

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week six

Brian Housman, Stephanie Acker, Alexis Kruza, and Kim Messenger
February 26, 2012

Welcome to Week Six

For those of you who are just jumping into the guide now, here are a few quick notes:

1. Brief introductions to the format of this guide and to the Gospel of John can be found at the beginning of Week One.
2. This guide can be found in various electronic forms. You can find us as a blog at dailybibleguide.wordpress.com or in PDF at bostonvineyard.org/classesprograms/leap-of-faith. Or, download the app, for Android or iPhones: Blue Ocean Leap of Faith.
3. Special family-friendly materials can easily be found by looking for the red text. This week, we encourage you to read the story of the events leading up to Jesus' resurrection together as a family. The passages highlighted in red will give your family an overview of Jesus' story that might be a little shorter and easier for kids to digest. In lieu of the "For you and your family" take home tips from previous weeks, you might ask questions like, "I wonder how this part of the story makes you feel?" or "I wonder what this part makes you think about?" to help you delve further into the story.

Spiritual Practice of the Week for Families: Thanksgiving.

Have any of your Leap of Faith prayers been answered? Reflect on your Leap of Faith journey together by sharing highs and lows that you encountered along the way. Thank God for being with you on this journey! You might try starting a gratitude journal to keep a record every day of things you're thankful that God has done, or you might take turns saying thanks to God every night before dinner.

As you reflect on this year's Leap of Faith, talk about which spiritual practices you especially liked. Consider incorporating them into part of your family's routine even after the Leap of Faith ends.

Monday, April 2—John 18:1-14

¹ After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. ² Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. ³ The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

⁴ Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked.

⁵ "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

“I Am he,” Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.)⁶ As Jesus said “I Am he,” they all drew back and fell to the ground!⁷ Once more he asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

And again they replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

⁸ “I told you that I Am he,” Jesus said. “And since I am the one you want, let these others go.”⁹ He did this to fulfill his own statement: “I did not lose a single one of those you have given me.”

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave.¹¹ But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?”

¹² So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up.¹³ First they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time.¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, “It’s better that one man should die for the people.”

Points of Interest

- ‘he stepped forward to meet them’--I’m amazed by the boldness and confidence with which Jesus handles this moment. He sees a crowd of people coming for him with weapons and torches, and responds with something like the calm of, ‘Oh, I think that’s my ride.’
- ‘they all drew back and fell to the ground’--though he is on one level simply saying, ‘I’m the one you’re looking for,’ he is also evoking God’s name, I AM (Exodus 3:14). It’s not just a bluff. There’s such power behind it that it actually bowls them over.
- ‘I did not lose a single one’--the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (10:11). Jesus gives himself up in such a way that his flock is safe.
- ‘Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus’--I find this equal parts heroic and comical--cute even. Peter is putting his life in danger in an effort to rescue Jesus, and I have to respect him for that. But Jesus doesn’t need rescuing, and if he did Peter wouldn’t be the one to do it. Jesus does more damage to the mob merely by saying his name than Peter does by drawing a sword. It’s pretty clear that if Jesus wanted to, he could handle this mob fairly easily without Peter’s help.
- ‘Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?’--once again, Jesus sees a deeper reality than his disciples. They only see an angry mob. He sees beyond it to a mysterious offer from the Father.
- ‘they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas’--Caiaphas is the official high priest as far as the Romans are concerned, but Annas may be considered the ‘real’ high priest by the Jewish people; Annas had been deposed by the Romans about fifteen years before, but as far as Jewish religious law is concerned high priest is a lifetime appointment (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*).

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Taking It Home

- For you: I'm pretty sure if I had a loud mob of angry people, including someone who had previously been one of my closest friends, coming after me and treating me like a criminal, I would just crumble to the ground in fear and hurt. But Jesus stands confidently in the face of the hostility and accusations that come his way. Are there things you feel accused of? This could be actual accusations from other people (though I'm hoping for your sake no actual mobs with torches are after you) or just an internal voice of strong criticism. Spend some time talking to Jesus about those things. The Bible tells us that accusation is the work of the devil, and that we don't need to tolerate it. If you feel like you can identify the specific accusation, consider praying something like this:

"I reject the lie of {insert accusation here} in Jesus name." or "I say to any spirits of accusation or criticism to go in Jesus name".

