

Service Overview

Speaker: Stephen Bates

Sermon Series: At The Table with Jesus

Message: At The Table We Find Restoration

Scripture Reference: John 21:1-19

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Service Welcome *Speaker: Reuben*

Good morning, everyone, including those joining us online as well. I was just reading 1 John 3, and it talks about how lavish God's love is for us, that he calls us his children, children of God. And so I just want to invite you to boldly come before him today.

I see a lot of kids this morning. Do you guys want to just come up and grab a flag or a streamer? So just feel free to come up. Can I get everyone to stand? And we're just going to come in to God's presence boldly into his throne of grace, declaring his goodness, his mercy, as children of God.

Worship Singing

Song: God is Able by Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan

Song: How Great Is Your Love by Brett Younker, Kristian Stanfill, Phil Wickham

Song: How Great Thou Art by Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

Song: Way Maker by Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu (Sinach)

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Father, son and Holy Spirit, we worship you today. We worship you in the fullness of who you are. You are good and kind and loving. You are full of grace and mercy. And you are our God, who is all powerful. You are the one who is able to make a way. And we praise you, Lord God. And we lift our eyes in faith to you today, Lord, for the circumstances in our lives and the circumstances in our world as well, we look to you, sovereign one. We ask that you go before us. Make a way. We bless you. Amen.

Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Please take a seat, everyone. Good morning, I'm Kathy, I'm one of the pastors here. It is so good to have each and every one of you here today. Kids, young people, it is time to go to your programs. We have loved having you worship with us this morning.

Turn around. Say hello to someone who's near you.

--- Break as congregation greet one another ---

There's some lovely conversations to continue with after our service. I do want to say welcome to everyone who's worshipping with us online today as well. It is good to have you with us. And we hope that you are able to join us in the room at some point as well.

I have two things that I'd love you to pop in as dates in your calendar.

Firstly, we have a church meeting in two Sunday's time (21 April) at 12:15. So, after our second morning service, we invite everyone who considers themselves to be part of our Parramatta Baptist

Church family to come and be part of these meetings. They're about, you know, some of the functioning of our church that's really important for you to be part of.

So we invite you for two Sunday's time at 12:15. Secondly, a date for your calendar is for all women and girls. We have a women's morning tea coming up on Saturday the 18th of May. That's from from 10 to 12. We would love to gather all women and girls of all ages. So, part of our heart this year is that we begin to form some really meaningful connections across generations.

We've been inspired. Did anyone get to see 'Old People's Home for Teenagers'? We've been inspired by this show. So, two of the teens and older people from the show are going to come and share their experience, but we're actually going to begin starting to form some of those meaningful connections between us as well.

So I'd love you to pop that in your diary. Personal invites will be out next week, and we'd love you to start praying for who you might invite as well, because this is super suitable for anyone, whether they come to church or not.

Well, now that Ben is out of the room, now we can do the sneaky Ben business. I'm sure most of you know, Ben is moving to another church, and taking up a pastoral role there. And his last Sunday with us is next Sunday, so it's come around very quick. One of the things we want to do is to bless Ben on the way out. And so we want to give him a book of encouragement and letters and ways that he's been significant in our lives.

We want to thank him. We want to bless him. So, we want to invite each and every person, if you're able to just write a note of encouragement or a thank you or blessing to Ben, and that we can pop in that book. If you have kids who have been blessed by Ben's ministry, please encourage them to do it. Or, if you have young adults in your household who have been blessed by Ben's ministry, encourage them to do it as well. So, we'd love that book to be brimming with notes of encouragement. I know from working with Ben for the last six years that words of affirmation of part of Ben's love language. And so, yeah, be sure to do that.

They need to be in by well, it was going to be today, but we're going to extend that to Wednesday. So, if you can email that through either to admin@parramatabaptist.com or jo@parramatabaptist.com, or if you want to bring a hard copy into the office, please do that. But yeah, that would be awesome.

The Cottage Counselling Centre

Introduction by Kathy

Well, on a completely different note, as a church, we are committed to be a healing community, where anyone is able to come and experience the wholeness that Jesus intended. And part of our commitment to being that healing community is we host a counselling service on site, and not for profit, and it's called Cottage Counselling.

And this morning I want to introduce you to Cottage Counselling a little bit. We're going to watch a video first up, and then I'm going to invite John, who's one of the directors of Cottage Counselling, just to come and share a little bit about what Cottage Counselling is. So, this service is accessible for all people in the community, but also all people in our church as well. So let's hear a little bit more about the cottage.

