

Preamble:

This is the second to last sermon in the gospel of John...

Sermon introduction:

In 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first human being to step foot on the moon. After this incredible achievement, it is not surprising that so many people honored him.

Armstrong was honored with so many accolades that it takes forever to list them, but permit me to list a few...

He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Nixon, the Cullum Geographical Medal, the Collier Trophy from the National Aeronautic Association (1969); the NASA Distinguished Service Medal and the Dr. Robert H. Goddard Memorial Trophy (1970); the Sylvanus Thayer Award by the United States Military Academy (1971); the Congressional Space Medal of Honor from President Jimmy Carter (1978); the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy from the National Aeronautic Association (2001); and a Congressional Gold Medal(2011).

These awards are just the tip of the awards iceberg.

Furthermore, there are more than a dozen schools named for Armstrong in the United States, and many places around the world have streets, buildings, schools, and other places named for him. The Armstrong Air and Space Museum, in Armstrong's hometown, and the Neil Armstrong Airport in New Knoxville, Ohio, are named after him. The mineral armstrongite is named after him, and the mineral armalcolite is named, in part, after him.

Armstrong was honored for his great achievement. When someone achieves something great, they are honored, and they are usually treated differently.

The greatest achievement in the history of humanity was the resurrection of the son of God. In light of this stupendous achievement, how should the disciples honor Christ? How should we honor him? We honor him in at least three ways...

We adopt his mission!
We pursue his presence!
We trust his gospel!

First, we adopt Christ's mission!

What is his mission? To make us fishers of men and women.

John 21:1-6 (ESV) — 1 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. **3** Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Why during the night? Night was the best time to go fishing...

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5** Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?"

"Children" was a term of endearment...

They answered him, "No." **6** He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

It is roughly one week after the resurrection. These disciples are in Galilee. Since Peter was a fisherman by vocation, they went out to catch some fish.

They labored hard all night and caught nothing. Jesus shows up, but they don't recognize him, because he is a ways off. He tells them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. They obey this stranger, and they catch a massive number of fish.

Now, why this story here?

Jesus is reminding them of their mission. How do we know that this story is about the mission, or evangelism, or fishing for people? There are several indicators.

Just a few days before this encounter with Jesus, the risen Christ commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel to the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23).

In addition, in Mark 1:17, roughly three years earlier, Jesus encounters the same men, fishing on the same lake. He tells them to leave their fishing nets behind and follow him, so that he can make them fishers of people. Do you think they remembered this earlier event? Of course they did.

Furthermore, in Luke 5, roughly three years earlier, Peter had just finished a night of fruitless toil in his fishing boat. While he is cleaning his nets in the morning, Jesus tells him to take his boat back out into the deeper water and cast his nets on the other side. And lo and behold, Peter catches a massive number of fish. Peter's reaction is interesting. He is terrified of Jesus. Then Jesus tells him, "From now on you will be catching people." Do you think Peter connected that story with this story? Of course he did.

Finally, in John's gospel, miracles are often signs that carry symbolic meaning (6:32-35; 9:39). This post-resurrection miracle probably symbolizes the abundance of people who will be gathered to Jesus from all the nations through Christian mission (see also 12:19; 1:29; 10:16).

Which brings us to verse 11.

John 21:11 (ESV) — 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

153 fish is a lot of fish—a massive amount in fact. Various attempts have been made to interpret the number 153 symbolically. But the number simply means that Jesus blessed them with a massive catch of fish.

The point, Christ will help the disciples and the church catch a massive number of men and women with the gospel. This is exactly what happened.

A few weeks later, Peter preaches after Pentecost and 3,000 souls are converted (Acts 2:41). Within a few weeks of the resurrection, over 10,000 Jews were converted. And billions have been converted since then.

When ordinary people adopt Christ's mission, they are often enabled to do extraordinary things.