Opposed to Satan, Jesus makes it his aim to bless and encourage. Ask Jesus to show you his encouragement and truth in those places where you feel accused.

- For your six: The image of Jesus' three small words sending this huffy, war-like crowd to the ground reminds me a little bit of the story of when David, a mere shepherd boy, takes down Goliath, a giant warrior (literally--a giant), with a small stone and a slingshot. The power of God on your side seems to be able to conquer anything. Ask Jesus to show that power to your six. Just as the crowds are literally blown to the ground by the words of Jesus, pray that your six would also be blown away by Jesus--but in a good way.
- For our church: I think it's safe to say that this day counts as a very, very bad one for Jesus and his disciples. Maybe because I know how the story ends, I easily overlook just how hard this would have been for them in the moment. Ask Jesus to give us grace, confidence and comfort to navigate our own hard times well. Ask Jesus to make our church more like him--patiently enduring and staying faithful--and less like Peter--unhelpfully taking initiative and impulsively cutting off people's ears.

Tuesday, April 3—John 18:15-27

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶ Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?"

"No," he said, "I am not."

¹⁸ Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

¹⁹ Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰ Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret.²¹ Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said.”

²² Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. “Is that the way to answer the high priest?” he demanded.

²³ Jesus replied, “If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I’m speaking the truth, why are you beating me?”

²⁴ Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

²⁵ Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, “You’re not one of his disciples, are you?”

He denied it, saying, “No, I am not.”

²⁶ But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Didn’t I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?” ²⁷ Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Points of Interest

- ‘as did another of the disciples’--once again, we have an anonymous disciple. Is this once again the author John? Or is John hiding the identity of the disciple because at the time of the writing it would still be dangerous for someone to be both a follower of Jesus and a friend of the high priest’s family?
- ‘Everyone knows what I teach’--Jesus has nothing to be ashamed of. Everything they’re asking him about is public knowledge. I think Jesus is making an implicit comparison between Annas and himself. Jesus conducted all of his business in the public square, but Annas is conducting his investigation in private in the middle of the night. Who’s the one doing the hiding? This whole interview with Annas reminds me of a sort of twist on Nicodemus (3:1-2). It seems like whether they are Jesus’ fans or his enemies, religious officials prefer to do their talking with him in secret and at night.
- ‘Ask those who heard me. They know what I said’-- I think this is what we call being a difficult witness. It seems that, while Jesus is not trying to hide anything--and he has, in fact, fully accepted that this process will lead to his execution--he also doesn’t feel a particular need to be respectful of or helpful to this kangaroo court.
- ‘a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off’--Peter hasn’t fully thought his plan through. It’s tough to go undercover when you just a moment ago cut off the ear of someone in the same group you’re trying to infiltrate.
- ‘Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed’--this is exactly as Jesus predicted (14:38). It happens so precisely that it almost feels like the rooster is in on it, deliberately waiting for the third denial before crowing.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Taking It Home

- For you: I don't know if you're like me, but every time I read this passage I judge Peter: 'How dare you deny Jesus? Aren't you supposed to be, like, one of his *closest* friends? And c'mon, didn't you just tell him you were willing to die for him. Sheesh.' Despite my impatience with Peter, truth be told, I'm not sure I would have actually responded much differently. Maybe it's because I often lose track of what, in fact, my relationship to Jesus is; it's hard to speak up about Jesus when I can barely figure out how to describe him and my relationship to him. How would you answer the question, 'Who is Jesus to you?' Spend some time today reflecting on the past six weeks of Lent. How have you seen or experienced Jesus during this time? Is there anything new you've learned about Jesus or an aspect of Jesus that you've experienced for the first time? Consider actually writing about these things to Jesus.
- For your six: The religious leaders and the crowds have so strongly accused Jesus for so long that they have entirely lost their ability to hear him. I think he could have said, 'You just won the lottery,' and they still would only hear him as spouting utter blasphemy. Ask Jesus to break any false accusations your six have made against Jesus. Ask Jesus to give your six the ability to truly see and hear what Jesus is actually saying, and not just what they have always assumed him to be saying.
- For our church: Annas holds his court in secret, while Jesus is open and public about what he says and does; and Jesus seems to get a great deal of strength and confidence from the fact that he has nothing to hide. Pray that our church would be a place where destructive secrets have no place. Pray for our church to be typified by a strong, confident, free, and life-giving openness.

Wednesday, April 4—John 18:28-40

²⁸ Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

³⁰ "We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

³¹ "Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. ³² (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.)