--- Cottage Counselling video plays ---

Since the beginning of the Collage Counselling Centre, we have grown from one centre to seven centres. We started on the Northern Beaches, we've moved to more central Sydney, and we're now moving to West Sydney. We've gone from a few hundred sessions in a year to 4,000-5,000 sessions in a year.

We essentially provide counselling to anyone in the community who needs it. For clients who can't manage even the lowest fee on our payment system, we have a subsidy program, and so we can provide a subsidy for a client who otherwise wouldn't be able to access counselling. To be able to do that, we need donations, we need grants, we need sponsorships.

It's this sort of place that people can come to when there isn't another place to go to help them. People come to us with all sorts of issues, like depression, anxiety, grief, trauma, childhood abuse, relationship problems, stress issues, all sorts of things.

Former Client: *It was one morning, I was getting together with some mates, was chatting away and then just burst into tears. And I'm not a crier. And they said, 'oh, you should go and see someone at the cottage.' So I met with the counsellor and we unpacked a whole lot of stuff that I left unpacked. But look, the care I got in that the cottage was great. Essentially, the counsellors are lifesavers.*

The counsellors themselves work for less to provide affordable counselling. But we do need money to subsidise the people who can't pay much. So, someone might come in the door and only pay \$10 or \$20 when the average cost of counselling would be more like say, \$140-\$150. So, we really need support from individuals and companies.

Supporting Company Representative: *When we started looking into various organisations when it came to mental health, what I think really stood out about the cottage was the access to services. People that you know, that cannot afford their services can go to the cottage and can actually get services. They will be looked after, but it's up to us corporates to actually help them look after the marginalised, look after those who can't afford. That's important.*

We would love for companies to sponsor the cottage and in doing so, they're really sponsoring the people who come to get help. And so the idea of partnering with companies and corporations, the cottage really invites that idea simply because we want to help more people and if we can get corporate sponsorship, then we will be able to not only help more people, we'll be able to open new centres. So the corporate dollar will really go towards essentially helping more people, and especially those who can't afford counselling.

--- Cottage Counselling video ends ---

About Cottage Counselling: John

Well, thank you. Thank you, first of all, to Stephen, Kathy, for agreeing to partner with the cottage a couple of years ago. Now that time's gone quickly. I work here as a counsellor in the room over there on Mondays. We did have two counsellors here a week, but that second counsellor has since had some family issues going on and has had to step back for a while.

So she is no longer here. But, as you saw in the video, we have gone from relatively humble beginnings about 27 years ago now where we had 2 or 3 counsellors, providing around 200 sessions in a year. And over the last 27 years, that's gone from 200 to 400 to 300 to about between 4,000-5,000 sessions in a year to provide accessible and affordable counselling.

I think the point of difference, I guess, between us and other counselling services is that firstly, all of our therapists, we've got psychologists and counsellors, are Christian, very committed Christians. And secondly, we just don't knock people back. So if, a person needs counselling, then we will make sure that they get it. So that means that our fee scale sort of runs in accordance to a person's income. And even if there is no or very little income, we will provide a subsidy so that that we make sure that they can get the help that they need.

We have been growing constantly over the last 27 years and we've moved from one centre to eight centres, and now there's more invitations out there, especially in western Sydney and southwestern Sydney, where obviously I think the need is great. Actually, every week it doesn't really matter whether you're at Parramatta, the Northern Beaches or Penrith, the need is great. And we just knock very few people back. Above me there you'll see what we need, to continue to do not just what we do, but in order to grow, we're really seeking corporate sponsorship. We are a registered charity. So, all deductions, whether individual or corporate, are tax deductible.

To be able to continue to grow in the way that we have, we really invite, as I said in the video, both the individual and the corporate sponsorship. So if you are working in a business or own a business that would like to support this ministry, I would dearly love to talk to you after the service or have a cup of coffee with you at a convenient time.

If you're an individual that would like to support the cottage, if you give as little as \$25 a week, that's probably enough to keep a person going for as long as they need it, so that that money would go straight to providing the counselling that they need. And of course, we would invite individuals or corporates to give larger amounts if that's possible.

But even small amounts, particularly if they're ongoing, just means that we can keep saying yes to people who need counselling. Just to perhaps give you, in wrapping up, a couple of examples, I guess, of the kind of people that we see. We see everyone from every profession, every age, every situation, we just see everyone.