Illustration:

According to Tim Keller's biographer, Tim Keller's wife, and friends of mine who knew Tim Keller personally—Tim Keller was a socially awkward person. In other words, he was not great with people. He was never in the cool crowd in high school or college. Plus, he was never a great athlete. He could not figure out how to control his gangly 6-4 frame. Furthermore, he was not a great manager of people and ministry, which caused problems at Redeemer church in NYC, years later. In other words, he was a normal human being.

He was converted to Christ his freshmen year at Bucknell university in Pa. in the late 60s through Inter Varsity Christian fellowship. According to Keller, IVF was a small group of misfits. There were 10-15 students max. It had been "small and struggling" for years.

But the following year IVF grew from 15 students to 100 students. How? God blessed the efforts of ordinary people who adopted Christ's mission.

Later, Keller became the lead pastor of Hopewell presbyterian church, in Hopewell Virginia. This was a strange pairing. Tim Keller was a white collar intellectual—who loved English literature, presuppositional apologetics, and the puritans. His small church was filled with uneducated blue-collar folks who worked at the local chemical factory. When he arrived, there were only two college grads in the entire church. When Keller left, ten years later, the church had tripled in size. How? God blessed the efforts of ordinary people who adopted Christ's mission.

A few years later, in 1989, Keller planted Redeemer Presbyterian church in Manhattan. He was told, "You are crazy! NY has tons of crime, you have small children, NY is way too secular, NY is way too expensive, and NY churches fail."

Eventually this little church plant grew from 50 to 5,000 people. Furthermore, since 2,000, Redeemer City to City (a ministry of RPC) has helped start 838 churches in over 140 cities across the globe.

Not bad for a very ordinary guy, with awkward social skills, and poor management skills.

Why tell you this story?

God often blesses the efforts of ordinary people who adopt his mission. Yes, Keller had some profound intellectual gifts, but he also had several deficiencies. Despite his deficiencies, God used him to catch an extraordinary amount of fish.

Application:

The disciples and Tim Keller are not the only ones called to fish for people. God calls all of us to fish for people. This is his plan for our lives. ("Behold, I am with you always..." Matt. 28:18-20)

The story of the great catch of fish in John 21 reminds us that ordinary people can have great success when they adopt God's simple mission. The apostles were ordinary, uneducated, blue-collar workers. Yet, they turned the world upside down.

How? They depended on God. Notice who does what in this story. All Peter did was cast the net on the other side. He simply obeyed. God was the one who caused all the fish to swim into the net. Jesus filled the net and Jesus fills his church, but he wants to use us.

The disciples toiled all night in their own strength, and they caught nothing. But when they depended on God, they found great success.

John 15:5 is true of everything (Apart from me...), but especially evangelism. So how do we depend on God? We pray.... This is where we must start.

One scholar writes,

In many impoverished portions of the world, the growth of the church seems almost out of control. Why? Milne comments: "In their poverty and weakness they have to rely on prayer for the power of God and the simple direct sharing of the gospel." In North America, prayer has ebbed to a low tide, so that it is virtually impossible to get church members to make a commitment to concerted prayer. Just as Peter labored through the night in his own strength to find his nets empty in the morning, our widespread self-reliance and emphasis on worldly methods has left the church in the West spiritually poor and empty-netted. (R. Philips, Commentary on John)

Fishing for people is terrifying for most. How do we proceed? We must depend on God through prayer. What should we pray? We should pray for opportunities and boldness.

Be encouraged, Christ just promised the disciples the holy spirit by breathing on them. He does the same for us. We have been given divine spiritual power to fish for men and women.

Whenever evangelism comes up many of us feel guilty, because we don't do it. Please, please, please hear me. I am not trying to guilt trip anyone. I simply want all of us to experience the joy of watching God use us to do extraordinary things as we adopt his mission. There is nothing more exciting than leading someone to Christ.

God wants to use you to do extraordinary things. Maybe you are thinking, "I feel weak and powerless." Even better, the weaker you are the more glory God gets.

We honor the risen Christ by adopting his mission. But there is more to honoring the risen Christ, which brings us to the next point.

How do we honor the risen Christ?

First, we adopt his mission.

Second, we pursue his presence.