³³ Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.

³⁴ Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

³⁶ Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”

³⁷ Pilate said, “So you are a king?”

Jesus responded, “You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, “He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹ But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this ‘King of the Jews?’”

⁴⁰ But they shouted back, “No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Points of Interest

- ‘Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning’--John doesn’t bother to report on Jesus’ audience with the actual high priest; apparently there’s no new information of any significance. It’s worth noting that this trial presided over by the official high priest is still highly irregular; it’s done off-hours, finishing before court would usually be open at all.
- ‘Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor’--we move from the religious to the secular authorities.
- ‘because it would defile them’--Jewish religious law contains a long list of items and actions that are considered prohibited or ‘unclean.’ We know these rules today as ‘keeping kosher,’ not eating pork being perhaps the most well-known way of observing the kosher laws. The rules for keeping kosher are for the most part found in the biblical book of Leviticus. The penalty for doing something non-kosher is usually to be excluded from religious ceremonies for a certain length of time; this would be highly inconvenient for a religious professional, particularly during a holiday--which it always seems to be in John’s gospel. Entering a non-Jewish household is not in itself non-kosher according to Leviticus, but highly observant Jews of Jesus’ time would treat it as such. They took a fairly extreme ‘better safe than sorry’ approach to the kosher laws, considering themselves unclean if they did something that even might be or lead to them being non-kosher. Since non-Jews don’t keep kosher, the likelihood of coming across something non-kosher would be much higher in a non-Jewish household. In a preventative medicine sort of way, they just call the whole idea non-kosher.
- ‘We wouldn’t have handed him over to you if he weren’t a criminal’--this isn’t exactly an answer to the question, ‘What are the charges?’ or if it is an answer, it’s a circular one: ‘His crime is that we think he’s a criminal.’ Then again, while it’s hard to see the legal merit of this charge, it is honest; that is, in fact, why Jesus is on trial.
- ‘take him away and judge him by your own law’--the Romans at this time gave the Jewish council a fair amount of autonomy to govern internal, and particularly religious, affairs; in most instances, though, the Jewish council did not have the authority to assign a capital punishment (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*).

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

- ‘This fulfilled Jesus’ prediction about the way he would die’--the preferred Jewish form of execution is stoning. The Romans instead use crucifixion. Despite the repeated attempts to stone him (10:31), Jesus has been insisting that he’ll be ‘lifted up,’ as the Romans would do (3:14, 8:28, 12:32).
- ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’--it seems that this is the charge the religious leaders eventually come up with: Jesus is rebelling against the Romans and trying to set up his own kingdom.
- ‘Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me’--I think Pilate knows that some funny business is going on. The religious leaders aren’t usually so eager to hand someone over to him; nobody likes a narc.
- ‘What is truth?’--in a ‘live and let live’ sort of way, Pilate is perhaps the most this-worldly person we’ve encountered in John’s gospel. If Jesus were claiming to be King of the Jews, or of Galilee, or really of any political entity of any kind, no matter how small, it would be of vast concern to Pilate. But King of Truth? No problem. Pilate scarcely believes in something as conceptual as truth; I bet eternal life would be completely beyond his imagination. ‘King of Truth? That’s it? Knock yourself out. If you want, I myself will declare you Lord of Hope, Master of Time, and Emperor of NeverNever Land right here.’
- ‘He is not guilty of any crime’--Jesus is declared innocent, but not released. As we’ve just learned, truth isn’t Pilate’s highest priority; politics is. There may not be any truth to the charges, but what is truth anyway? The politics of the situation are still complicated.
- ‘Would you like me to release this “King of the Jews”?’--nice try, but they would obviously refuse this suggestion; they’re the ones who turned Jesus in, after all.
- ‘Barabbas was a revolutionary’--I’m impressed by their boldness. They don’t even bother to continue to play along with the idea that they’re genuinely concerned that Jesus may be a dangerous revolutionary. In fact, by asking for the release of an actual rebel, aren’t they essentially admitting right in Pilate’s face that their actual complaint with Jesus is that he’s not nearly enough of a political revolutionary?