But I guess I'll give you example of perhaps some of the people who really need the help. I think for the last five years, we've been seeing a woman—I'll call her Mary. And her marriage was disintegrating. The husband was her only source of financial assistance. As soon as that situation in their relationship was disintegrating, then he would block access to finances, and she could not get help. On top of that, a couple of years into therapy, she got cancer and needed even more support. A person like that, there is just no way that they can go to a regular counselling service and pay a regular fee. We've been seeing that lady for about, I think somewhere between 4 to 5 years and we're still seeing her.

There are many, many situations with women in domestic violence situations who don't have access to finances, who's finances are controlled. And that's part of the control. And they often have to come to us, unbeknownst to their husband, and say, 'what on earth can I do?' And they can't say that they're getting help. They can't pay for help. And we would see women in that situation all the time, sadly. So, the money that comes from your individual support or corporate support goes directly to enabling those people to get help.

It's a privilege for me to be one of the directors of the cottage. I've been working for the cottage for over ten years now, but have been the director for the last three years. I have got fliers here. If you go to that QR code, you can just give straight to the ministry, and that would be lovely.

If you would want to talk more about ongoing support, then of course, that would be lovely too. I've got lots of these fliers. I'll leave some on the table as well. There are brochures here for those who want to get support. Anytime you can go straight through the church or through our website, and you will get go through to an intake lady who will direct you to the right counsellor for you or somebody that you know.

So once again, we could not do it, the work that we do, without financial support or church partnership. And so being a part of this church and having a room and working here is just part of the blessing and part of the kingdom of God, where we as a ministry can partner with churches to do what we do and support what they do. So thank you. Thank you, Parramatta Baptist. Thank you Steve and Kathy for having us as a ministry and for having me here today.

Wrap-Up: Kathy

Thank you, John. We appreciate all that the cottage and you sow into lives. And we're on about healing, we as a church. And so, this is just one of the ways that we sow into healing. And, as John has said, if you want to access the cottage for yourself or for a friend, there are brochures for that and our noticeboard in the foyer as well.

Bible Reading: John 21:1-19 (NSRV)

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2 Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,[a] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 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.

4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' 6 He said to them, 'Cast the net to 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 there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards[b] off.

9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' 16 A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' 17 He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt 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. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Sermon: At The Table We Find Restoration *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Morning, everyone. Welcome to Parramatta Baptist Church. My name's Steve. I'm one of the pastors here. We had a wedding up in the Hunter Valley yesterday, and I thought that we'd have a small congregation today, but, I never quite get that right in terms of working out whether it's going to be a large one or a small one.

--- Interlude where Steve acknowledges the long history of Parramatta Baptist Church and commemorates long-standing members of the congregation for their partnership & service ---

Sometimes I don't like being a pastor. But then mornings like today, I do. Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ through the lens of the tables that Jesus sat at for couple of weeks. On Good Friday I made the point that Jesus always seemed to be going to a meal, coming from a meal, or sitting at a meal. And we've looked at what happened and the significance of what happened at the tables, particularly around Easter. We looked at how Jesus took the role of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples, washing them as a pointer to his humiliation that was still to come on the cross. We looked at the way that Jesus at the table took bread and the cup, pointing to his body that would be broken for our sins, his blood shed so that we could come into a new covenant with God in a very real way.

Jesus drank the cup of our suffering, and in exchange gave us a cup of blessing, a forgiveness, a cup of life. But there's something else that Jesus does at that same table, which we need to remember in order to understand fully this passage that was just read. It's just after Jesus has spoken about the symbolism of the bread broken and the cup shared.

And in Matthew 26:31, Jesus says, "this very night, you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I've risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter's response to those words from Jesus is quite touching, genuinely touching. He says, "even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." Jesus destroys that moment, that touching moment, and he says, "truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

And yet Peter just doubles down as he is inclined to do. And he declares, "even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. And yet it's only hours later that a servant girl says to Peter, "you were with Jesus." He denies for a little while longer, a second servant girl says the same thing. He says, "this fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denies at this time with an oath, "I do not know the man."

And a little while longer those standing around went up to Peter and said, "you are one of them. Your accent gives you away." And at this point Peter doesn't just say, "no, I don't know him," but

we're told that he begins to call down curses, which you can understand what that means. And he begins, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man." And as he says that, the rooster crows.