How do we pursue his presence? By imitating Peter.

John 21:7-9 (ESV) — 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was

stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. **8** The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. **9** When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

When Peter finds out that Jesus is the one on the shore, he throws on his clothes, abandons caution, abandons his friends, and impulsively jumps into the water and starts swimming.

He is 100 yards out (v. 8). This is not a short swim....

According to one scholar,

The emphasis is on Peter's single-minded obsession to reach Jesus. He abandons everything, even his fellow disciples and the fish, in his haste to Jesus. (Osborne, 458, John Commentary)

Clearly, Peter can't get to Jesus fast enough. He really wants to be with Jesus. But why? He understands grace.

Don't forget, a few days earlier, Peter committed the greatest sin of his life. He turned his back on Christ not once, not twice, but three times. He abandoned Jesus. Then a few days later, Christ rises from the grave.

Then Christ finds Peter. What is the first thing that Christ says to Peter and the disciples, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19-20).

Peter has been forgiven much, so Peter loves much. You and I will not pursue friendship with God until we understand how much we have been forgiven. Then we will run to him as fast as possible.

How do we pursue Christ's presence? By imitating Peter.

Why should we pursue Christ's presence? Because He wants to be our friend!

John 21:9 (ESV) — 9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

John 21:12-13 (ESV) — 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

These are amazing verses.

Jesus, the resurrected king of kings and lord of lords.

Jesus, the Lord, and giver of life.

Jesus, the one who is co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit.

Jesus, the one who knows everything about everything.

Jesus, the one who has unlimited power.

Jesus, the one who has power to forgive sins.

This Jesus, takes time to gather sticks, build a fire, bake some bread, and cook some fish so that he can share a meal with his friends. Wow!!!

Utterly amazing! The maker of all things wants to share a meal with them.

Application:

Here is the good news. Jesus invites the disciples, and Jesus invites us, to himself.

Matthew 11:28–29 (ESV) — 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

John 7:37–38 (ESV) — 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **38** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

He doesn’t just want us to serve him, although he does. He also wants to fellowship with us. He wants to be our friend.

Don’t forget that we will feast with him in heaven at the marriage supper of the lamb.

In the meantime, we honor the risen Christ by pursuing his presence. What does this look like?

We pursue his presence on Sunday mornings as we sing.
We pursue his presence as we take communion.
We pursue his presence as we read the Scriptures and pray.
We pursue his presence as we read good Christian literature.
We pursue his presence as we engage in genuine biblical fellowship.

And we do all of this, not to make Christ love us, but because he has already loved us and proven to us that he wants to be our friend.

But is all of this really true? Let’s keep reading...

How do we honor the risen Christ?

*We adopt Christ’s mission.
We pursue Christ’s presence.*

Third, we trust Christ’s gospel!

What is the gospel? We have been studying it in the last few chapters of John. The gospel is the simple message that Jesus lived, died in our place, and rose again, so that we can be reconciled to God. So that we could have friendship with God.

But how do we know it is true? How can we really trust the gospel? Once again, this brings us back to the evidence for the resurrection.