Taking It Home

- For you: Pilate may allegedly be the person in charge, but I can’t get over how he seems entirely powerless, trapped as he is between two groups (the Roman government and the Jews) whom he must make happy. I wonder who Pilate would be if he weren’t stuck in this role. Can you relate to Pilate at all? Is there some way you feel trapped? Trapped in anxiety? Trapped in debt? A bad relationship? An addiction? A job you hate? Ask Jesus to free you from whatever you feel is currently holding you in some form of bondage. Are there parts of your identity that have been buried as a result? Ask Jesus to restore you to who he intended you to be.
- For your six: In this passage, the real power of the Pharisees is in how, in pursuit of their own hatred of Jesus, they are able to influence everyone else around them so easily. Pray today about the things and people that influence your six. Thank Jesus for all of the good influences that your six have in their lives. Ask Jesus to provide more people and places to positively influence your six towards him. If there are situations that really negatively influence your six, ask Jesus to protect them.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

- For our church: We haven't heard Jesus explicitly mention his kingdom very much, but it does seem like the whole time he has been trying to demonstrate what that kingdom is like: blind people see, everyone is fed, and there is a whole lot of love. Ask Jesus for more of his kingdom here at our church. Ask Jesus to make our church a place where people would come to experience his kingdom first hand. Can you imagine living in a place where everyone got along, sick people were healed, and the hungry were fed? It just sounds so great. Tell Jesus that our church wants to be like that, and ask him for his help in doing so.

Thursday, April 5—John 19:1-16

¹ Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ² The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. ³ "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.

⁴ Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." ⁵ Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

⁶ When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty."

⁷ The Jewish leaders replied, "By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God."

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹ He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰ "Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

¹¹ Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

¹² Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.' Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

¹³ When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴ It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Look, here is your king!"

¹⁵ "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!"

"What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶ Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Points of Interest

- ‘Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip’--I think this is letting someone off with a stern warning, Roman-style. Pilate seems to hope that the crowd will be satisfied with a good beating.
- ‘understand clearly that I find him not guilty’--I guess the truth thing is bothering him a little. He still seems perfectly willing to execute an innocent man; but he does want to make sure that the religious leaders know that’s what he is doing.
- ‘Why don’t you talk to me?’--I think Jesus doesn’t talk to him because Pilate has already told him that they have nothing to talk about. They have nothing in common: Jesus is king of truth, and Pilate is governor of Judea; there’s no point of connection.
- ‘Don’t you realize that I have the power to release you’--Pilate might be more accurate to say that he has the authority to release Jesus. His actual power doesn’t quite seem to match his authority. He lacks the strength of will to stand up to the crowd and release Jesus, as he clearly wants to do.
- ‘We have no king but Caesar’--this harkens back to about a millennium before, when the people of Israel first requested a king of the prophet Samuel, who had been leading them up until that point:

Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. “Do everything they say to you,” the Lord replied, “for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer. Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment (1 Samuel 8:6-8).

Taking It Home

- For you: Authority is a big word. I mainly associate it with police, and judges, and military officers, and government officials: ‘the authorities.’ However, if we think of authority simply as something you are both responsible for and have the ability to influence, all of us have all sorts of authority. What would you see you have authority in? Officially speaking, Pilate had a lot more authority than most of us ever will, but he didn’t seem to do much with it. Talk to Jesus about how you might use your position, status, responsibilities, knowledge, or job for good. Ask Jesus if there is a way he would like you to leverage your authority.
- For your six: Pilate’s meager attempts to claim Jesus’ innocence demonstrate that he at least has some hint that there is something to Jesus. However, there is too much pressure on Pilate and too little time for him to really consider what that is. Ask Jesus to help your six pay attention to whatever inklings they have that there might be something to Jesus. Ask Jesus not to allow anything to get in the way of them exploring who he is.
- For our church: Does this whole story feel outrageous and infuriating to you? It does to me. Obviously, to the Pharisees it seems like a perfectly sound and fair plan, but my two millennium of hindsight make me just want to yell about how unfair the whole thing is. Of course, acts of gross injustice--too often done in the name of justice--aren’t limited to 1st Century Rome. Ask Jesus to help our church be a place that advocates for justice. Ask for our church to be a place

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

that doesn't simply roll with the status quo or popular opinion, but is really compelled to see everyone in our society treated fairly.

Friday, April 6—John 19:16-42

So they took Jesus away. ¹⁷ Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, *Golgotha*). ¹⁸ There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ And Pilate posted a sign over him that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

²¹ Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

²² Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written."

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing." So that is what they did.

²⁵ Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." ²⁷ And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

²⁸ Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰ When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and released his spirit.

