



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 21: 15-25

Fall 2023

"Follow Me"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are concluding our studies in this Fourth Gospel with chapter 21, verses 15 through 25. I think if I could summarize this text in a phrase, it would be joining two major themes that we see here; or one major theme and one great exhortation. We read this, and it's clearly about *love*. And the exhortation that the Lord gives to Peter, (and by application to all of us), is, 'Follow Christ'. So I think we put the two together as, '*From love, follow Christ*', and I think that's the theme of this text, and that's the theme of our lesson,

¹⁵ So 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." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him again 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, "Shepherd 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 all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to *go*." ¹⁹ Now this He

said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

²⁰ Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following *them*; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" ²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!" ²³ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you?"

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

John 21: 15-25

Well, may the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. But I want to echo what Seth's said about the importance of prayer—and I think, as a congregation, we witnessed some of that in just the past few months with some of the trials that some of the families here have gone through, and the way the LORD has answered prayer greatly. Well, let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together. What a privilege it is to be with Your people. I can't say that enough. We can say that every Sunday, but this is a great day, for this is the day that we remember the resurrection. Every Sunday is 'Resurrection Sunday', and we who are Your children live in that resurrection life. And we pray that that life will only increase within us—and it will do that as we follow Your Son. As we

follow Him day by day, we grow in Him, we mature, we become like Him, we become like Christ, and we enjoy that new life that He obtained for us through His death.

We pray for that, LORD. We pray for that this morning because, as we study the Word of God, You sanctify us, You nourish us with it. We may not notice it this morning. We may not walk away from this thinking, 'Well, I've grown a little more.' That's not the way growth works. It's imperceptible, but it happens, and it happens over time. And as we follow Your Son and as we understand Your Word, and nourish our souls with it; and through prayer, through fellowship with the saints as well, we grow. And we grow over time, and we are prepared for the trials of life that come unexpectedly.

Calvin talked about that in *The Institutes*, how there's so many things that can happen, so many dangers out there, we can't even count them. They're innumerable. And one of them that he mentions is a horse stumbling, and a person's life is changed completely; "It is appointed unto man once to die..." (Heb 9:27). And this is something we all need to consider, that the day is coming when we will pass from this world. Are we ready? We will only be ready if we are students of Your Word and we grow in Christ daily. So help us to do that, LORD.

And bless us in this hour: We pray that this will be a time of learning, of being instructed from Your Word by the Spirit of God, but also that the Spirit of God would apply these things to us and we would see the beauty of Christ—and want to follow Him out of love.

So we look to You to bless us, LORD, build us up in the faith. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(*Message*) The apostle John is known by various titles, 'The Evangelist', and 'The Theologian', and 'the apostle of love'. Each one is well deserved. His Fourth Gospel is both evangelistic and theological; "...these things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (Jn 20:31). John's Gospel was written to affirm the doctrines of Jesus' deity

and humanity, and to lead people to salvation. He is the 'Theologian' and the 'Evangelist'.

But he was also well named, 'the apostle of love', not only because he identified himself as, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", (vs20), but because the subject of love fill his Fourth Gospel. And that is especially noticeable in the last verses of the book when three times the Lord asks Peter if he loved Him. And the Lord did that because He loved Peter, unconditionally.

Peter had failed the Lord miserably. After boasting in the upper room, before the other disciples, that he would not desert Jesus, that he would 'lay down his life for Him', (Jn13:37), he denied Him three times. It was something everyone knew about, but wouldn't talk about. It was, 'The elephant in the room.' But it had to be addressed and Peter forgiven and restored, if he was to resume his ministry.

So after the disciples finished the breakfast that they shared with the Lord, He turned His full attention to Peter and, in the presence of all of these disciples, He asked the question in verse 15, "Simone, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" Now, 'more than these', might mean, 'more than these men'—the other disciples, 'Do you love them more than Me?'