John 21:14 (ESV) — 14 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

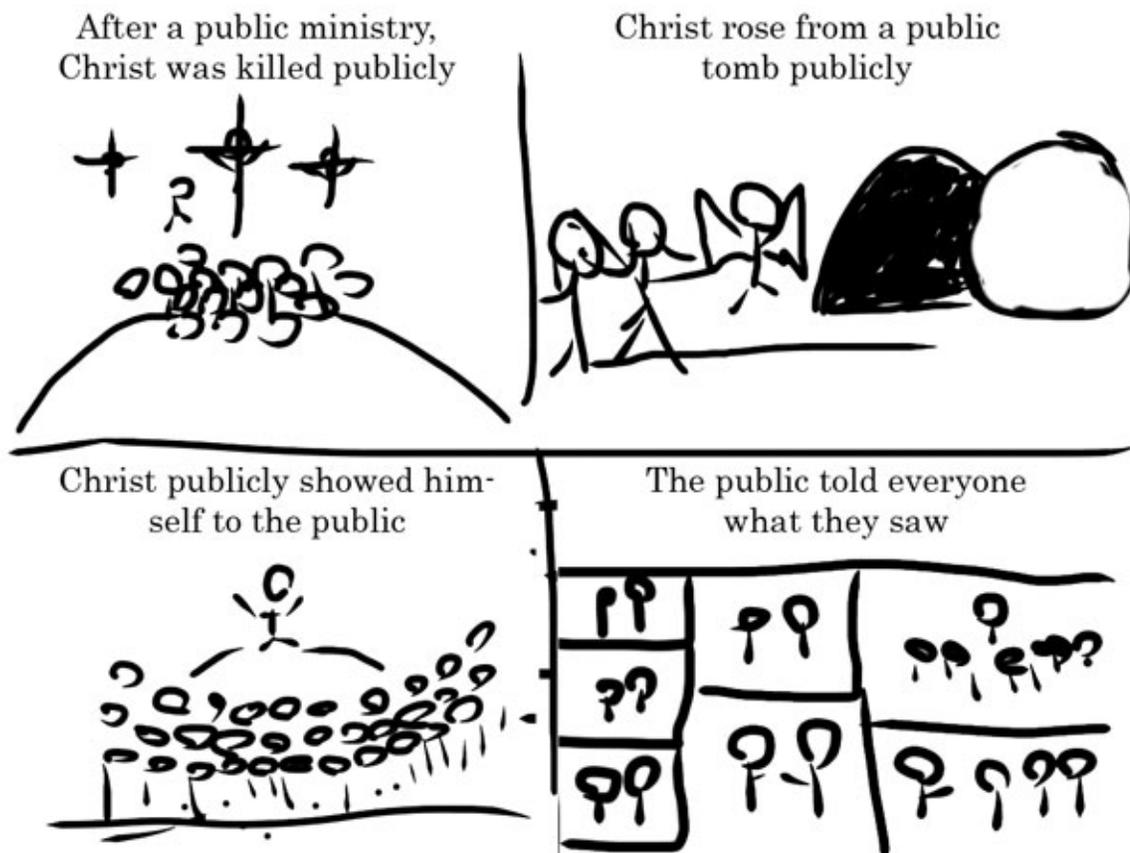
After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples, proving that he rose from the dead. If he rose from the dead then he is God and his claims are true.

In John's gospel alone he appeared not once, not twice, but three times. What can we say about the eyewitness testimony from the rest of the NT. A few weeks ago, we learned...