³¹ It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was the Passover). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. ³³ But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. ³⁴ One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. ³⁵ (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also can believe.) ³⁶ These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken," ³⁷ and "They will look on the one they pierced."

³⁸ Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. ³⁹ With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰ Following

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. ⁴¹ The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before. ⁴² And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Points of Interest

- 'in Hebrew, *Golgotha*'--I'm not sure why John has all of a sudden starting translating things into Hebrew (here and 19:13). My best guess is that he's trying to give his description of Jesus' death more of a ritual feel. Jews of Jesus' time spoke Aramaic or Greek in everyday life; Hebrew was the language used for religious ceremony.
- 'Pilate posted a sign over him'--these would be the charges against Jesus.
- 'what I have written, I have written'--having completely caved in to the wishes of the priests on the much more important matter of whether or not to execute Jesus, Pilate now tries to assert himself by being stubborn about changing the sign. I guess it's something.
- 'They divided my garments among themselves'--this is Psalm 22:18. This psalm as a whole is strange and amazing. In it David, writing about a thousand years before Jesus, talks about some of his own suffering in terms that eerily evoke Jesus' crucifixion. Take a look, if you're inclined.
- 'from then on this disciple took her into his home'--we haven't seen Jesus' mother since the wedding at the very beginning at which Jesus turned water into wine at Mary's request (2:1-12). I don't know what the significance of it is, but I find it intriguing that at the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry--and only then--John includes a small domestic moment, in which Jesus is simply Mary's son, not the Father's Son.
- 'to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty"'--this seems to be another reference to Psalm 22 (v. 15), and perhaps also to Psalm 69:21: 'But instead, they give me poison for food; they offer me sour wine for my thirst.' It feels a little like Jesus is running through a checklist here, making sure he ticks off all of the Old Testament prophecies and foreshadowing of his suffering. 'I'm almost finished; I just need to mention that I'm thirsty.'
- 'the day of preparation'--the day of preparation is when the Passover lamb is made. The religious leaders are concerned because they don't want these executions to get in the way of the big, busy holiday schedule. John, however, seems to be mentioning it because he is presenting Jesus as a new Passover lamb. The Passover lamb, you may recall, is eaten in memory of God sparing the Israelites during the plague of the firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 12). Way back in chapter 1 (v.29), John the Baptist had called Jesus, 'The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' The story is now catching up to John the Baptist's pronouncement.
- 'didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath'--they don't have much problem with killing an innocent man, but doing a funeral on the Sabbath is unthinkable.
- 'hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken'--broken legs would make it harder for them to keep breathing, which would require raising themselves up a little (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*).
- 'This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account'--I think John is saying that he actually saw this happen with his own eyes. Since we know that the 'disciple Jesus loved' is

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

nearby (v.26), this lends extra credence to the idea that this beloved disciple and the author are one and the same.

- ‘Not one of his bones will be broken’--perhaps a reference to Psalm 34:20: ‘For the Lord protects the bones of the righteous; not one of them is broken!’ It could also be another way in which John is connecting Jesus to the Passover lamb, the bones of which were supposed to remain unbroken (Exodus 12:46).
- ‘Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus’--this Joseph of Arimathea is apparently well-known, whether it be among Jesus’ followers at the time of John’s writing, in Jerusalem society at the time of Jesus’ death, or both. I guess he’s one of those secret disciples mentioned in 12:42. At what must have been the most dangerous time of all to be associated with Jesus--when even one of his closest associates would deny ever knowing him (18:17)--Jesus’ remarkable death draws Joseph out into the open; and Nicodemus finally comes out into the light with him (3:1-2).

Taking It Home

- For you: Talk to Jesus today about how you feel physically. Are you in pain? Sick? Are you exhausted? Hungry? Out of shape? Jesus’ dying request for something to drink reminds me of just how basic and human our needs (even Jesus’) often are--a good meal, more sleep, exercise, health. Ask Jesus for a good relationship with your body (we seem to tend to idolize, hate, or ignore our bodies) and for good health for your body. Ask Jesus if he has anything he wants to say to you about this. Consider if there is something you could do with your body that would bring you closer to Jesus. Again it could be a nap, making a really great meal, going for a walk, an impromptu dance party...you decide.
- For your six: I sometimes wonder what it was like for Mary and Jesus’ followers to watch Jesus be executed. To me it just sounds terribly traumatic--especially since they didn’t necessarily know how the story would turn out, as we now do. Ask Jesus to heal any trauma that your six have experienced (it seems like all humankind unfortunately gets healthy doses of it). Pray that your six wouldn’t be defined by the trauma and instead that Jesus would meet them in any lingering pain.
- For our church: Joseph of Arimathea is a follower of Jesus who had gone completely under the radar until all of a sudden he plays a key part in Jesus’ story (I mean, being the one to claim and care for Jesus’ body seem like a pretty big deal, right?). Ask Jesus to raise people up in our church who are flying under the radar. My hunch is that there are a lot of people in our church with incredible things to offer, but for one reason or another they’re a little undercover. Ask Jesus to remove whatever is holding people back and to raise more people into leadership. Who knows, maybe it’s you?