Or, it might mean the 'things', 'these things', meaning the boats and the fishing gear lying around the shore. Both are possible, and they make good sense: 'Do you love Me more than your friends, more than the companionship you have with them, more than your job and accumulating things, and having financial security? Do you love Me more than that?'

But a third option, perhaps, better fits the context. And that is, 'Simon, do you love Me more than these other men do?' After all, that was what Peter boasted in the upper room. In Matthew's account, when he declared his willingness and readiness to lay down his life for Christ he added, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." (Mat 26:33). In other words, 'Lord, I love You more than these other men love You.'

And so, in their presence, the Lord now puts the question to Peter, 'Do you love Me more than these other men do?' And Peter, who had been severely humbled by his failure answered affirmatively, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." (vs15c). But he refused to compare his love with the others. He couldn't know how much they loved the Lord, but he had learned how weak his love was, and had learned to put no confidence in himself. He knew the Lord knows how strong his love was; and he left it at that.

The conversation was necessary, but also an interesting conversation because of the synonyms that are used in it: There are two words for *love*, two words for *shepherding*, and two words for *sheep*. But it's the two words for *love* that have gotten the most attention. Three times, the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him. The first two times He used the verb *agapao*; and the third time, the verb *phileo*.

I don't want to get into the weeds on this, but I think it's important because this is an issue that many commentators bring up and people preach upon. We know these Greek words. If you've never had Greek, you are familiar with *phileo* from 'philanthropy' —which is 'love of man'; and 'Philadelphia' —which is 'love of brother', the city of brotherly love.

And we know *agapao* from the noun *agape*. Christians often speak of *agape* love, which is sometimes explained as being the special Christian love. And some interpreters have found a lot of meaning in the two words by reasoning that *agapao* is the stronger love, and *phileo* is a more natural love, something like friendship.

That's indicated in the translation of the New International Version. If you have that, you can see that here, which has, 'Simon, do you truly love Me?', (that's for *agapao*), '...do you truly love Me more than these? Yes, Lord. You know that I love you.' And in that Peter answered with the word *phileo*, not *agapao*. And the explanation given from that translation is, 'Peter had been humbled by his fall, so humbled that he refused to use the stronger verb for love.' And each time Peter answered with the weaker, *phileo*.

Well that makes sense, but it may be reading more into the passage than is warranted because it's not all that clear that there's a great distinction between these two words. For example, *agapao* isn't always positive. It's used, for example, in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 10, of Demas and his improper *love* for, "this present world", which was the reason that he abandoned Paul in Rome. So it may be best not to make too much of John's use of two different words.

The significance of this conversation is not found in the difference between the words for love any more than in the different words he used for *shepherding* or *sheep*. The significance and lesson are in Peter's confession of love. Three times the Lord asked, 'Do you love Me?' He asked that question three times because Peter had denied Him three times. And three times Peter affirmed his love for the Lord before the other disciples.

The result was he was publicly 'rehabilitated'; publicly forgiven, restored, and reinstated to service. Each time he confessed his love for Christ, the Lord said; "Tend My lambs." "Shepherd My sheep." "Tend My Sheep." His love for the Lord would be revealed in his care for the Lord's flock. He was saying to Peter, 'If you love Me, you will love My flock, you will love My sheep, for whom I died, My people.' And if he loved them, he would serve them.

In his third epistle, 3 John, the apostle John deals with a man named Diotrephes. He had a position of authority in the church, probably an elder. He was an ambitious man. John wrote of him that he, "loves to be first." (vs9). There's no place for that in the church, and nothing of it in what the Lord said here to Peter. He called him to service. — He didn't install Peter in the office of shepherd. He didn't tell him to be the pastor of the flock.