I love Peter. I love what he does. I love the way in which he says the things that everybody else is just thinking. There is no such thing as an inside thought, is there? Because how many of us would not have just done the same thing that he did? Disowned. Denied. I think most of us wouldn't have been in the courtyard. We would have run.

But this betrayal cuts deep for Peter, and he leaves, weeping bitterly. Have you ever experienced a sense of regret like that? I'm not talking about the sense of regret of buying something you didn't wear, or taking out a gym membership you never went to. Have you ever experienced a deep sense of regret?

I regret so deep that it physically hurts. I mean, I remember the pain of some of my regrets. The ones that really cut deep. It was a long time ago, but I still remember my sense of regret in Year 8 when I shared something about a friend that he'd shared with me in absolute confidence. And as Year 8 boys tend to do at times, I was trying to be funny, be the centre of attention, and I caused my friend great embarrassment by sharing what he'd shared with me with others. It damaged our friendship badly because I proved that I could not be trusted, and I regretted that deeply, even as a Year 8 boy, I regretted that deeply. I knew that I'd done something wrong.

And so I apologised, and we're still friends. But I've regretted not many of the things I have done. I think perhaps I've regretted more the things I haven't done. Maybe out of fear or just not wanting to get involved. There are things that I've said no to that I've regretted. But I've come to understand over my years that my feelings of regret are actually really important for me.

You can get a T-shirt that says no regrets, but I don't own one and I don't want one, because I've come to realise that my feelings of regret are really important because my feelings of regret tell me that something is not right. My feelings of regret tell me that there is something I need to learn, something I need to do differently. Something that I need to make amends for. My regrets can shape me. They can help me grow in character and in humility. And when I allow my regrets to cause me to apologise for what I've done, it actually deepens my relationships rather than damages them.

You see, my regrets are important. But I don't want them to control me. Because if I get stuck in my regrets, that simply leads to shame. And that's not helpful. You know where this is going when it comes to John 21, perhaps Peter and the others by now have seen the empty tomb. They have seen Jesus, and they know that he's been raised. Jesus, who told them to go to Galilee and wait for him.

So they do, and they wait. How are they feeling as they wait? I'd love to know. I imagine they would still be thinking, 'what the heck has just happened over these past days?' It was a strange time for

them. And when things are unfamiliar and strange, what's a good thing to do? Do something familiar. When Peter says, 'let's go fishing', and the other disciples say, 'we'll go with you.' And what happens is they go fishing. It goes back to Luke 5, when they first met Jesus, and when they first were invited to follow him, they fish all night and they catch absolutely nothing.

They are about 100m still from the shore. When someone calls out 'friends, you have no fish, do you?', they didn't know who it was. It was still too dark. And so they just say no. Then the voice calls back to them, 'cast your net on the right and you'll find some.' And so they did. And they did. And there were so many fish that they could not get the net back into the boat.

And John says to Peter, 'it's the Lord. You remember the story. It's the Lord again. He's done this again.' And I love what Peter does. And again, this echoes of what he did previously. It's reminiscent of the time when he was in a boat. And Jesus is not in the boat. And so regardless of the circumstances, Peter gets out of the boat to go to Jesus.

And I wonder whether he tried to walk on water again. But no, he had to swim this time. But he leaves the other disciples in the boat struggle with the net, and he swims to shore to be with Jesus. And when they get to shore, I presume Peter beat them. I don't know what he would have done at that point.

Maybe a nervous little, 'well, hi, Jesus. How are you? I wonder how long those guys are going to be.' But they all get to shore and there's a charcoal fire. There's some bread and some fish, and I know there's no physical table at this one, but it's a table of sorts, is it not? It was a meal that Jesus had made for them. And Peter goes and brings some of the fish that they caught, brings them to Jesus. And Jesus says to them all, 'come, let's have breakfast.' And once again, Jesus takes bread and he gives it to him, and he does the same with the fish. I do wonder if there was a sense of awkwardness at this meal.

It was their third time seeing Jesus we're told, and they would have still been unsure of what was going on and what all of this meant. You put yourself in their situations. We saw this man crucified just a few days ago, and here we are having breakfast with him on a shore in Galilee. If that doesn't confuse your brains, nothing will.

But they would have also been very aware of their own abandonment, their own disowning, and in a sense, their betrayal of Jesus on the night when he was betrayed. Sure, Judas was the one who betrayed him. But so had they. And did they regret this? No doubt.

Jesus has a conversation with Peter. When they'd finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, "do you love me more than these?" And I'd love to know what Jesus was pointing at, if he was pointing when he said, "do you love me more than these?" Is he looking at the 153 fish?