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Saturday, April 7—John 20:1-31

¹ Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸ Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—⁹ for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then they went home.

¹¹ Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.¹² She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ “Dear woman, why are you crying?” the angels asked her.

“Because they have taken away my Lord,” she replied, “and I don’t know where they have put him.”

¹⁴ She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn’t recognize him. ¹⁵ “Dear woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who are you looking for?”

She thought he was the gardener. “Sir,” she said, “if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

¹⁶ “Mary!” Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, “Rabboni!” (which is Hebrew for “Teacher”).

¹⁷ “Don’t cling to me,” Jesus said, “for I haven’t yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord!” Then she gave them his message.

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

²⁸ “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

³⁰ The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

Points of Interest

- ‘the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first’--now I’m certain that the beloved disciple is the author. Though it has almost nothing to do with the story, he can’t resist mentioning that he’s faster than Peter. To his credit, he does also mention that Peter is the one brave enough to step into the tomb.
- ‘folded up and lying apart’--if someone had stolen the body, I wouldn’t think that they would leave the grave clothes behind, or that they would bother to neatly fold the head piece. Of course, it’s also a little remarkable that, fresh from resurrection, Jesus would stop to fold his clothes. I guess he’s the tidy type.
- ‘until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead’--I tend to agree with the *New Bible Commentary* that John is referring to the Bible as a whole, not necessarily particular passages (Wenham G.J et al, editors. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). Specific passages directly referring to resurrection are actually kind of rare and obscure. However, one of John’s major points all along has been that people have a very strong tendency to misinterpret the Bible and that Jesus came to earth to show us more clearly what God always meant. This theme in John goes all the way back to that section from John’s introduction I’ve quoted so many times: ‘the law was given through Moses, but God’s unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus’ (1:17). We see it again when Jesus and the religious leaders fight about the Sabbath rules: ‘You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!’ (5:39). Peter and the beloved disciple finally understand when they see the empty grave and grave clothes that the whole story of the Bible is the story of Jesus rising from the dead.

That being said, there are a couple of specific passages to which John might be referring. Psalm 62:10, for instance, says, ‘For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave,’ and Isaiah 53:10 (another remarkable passage like Psalm 22 from yesterday) says:

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week six

But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.
Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.
He will enjoy a long life,
and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.

- 'Mary was standing outside the tomb crying'--it's unclear to me whether this is happening while Peter and the beloved disciple are in the grave, or Mary lingers after.
- 'It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him'--I could imagine that Mary would think he's a ghost, but I'm surprised that she simply doesn't recognize him at all. Apparently, the resurrected Jesus looks different.
- "'Mary!' Jesus said"--his look is different, but there's something familiar in how he says her name. It reminds me of the shepherd and the sheep: 'He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... and they follow him because they know his voice' (10:3-4).
- 'Don't cling to me'--it doesn't seem so much that Jesus can't be touched (we see later in the passage that he does indeed have a corporeal, if strangely wall-permeable, body), but that Mary is holding on too long. Jesus has an important errand to run, but Mary won't let go.
- 'find my brothers and tell them'--Jesus treats his resurrection with the same nonchalance with which he treated the mob with torches and clubs (18:3-4): 'Hey, Mary. It looks like I just missed Peter and John. If you see them, could you let them know that I'm back from the dead, but I have to run off on a quick trip to heaven?'
- 'Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them'--Jesus has second thoughts about just sending his news through Mary. He decides to say hello to the disciples himself.
- 'Peace be with you'--I imagine this is more than Jesus being polite. I bet that if I were behind locked doors, hiding from the authorities, when a dead guy--or anyone really, but even more a dead guy--suddenly popped up in the middle of the room, I would freak out a little. I picture eleven screaming men, Nathanael diving under the table, and Peter whipping out his sword to chop off another ear or two. Jesus is trying to calm the situation: 'We're going to be like twelve little Fonzie's here. And what's Fonzie like?'
- 'he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side'--having had the awkward moment with Mary when she mistook him for the gardener, Jesus makes himself a little more obvious this time.
- 'Receive the Holy Spirit'--maybe it's not so much that Jesus decides to drop in on the disciples before he goes, but that his trip to the Father was a quick day trip. He's been there and back already. Jesus had told the disciples before he died that he would be going to the Father to get the Holy Spirit for them (16:6), and here the Spirit is. This is the moment to which the entire story has been building. Jesus is finally baptizing the disciples with the Holy Spirit, just as John the Baptist had foreseen (1:32-33).
- 'If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven'--Jesus had promised that once they were filled with the Spirit, they would do even greater things than him (14:12). I had imagined he was