The ministry is described here in verbs, not nouns. It's not about 'holding office', it's not about 'having authority', it is about acting as a servant. It is about doing and sacrificing, and Peter did it well. You see that in the Book of Acts. You see it in his epistle, 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 1-4, where he gave important counsel on the ministry when he

exhorts elders to “shepherd the flock of God among you.” He told them to do it voluntarily. He told them to do it with earnestness, “...not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” And then he added, “When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Well unless Diotrephes changed, he'll have no crown. But here's the point. The Chief Shepherd in 1 Peter chapter 5 is the Good Shepherd of this Gospel, Christ. Men in the church, elders, are just His under-shepherds—responsible to Him and responsible to Him to take care of His flock. Not ‘our’ flock, His flock.

And that care, or shepherding, is feeding the sheep. That's what shepherds do. They lead the sheep to pasture. And it's what the Lord's shepherds do for His flock; by teaching the Word of God or insuring that the Word of God is taught. That's what the Christian feeds on. That's what nourishes us. We can't be strong in the faith if we are not strong in the Word. So shepherding involves instruction. 1 Peter chapter 5 is specifically for elders.

But in principle, I think we can apply it rather broadly—apply it to other people, apply it to teachers in every area, the teachers in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School teachers, and helpers. You have opportunity to instruct young lambs. It's important. There is no unimportant class where the Word of God is taught. Peter was well equipped to do that, to feed the sheep, and care for those who were young, who were weak and wandering, because he had been that. But he had learned from his experience. He learned humility and dependence on Christ.

And we see that in his response: He made no excuse for his sin. He exhibited no self-righteousness in his answer. All he did was affirm his love and appeal to the Lord's knowledge. The Lord asked, "Do you love me?" And Peter answered, ‘Yes, Lord, You know all things’, indicating that Peter didn't trust his own judgment. He had learned not to do that. He conceded that to the Lord, who is omniscient. "You know all things." (vs17). He's omniscient; He's all knowing because He is the One whom John said He is

in this book—and who all the other Gospel writers also affirmed that He is, “the Son of God.” (Jn 20:31).

And so He knows all things because of who He is. He knows who His elect are. He knows who He has redeemed and forgiven. Paul said, "The Lord knows...who are His"; 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 19. He knows everyone for whom He died; everyone upon whom the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit set their love upon from all eternity. So He knew Peter's heart; He knew the genuineness of his love and the reality of his repentance—and He accepted his “Yes”.

Still, the Lord required this confession of his love. It was necessary for Peter to make this public confession in order for Peter to have a public restoration to service, so that others would know that this had been dealt with, that he had been reconciled to the Lord in this personal way.

But it was also necessary for his personal relationship with the Lord, not only for the restoration to public ministry, but for his personal life. Confession is a necessary part of the Christian life. We need to confess our sins to the Lord and reaffirm our love for Him in order to maintain an open and free relationship with Him. —That's 1 John chapter 1, verse 9. (*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*)

And the Lord was kind to Peter, who was weighed down with guilt. When the rooster crowed that night, Peter remembered: ‘Jesus said he would deny Him three times’—and when that hit him like a ton of bricks. Luke said he, “wept bitterly.” (Luk 22:62).

Finally, the Lord confronted him, but not with a sharp rebuke; He didn't even question Peter's faith. He asked about his love for Him and gave Peter the opportunity to affirm it. Only when Peter confessed His love for Him did the Lord tell him, ‘Feed My sheep’—because love for the Lord is a prerequisite for service.

The great New Testament scholar, B. F. Westcott, called love for the Lord, "The spring of the Christian life." It is what impels, motivates genuine disinterested service, (*that is, selfless service*), sacrificial, joyful service. And so this question, "Do you love Me?", is for all of us. It's the question that we must ask ourselves. And every believer will affirm that yes, we do. It's part of being born again.

But the fact is, we can drift away from it, imperceptibly at first, but soon we've drifted away. That's what happened to the church at Ephesus. The Lord addressed that in Revelation chapter 2, verse 4. The Lord told them, "You have left your first love." There's so many things He could commend them for—and did: They knew the truth; they had doctrine; and they could apply it and distinguish between the true and the false. They knew who were good teachers and false teachers. —But they had this flaw and that was, "You have left your first love."