Probably not. Is he pointing to the boats in terms of a second calling away from being a fisherman, to being a follower and a disciple, and also a leader of the church? Maybe.

Is he saying, "do you love me more than the other disciples?" Or in terms of him loving the other disciples? No, I don't think that's it. He's reminding Peter that not that long ago, Peter declared that regardless of what the others did, it doesn't matter what anybody else in the world would do when it came to Jesus, Peter alone would be the one. He would be the one who would love Jesus the most. He would be the one who would stand by. And when everybody else walks away.

"Peter, is your love for me greater than the love that these other disciples have for me?" And Peter doesn't answer the question. He can't say yes. He's in no position to make such a bold claim. Now, his actions prove otherwise. But what I like is that Peter doesn't make excuses either. He doesn't say, "Oh Jesus, we were so tired that night. It wasn't a good one for me. I wasn't at my best. I'm sorry."

He doesn't make comparisons to say, "well, Jesus, at least I followed to the courtyard. Those other ones, you know, the other ten who were still left, they didn't even come anywhere near." So he's not trying to do that. He doesn't actually answer the question, very simply appeals to Jesus' knowledge. "You know, you know that I love you." And Jesus says, "feed my lambs."

A few things, Peter. Jesus asked the second time, "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." And then a third time, and Peter is hurt. Hurt by the third question. It calls into question the sincerity of his response. "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "feed my sheep."

You can see what's happening here. Three times Peter denied even knowing Jesus Christ, and that was knowledge that the disciples shared. They knew that. But now, three times, Peter acknowledges Jesus. "Yes, Lord, you know you know that I love you." And also in there three times, Peter, and at least some of the disciples hear Jesus' response as well.

"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, take care of my sheep, and feed my sheep." I love what's happening in this passage. I love what's happening around that table on the shore. Because Jesus isn't allowing Peter to be destroyed by his regret. In this exchange with Jesus, Peter is not being shamed, but he is being shaped. Jesus is chiselling away at Peter's self-confidence and his bravado because he will be a better man without it.

When we read the book of Acts, we see that Peter is still bold. My goodness, he is bold. He hasn't lost his boldness and his courage, but what he's lost is his brashness and his self-confidence. And I like also that Jesus isn't demanding that Peter publicly say that he's sorry, i.e. "I want you in front of all of these men to apologise to them, that you put yourself over them, that somehow you were better than them when you weren't." That would have been a cruel and harsh thing to do. But Jesus

doesn't do that. He doesn't demand that Peter say sorry. He doesn't ask that Peter never make the same mistake again. "Well, I'll forgive you now, but don't you ever do that again."

Instead, three times he asked Peter, "do you love me?" And I just think that's incredibly profound. Because at this table of sorts, on the shores of a lake, Jesus invites Peter to see that their relationship doesn't depend on Peter, doesn't depend on Peter keeping his promises. It just depends on the answer to that question. "Do you love me?"

It doesn't depend on Peter's understanding. Jesus doesn't ask Peter, "have you figured me out yet? Have you worked out that I am God in the flesh, that I came to earth to reconcile you to the Father through my death on the cross?" Jesus doesn't say that. He just asked, "do you love me?" You see, this is the most important question that Peter had to answer, and it's the same with us.

Jesus isn't going to quiz me on whether I know the order of all 66 books in the Bible, though I reckon I could give it a red hot go. He's not going to ask me how many sermons I preached, and how many of those sermons people actually listened to or enjoyed. He's not going to analyse me about all the mistakes that I've made in ministry over the past however many years.

So the question that matters most for Jesus is, do I love him? And there is a second question—do I love others? But the most important one is do I love him?

Our relationship with Jesus Christ has nothing to do with how worthy we feel of being loved. Peter would have felt, at this point in time, of so unworthy of being loved by Jesus, and at times so do we. But the journey of our faith depends on when we acknowledge that we don't come to God with an exemplary life, or at least of brave and magnificent days, but we come empty handed.

Jesus takes our regrets, and instead of allowing them to fall into shame, he invites us to be shaped by him. You say this is the good news, that a relationship with God is not dependent of how good I am or how good you are. It is dependent upon our answer to that simple question that Jesus asks, "do you love me?"

