broken, he's received love, forgiveness, acceptance. Jesus now compels him to show the same love to his people.

[27 : 39] The meal invite from the shore, this whole scene is just a metaphor of the gospel that there's no chasm or barrier, no distance between Jesus as Peter, there is deep affection for one another has been rekindled.

The meal is the place where Peter not only knows he's forgiven but where he experiences it. This is the opportunity, the amazing opportunity that we have as God's people.

We all have experienced this affection and love first hand. We've been invited to sit and dine at the table of the Lord. There's no chasm or distance between us and Jesus. The church, the body of Christ, we're to extend that welcome of Jesus and become the place where people experience his love, where they don't just hear about it, where people are not just told about it, but they experience his love and his acceptance by, they receive it by sitting down together to eat with his people.

It's what it means to live as a community of grace to demonstrate that. yes, people do need to hear the gospel, but they need to experience it too.

The meal is the place of forgiveness, where your shame doesn't buy you entry, where there's no special requirements. And if you want to get, I suppose, really practical, I think this is really powerful.

[29 : 03] It might be the last thing that you want to do, but for each of us, and I don't know if there's broken relationships that you have in your own walk with people, if you're at loggerheads with someone, perhaps someone's hurt you and they know it, telling them they're forgiven is important.

And this might be the last thing that you want to do, but as well as being told what they might really crave is to feel your forgiveness. When you sit and eat together, that act of even though you have had this disagreement and this relationship breakdown, the act of inviting them in, it puts me on the bones of your words.

That you really do forgive and love and extend them. It becomes tangible. Peter thought his friendship with Jesus was shattered beyond repair, but Jesus' love made the first move, restoring him over breakfast and sending it out to feed the spiritually hungry.

This is not just Peter's story, it's yours and it's mine. And his invitation is not just a one-time offer, the door is always open and there is always a place waiting to eat with Jesus, to be restored and then to be sent out again as followers full of his love and grace.

Let's pray. Almighty God, we come this morning and we know that emotion is very real for all of us in many ways.

[30 : 49] In the past, we we've all felt that emotion of shame and it is hard to get over. Sometimes we do lock it away and we want to distance ourselves from it.

Lord, I thank you that because of the gospel we don't have to hide it any longer and that we can come openly and bring it to you and with you there is healing, there is restoration, there is forgiveness.

And so we just want to do that now and bring it all to you, every part of us with nothing hidden, that we would freely receive the goodness of the gospel.

gospel. We can't ever love you with the cost that you did for us, we can't ever do that. But we praise you that you have done that for us.

And so we ask you to bless us and we pray that the more that we meditate on the cost that you've shown to us, that we would show that same love to others and that it would be powerful.

[31 : 54] Where we've harbored unforgiveness in our hearts, help us not just to demonstrate that we have with our words, but to show it with our actions too. The only way that we can do that is if you, by the power of your spirit.

We ask for all this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.