It's possible for a good church to grow cold toward Christ. It is possible for a believer, a Christian, to become enamored of the things of this world and lose sight of the glories of our Lord. That is a constant fight that we face. We have it every day, every moment.

So we should all let this question search our hearts. And if we find it cold or we find it indifferent, we should confess it, affirm our love for the Lord, and fill our thoughts with Him. That's the solution. Paul told the Colossians in Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, to, "...keep seeking the things above where, Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not the things that are on earth." Now that's Proverbs 23, verse 7. "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." What you think about determines the kind of person you are.

So what do we do? Do you want to love the Lord? Then study the Lord. Read the Scriptures. Learn of Him. Learn of who He is. His good and wise character is what we see in His genuine concern here for Peter. He loved Peter with an infinite and unconditional love. He was careful not to crush him, but to restore him to fellowship with Himself, and the disciples, and restore him to useful service. That's what He wanted; so He wisely ministered to him to accomplish that—and He did.

But He does that no less with us. He is the living Savior, every bit as involved with each of us daily as He was here with Peter. Peter's no exception. If you say, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if I had that relationship with Him?' —You do have that relationship with Him if you're in Christ, if you're a believer in Him. He's not far from us. He's near. He's real. If you're a believer, He saved you; He came personally for you, and will never let you go.

That's what generates, in our hearts, gratitude and love for the Lord—when we understand who He is and what He did, what He stooped to do for a sinner such as me. That generates gratitude which is the spring, the motivation, for joyful obedience. It's what the Scotsman, Thomas Chalmers, called, "The expulsive power of a new affection." That *new affection* that we have is love for Him.

And that love for Him fills us—and the more it fills us, the more it expels, pushes out all the other desires that we have. It fills our mind with what's right and good, and constrains us, ("controls us"), as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 5; constrains us by our love for Him to live a life of obedience and service—which we do gladly. It's the result of regeneration, so it's supernatural. It's what the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts so that we are like those that Peter wrote to in 1 Peter, where he said, 'Though you have not seen Him, you love Him.' (1Pe 1:8). They had never seen Him; you've never seen Him. You don't have that experience that Peter had, or John had. But though you've never seen Him, you love Him, because that's a supernatural thing that's occurred within your life as a result of the new birth.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and six other virtues. But love...it's a gift of God, and you have it supernaturally for Him. But, we must cultivate that love through God's Word and prayer. We must ask the LORD through the Spirit to kindle afresh an interest in the things of God, and our love for Christ. That is the key to godliness and successful service in this world.

And it is the *affection* that inspires courage in service. It would give Peter the courage to lay down his life for Christ. He had denied Jesus from fear of losing his life. But the day would come when Peter would sacrifice his life out of love for Christ.

And the Lord told that to him next. Verse 18, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

It was a prophecy of his death. A prophecy of his martyrdom, as John explains in verse 19, "Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God." The freedom Peter enjoyed in his youth, when he would dress himself and go wherever he wished, would end in his old age with someone else who would bind him and determine where he would go. And it would not be a pleasant place—it would be a place of his execution.

Tradition has it that Peter was crucified in Rome under the emperor Nero. Crucifixion is suggested from the description of him being bound, and his hands stretched out. A later tradition found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, one of the first church historians, is that Peter requested that he be crucified head downwards because he felt unworthy to be crucified as Christ was.

What John wrote about the death is that it, "would glorify God." (vs19). It would be an opportunity to bring praise to God by Peter's faithfulness and willingness to die for Him who died for us. It would be some 30 years later that Peter did that, so think of that: It's really, kind of an amazing thing. He lived and he ministered faithfully for some 30 years with that prophecy always before him, always on his mind—that he would die painfully on a cross. But he did so faithfully.

