

Title: NOW WHAT? JOHN 21
(Chatham, NJ; 04/10/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: With the third appearance of Christ after his resurrection, we see the apostles still struggling to know what to do with the changes brought about by their experience.

Purpose: To extrapolate modern lessons from the apostles' experiences with the resurrection, and to provide insights for greater commitment.

Introduction:

1. The faith of the Apostles is still in the developmental phase in John 21.
2. This Gospel has encouraged the audience to have faith, but now it reveals the movement toward an entirely new life for the Apostles.
3. I am going to extrapolate what I think are some principles contemporary Christians can learn from these episodes.

I. What do I do when the "Easter glow" wears off?

- A. The resurrection was a unique/life-changing experience
 1. After Easter many churches experience a severe drop-off in attendance
 2. The Apostles hesitate: the Resurrection has occurred but now what
 3. Episode of "Chicago Fire" and the movie, "The Candidate" both had a similar scene: a newly-elected candidate said, "Now what do I do?"
 4. The disciples seem to be in that no-go, uncertainty zone: what next?
 5. Many people don't grasp the impact of the resurrection
- B. What do the disciples do?
 1. They go back to their old jobs: fishing (3)
 2. In a scene reminiscent of their recruitment (Luke 5:1-11)
 3. After an all-night, fruitless expedition, they caught an amazing number of fish
 4. John recognizes Jesus (7)
 5. They all know who it is: what does their silence say? Are they uncomfortable? Are they avoiding any discussion about what he wants from them?
 6. Most of us will go back to our old jobs, but we can't go back to our old life
- C. They had breakfast!
 1. No longer behind locked doors
 2. Jesus becomes the host, cooking and serving the meal
 3. We don't hear any conversation
 4. It seems a rather mundane setting for getting to the task of world-wide phenomenon
 5. Perhaps profound things happen in ordinary settings

II. How do I go on after my mistakes? (After seeing who I really am)

- A. The conversation after breakfast (15-19)
 1. Peter's denial of Jesus was probably no worse than all the others who ran away
 2. He was the one who made rash commitments: they may all fall away, but I won't
 3. Peter was prepared for a certain kind of battle but got another: General Boykin was a commander of Delta Force, an elite combat unit
 4. He found out that the enemies he fought off the battlefield couldn't be confronted in the same way the enemies on the battlefield were
 5. Perhaps this was Peter's problem early on
 6. We see a more mature leader in 1 Peter 5:1-5
- B. What holds us back? Guilt? Uncertainty? Feelings of inadequacy?

1. Many of God's servants in the past felt inadequate
2. Jesus' repeated questions seem designed to get Peter to affirm his commitment out loud
3. He had faltered before
4. Jesus reinstates and implicitly forgives him
5. Forgetting the past and moving to what lies ahead is still hard for all of us

III. Why concern ourselves with God's will for other servants? (Romans 14:4)

A. Peter and John

1. What about this man? (21)
2. Why do we think we have to be concerned about God's will for others?
3. Our legitimate desire to help with the needs of others often deteriorates into being busybodies who stick their noses where they don't belong
4. Jesus' response tells us that Peter has overstepped his boundaries: "What is that to you?"
5. Is this the Thomas Generation trap? "I'll be a disciple if he will."
6. A less strident form of "Take the plank out of your own eye," etc.
7. What God has in mind for other disciples is not necessarily our concern

B. The rumor: a case study in biblical interpretation

1. The misunderstood statement: "If" was left out
2. Maybe others were too concerned about John also.

Conclusion:

1. The Gospel ends abruptly without telling us what happened to the Apostles.
2. We believe John's Gospel was written later, well after the church had been established and perhaps after several of the other Apostles had been martyred.
3. Thus there was no need for John to explain all that.
4. He ends by reflecting on the remarkable life of Christ, 25.
5. That life is what directs us after the resurrection, forgives our mistakes, and helps us focus our lives on serving God.
6. Can we catch a glimpse of the wonder and amazement implied here?
7. "Follow me," is what Jesus says to all of us.