I love also in this story that not only does Jesus let Peter know that their relationship is good, it's unbroken, but that Peter is still one of his disciples. Feed, tend, feed lambs and sheep. I don't understand the difference between that, and none of the commentators agree on it, so that doesn't matter. What's happening here is that Jesus is making Peter understand that he is not just one of his disciples, but that he will be a leader among them.

Not only does Jesus publicly confirm his relationship with Peter, but he also publicly restores him to leadership. And it's important for us to remember that as Christ has asked to serve him and to minister to others, it's never because of how great we are. In fact, the best place, and perhaps the

only place where we can minister from is from a place of brokenness, humility, and dependence upon God.

We lead and we serve not because we're worthy, but simply because of God's graciousness. I often wonder when is someone so bad that God can no longer use them to bring about his purposes? I think about at what point can God no longer use anyone for their glory, for his glory? Because when I read through the scriptures, I find that God can use anyone that he chooses. Anyone where there is genuine repentance or remorse, where there is a confession of a broken state of our lives, God will use and shape for his glory.

At this meal, by the light, at this table of sorts, Peter finds restoration. He finds that the intimacy of the relationship that he had with Jesus Christ is restored, and he lays down his bravado and he lays down his shame, and he chooses instead humility and repentance. And he finds in that that God can and will use him to grow the kingdom.

Reflective Exercise *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

What I'd love for us to do in response to this passage is to take about 5 or 6 minutes to create a place of stillness and silence. We've wanted to do that as we've come to the table over these weeks, just to create space in the service and for us to do this.

And so, again, I'll just invite you to close your eyes, put yourself into a comfortable posture. And again, that posture of actually just having our hands open, just as a posture of being willing to receive from God, being open to what he might show us or speak to us. So we just invite you just to find a place of quiet.

And as you close your eyes, I invite you to place yourself in the story. I invite you to put yourself on the shoreline as one of Jesus' disciples. And I want you to imagine that he is there with you. I want you to think about how you feel. You're sitting in his presence. He's there with you. Maybe just a meter or two away. How are you feeling in his presence?

And now I want you to think about all the regrets that you carry. That as you're sitting with him, there are regrets, some things that you may want to tell him or confess to him. And just take some time just to think through that. What are the regrets you need to bring to Jesus?

As you're speaking to him, what's he doing? Do you sense him saying something to you? I want you to hear his question. Do you love me? What do you say to him in response?

Father, we thank you that there is nothing that can separate us from the love is given to us in Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you for the promise that when we confess our sins that you are faithful and just, and that you will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. And Father, we thank

you for your gift of Your Holy Spirit, given to us, living within us, and the way that he takes our regrets and our mistakes. And he so desires to shape us into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus Christ, we love you, and we give ourselves to you, trusting you and trusting all that you have done for us. May our lives bring glory to you. Amen.

Shall we stand in response?

Worship Singing

Song: How Deep the Father's Love for Us, Stuart Townend

Post-Sermon Prayer *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

My father, thank you that your heart for us is always restoration.

Thank you that you don't hold us out and shame us and point out that which needs to improve and all of those things. But, Lord, you love us and you draw us back into loving relationship with you. Thank you for your gentleness, your kindness. Jesus, thank you that you made the way possible for our restoration.

Thank you that you share the heart of the Father. You draw us into that beautiful place of intimacy with you, where we can be whole fully who you created us to be. And Holy Spirit, thank you that you continually draw us to this table with Jesus. Thank you that you are the very power of God who is at work in us, helping us to be the people who Jesus created us to be.

Would you fill us afresh? May we continue to respond to you, Holy Spirit, where you convict, where you show those places that you're wanting to heal, you're wanting to restore. May we work with you, knowing your power of restoration at work in us. We bless you, Lord.

Conclusion *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

We would love you to join us for morning tea, but we also want to offer prayer this morning as well. So our prayer team will be along the front, and we would love to pray into those places of restoration. Maybe it's in your life. Maybe it's in a situation that you're in. Maybe it's in the life of someone that you're working with and you're finding that hard going. But we're just going to pray in faith this morning, and we're going to come before our beautiful God.

So we invite you to come for prayer, or we invite you to stay and join us for morning tea. Bless you.

Online Outro *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Hey, thank you for joining us online today. We pray that you have been blessed and encouraged. And if there is something from today that you would like us to pray into with you, don't hesitate to let us know.

If we haven't met you, we'd love to hear from you. And you also welcome to come and join us in person as well. To know more about our church, please go to our church website and you can also find more details about who we are through our newsletter. And you can subscribe to that through our website as well.

God bless you and may you have a great week.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*