And that fact adds some color and clarity to what the Lord said next. He told Peter, "Follow Me!"; which has the idea of, 'Keep on following Me!' It means that he would follow Christ to the cross. Now that's a challenge. We are called, not to a life of ease and comfort. God in His goodness and grace gives us that. We all have far more comfort in our life than most people in the world do.

But that's not what God has called us to. He blesses us with that, He blesses us with the good things of this world, and we should enjoy them. But He has

fundamentally, most importantly, called us as believers in Jesus Christ, as His people, as His children, as His sheep—He's called us to a life of service, humble service, selfless service, and one that might end painfully, even cruelly.

But we don't live the Christian life preoccupied with future danger, but occupied with the present. Peter was to follow Christ faithfully, daily. That is the best way to prepare for the future: Live for Christ now. That's the sense of this command, 'Keep on following!' That's the Christian life; it is a daily, continual following of the Lord. Step by step, moment by moment, trusting Him wherever He may lead us.

We don't know where life's going to take us tomorrow. But as we live in obedience to the Lord, we know He's taking us where He wants us to go. And He will always lead us to the right place, to the best place. Maybe the most painful place, but if it's His leading, it's to the right place. That's Psalm 23, verse 2 and 3, "He leads me beside quiet waters. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." That's what the Good Shepherd does for His people, always.

And then, when the end comes, He'll be with us there, wherever it may be. And we will be ready for it, prepared over the days and years of faithfully following Him, and growing in Him, and maturing in the faith. All will be well.

Well, how do we follow someone we can't see? Well, we listen to Him. And we hear Him through His Word, the Scriptures. That's where God speaks to us. So, following assumes reading; it assumes knowing Scripture. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of Christ. It is through the Word of God that we are sanctified, that we are strengthened, and that we are transformed into the image of Christ.

That is how we have His mind. That is how we gain His wisdom, God's principles of conduct that equip us for life. And with that, the Holy Spirit enables us to form correct judgments and decisions at any given moment. The Spirit of God is very much in it. We walk by the Spirit, and He empowers us to do these things.

But the command for Peter is the command for us: "Follow Me!" 'Keep on following' Christ. And as we follow Him, He equips us, He empowers us to meet the

challenges of the day, and prepares us for the challenges that are in the unseen tomorrow.

Now it seems at this point, the Lord took Peter on a walk along the lakeside, so that they could speak about these things in private. As they did, Peter turned around and he saw John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved following them..." (vs20). And seeing his friend coming after them, Peter naturally wondered what commission the Lord had for him, what mission he would be on, and what his end would be. Would he, too, be a martyr?

And so he said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" (vs21). To which Jesus gave the short, almost terse replay, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is *that* to you? You follow Me!" (vs22). In other words, that was not Peter's business nor concern. He wasn't being harsh with Peter, but He was indicating that He had plans for John, for all of those disciples, but it wasn't necessary for Peter to know them. It didn't add anything to Peter's commission and life and walk with the Lord.

In other words, we all have our path in following Christ and in which we are to glorify God—in our life in various ways, in different occupations that we have, different professions, and in death itself. We all won't die the same way. Some will have peaceful deaths, some will have difficult deaths. But it's all in the LORD's will—and what it is for another person doesn't need to concern us. Each has a separate, unique way for us. In whatever the circumstance of life is that God has placed us, it's an opportunity to glorify God. Our concern is to be faithful wherever God has put us—and be faithful to the end so that even our death may be a ministry to others. And the way to do that is to, 'Follow Christ!'

Now the Lord's statement, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you", circulated among the Christian community and was misunderstood to mean that John would not die. So in verse 23, he corrected that, (John did): "Jesus did not say to

him that he would not die, but *only* 'If I want him to remain until I come, what *is* that to you?' "

The Lord's point was not John's future, but Peter's present—his obedience now. He was not to be distracted from it; He was to follow God's path for him by looking to Christ. That's how the author of Hebrews said that we are to 'run the race of faith', not by looking around at others, not by comparing ourselves to others, but by, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." (Heb 12:2). He will always lead us in the right path and to the right place.