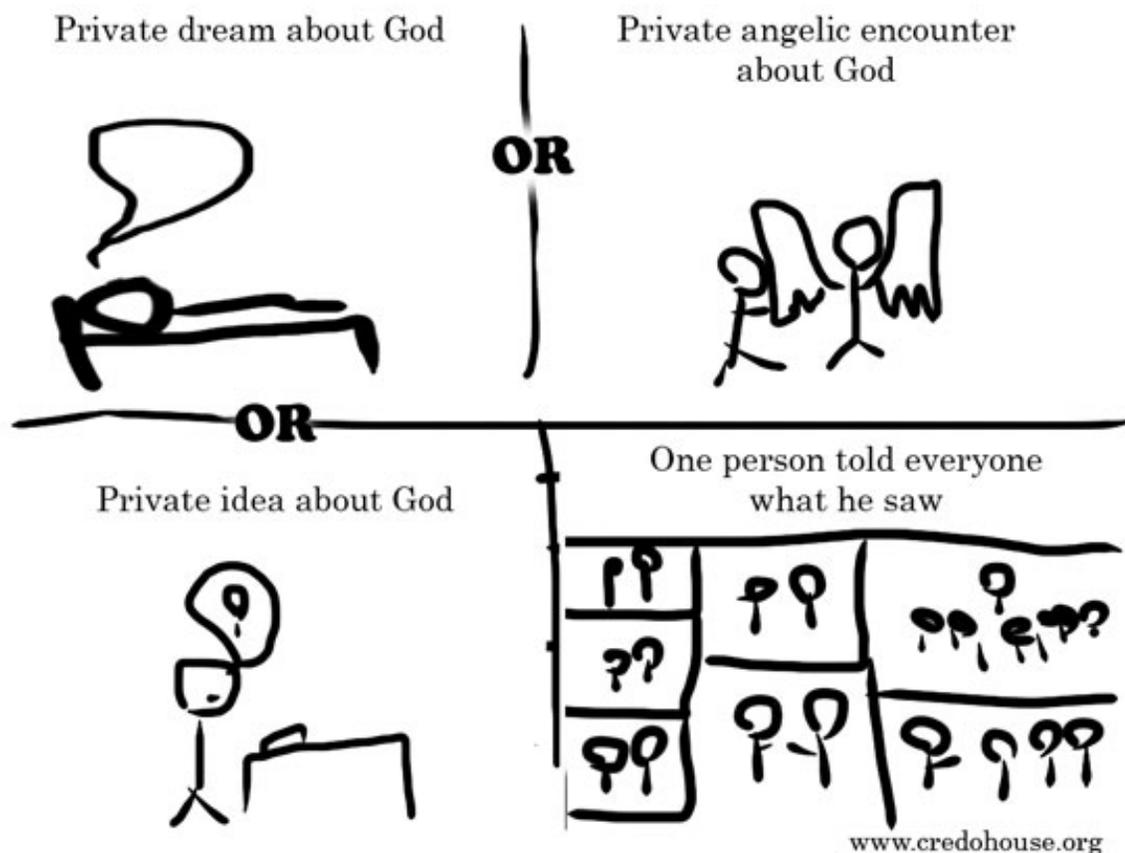
1. He was seen in different places
2. Over a period of forty days
3. He was seen eating and drinking
4. Walking and talking
5. By male and female alike
6. He was seen over a dozen times
7. He was seen inside and outside
8. He was seen by over 500 people at once
 - a. These people could have been cross-examined because they were alive.
9. He was physically touched
10. None of the critics could produce his dead body.
11. He was seen and believed by Jews
12. This was all very public...

I want to compare this last important point with other religions for a moment by looking at a chart.

How Christianity Started



How Other Religions Started



Jesus life, death, and resurrection were all very public. There were lots of eyewitnesses. And anyone in the first century could go and talk to the eyewitnesses.

In light of this, one scholar writes,

“Christianity is the world’s most falsifiable religion, yet it survived. The believer in the Islamic faith has to trust in a private encounter Muhammad had, and this encounter is unable to be tested historically. We have no way to truly investigate the claims of Joseph Smith (and when we do, they are found wanting). Buddhism and Hinduism are not historic faiths, meaning they don’t have central claims of events in time and space which believers are called upon to investigate. You either adopt their philosophy or you don’t. There is no objective way to test them. Run through every religion that you know of, and you will find this to be the case: Either it does not give historic details to the central event, the event does not carry any worldview-changing significance, or there are no historic events which form the foundation of the faith.” (Michael Patton- Now that I am a Christian: What it means to follow Jesus)

Every religion but Christianity you must accept on blind faith. In other words, you cannot falsify it. On the other hand, Christianity’s truthfulness is based on historical events that can be tested or falsified.

In other words, Christianity is the only world religion that is historically defensible.

In contrast the other religions of the world cannot be historically defended. They must be accepted with blind faith.

The historical evidence for the resurrection is true.

Application:

Ultimately, how do we honor the risen Christ? It starts by believing that he rose.

If he rose, than everything changes.

If he rose, he is God.

If he rose, all your sins can be forgiven.

If he rose, you can be reconciled to God.

If he rose, you can be God's friend.

If he rose, you can have access to resurrection power.

If he rose, you too will rise someday from the grave and dwell forever with him in paradise.

How do we honor the risen Christ?

We adopt his mission!

We pursue his presence!

We trust his gospel!

Lets pray...