Now John concludes his Gospel with verses 24 and 25; "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." (vs24). We know that it is true from the fact that it fits perfectly with reality. And we know it's true on a deeper level because the Spirit of God is in us, and bears witness to our spirit that this book is true, and this Gospel is true. And we know it because the Spirit of God has given us a new heart with new eyes to see, and we have the testimony of the Spirit of God within us. It's supernatural. That's how we know it. But we all say, as we look at that, 'Amen to that.' We know it's true.

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." (vs25).

I believe that's true. But what we have in this book, in this Fourth Gospel, is really all we need to know about Christ: He saved a wedding party from public shame by turning water to wine. He saved two sisters from grief by raising their brother from the dead. He conquered death. He is almighty, wise, and He cares for us, and never leads us where He Himself has not gone.

That's true of great leaders. Alexander is called 'The Great'. He was one of those kinds of leaders. He led his army from Greece and across Asia on long, treacherous marches. On one occasion, on a terrible march through a burning desert, the scouts found water. It was enough for one man. They brought it to Alexander. He thanked them

for it—then he poured it out in the sight of all. He would suffer with them—and that's a man men follow. It's instructive, and it's interesting, because that's what David did 700 years earlier. Did Alexander know about him? (Maybe he did, because he stopped by Jerusalem on his way to conquering the Persian empire.)

When three of the mightiest of David's men risked their lives to get water that David longed for as he just spoke one afternoon or evening, longing for the water from that well in Bethlehem, (which was being occupied at that moment by Saul's men), they went into that place, faced danger, got the water, and brought it to him. He received it—but he could not drink it, and he poured it out to the LORD. He said that the water was like the very blood of these men—and considered it so sacred that he made it an offering to God.

That's the kind of captain he was; and the reason men risked their lives for David. A real leader doesn't ask more of his people than he asks of himself.

And the highest example of that, the greatest captain of all, is Christ, who never leads us into places He has not gone, who suffered what He suffered, and never asked us to suffer anything that He did not. And He's always with us, like He was with those young Hebrews in the fiery furnace. He emptied Himself to die for us. And the more we know Him, though we have not seen Him, the more we will love Him and the more we will follow Him gladly.

He freed us from sin's penalty and power. When John and Charles Wesley realized that, when they gave up their futile efforts to defeat sin in their lives through all of their efforts, (their religious exercises and acts of discipline), and gave all that up by trusting in Christ alone for salvation, they finally got freedom—and they got life, life everlasting.

Charles, the great hymn writer, wrote that in one of his greatest hymns, in celebration of what the Lord did for them. It has that line, (you've sung it many times),

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;

My chains fell off, my heart was free.

I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

May we recognize increasingly the greatness of God's grace, of Christ's love, His sacrifice and constant faithfulness to us, and follow Him in paths of righteousness. May we do that.

But you can't until you wake up, until you realize that you are in chains, that you are a sinner, and guilty. And only Christ can remove that guilt and shame, and will do it when you put your faith and trust in Him, as Savior and God. And then, like that blind man in chapter 9, He will open your eyes so that you see who He really is, and you trust in Him—and as a result, have life that is eternal; life in His name. And then, by God's grace, you will follow Him to glory. May God give all of us that desire to do that.

(Closing prayer) Father, everyone here who knows Your Son, who has put his or her faith in Him for eternal life and salvation, for forgiveness, can make that confession: 'We are debtors to mercy alone.'

There's nothing in us that commended us to you. We're lost and dead in our transgressions and sin—and yet, in that condition, You set Your love upon us and redeemed us in time through the work of Your Son.

We give You praise and thanks for that. Thank You for Your mercy, Your grace. And may we never forget that; may we have it ever before us, so that in love for Christ, we follow Him. We pray these things in Christ's name.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. Amen.

(End of Audio)