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

talking about doing even more impressive miracles. While I'm sure that could be part of it, that doesn't seem to be what Jesus primarily has in mind. The 'greater thing' is forgiveness. It makes sense. All along, Jesus has been saying that his miracles are merely signs of the actual, greater, spiritual work he wants to do. In the episode with Nicodemus, John tells us that that greater work is saving the world from condemnation and death and offering eternal life (3:16-18). The disciples get the privilege of actually doing Jesus' real work, when he only had the opportunity to set it all up.

- 'If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'--this seems like a scary amount of power to put into anyone's hands. I wonder if Jesus doesn't so much intend this as something the disciples can hold over other people as it's a responsibility he's giving them: 'I'm putting this job completely in your hands. Make sure you don't forget anyone'--not that that completely reassures me.
- 'Blessed are those who believe without seeing me'--not everyone is going to get a personal visit, complete with a demonstration of the wounds. Thomas is a special case.
- 'the ones recorded in this book'--it sounds an awful lot like John is bringing things to a close, but as we'll see there's one chapter left. Because of this seemingly concluding statement, and because chapter 21 takes little account of the fact that Jesus has already appeared to the disciples twice in chapter 20, many modern scholars think that chapter 21 is a later alternate ending, and that this was the original one (*New Bible Commentary*). However, unlike with the woman caught in adultery (chapter 8), there's no manuscript evidence for that hypothesis (again *New Bible Commentary*). As far as we know, John's gospel was only ever distributed with this somewhat peculiar double-ending. Perhaps a way we can look at it is that chapter 21 is what we call nowadays an epilogue.

Taking It Home

- For you: I like the three step action plan Jesus has upon first seeing his disciples again: 1. he offers them peace; 2. they are filled with joy; and 3. they receive the Holy Spirit. Use that as your prayer guide today. Take some time to let the peace Jesus is offering settle on you. Ask Jesus to fill you with joy. Tell him that you want his joy to be what gets you through the day. And finally ask Jesus for more of the Holy Spirit. Tell him you want to receive as much of the Holy Spirit as you can possibly contain.
- For your six: Just as Jesus actually has to call Mary specifically, by name, before she recognizes that Jesus is standing right in front of her, ask Jesus to call your six by name.
- For our church: I'm struck by John's words that all of this was 'written so that [we] may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.' I think he knew we might forget or need help to keep believing. Ask Jesus to help our church continue believing resoundingly in him. Pray that we would continue pursuing Jesus with the same faith and vigor as we did when our church first started--or when you first joined it.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week six

Sunday, April 8 (Easter Sunday)—John 21:1-25

¹ Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. ² Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³ Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.”

“We’ll come, too,” they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴ At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was. ⁵ He called out, “Fellows, have you caught any fish?”

“No,” they replied.

⁶ Then he said, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. ⁸ The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹ When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰ “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

¹² “Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵ After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

¹⁸ “I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

²⁰ Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, "Lord, who will betray you?" ²¹ Peter asked Jesus, "What about him, Lord?"

²² Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me." ²³ So the rumor spread among the community of believers that this disciple wouldn't die. But that isn't what Jesus said at all. He only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

²⁴ This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

²⁵ Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

Points of Interest

- 'I'm going fishing'--it's hard to read this as anything but a step backward. They're supposed to be celebrating the resurrection, being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and doling out forgiveness like candy. Instead, they go back to their old life as fishermen. Then again, maybe they're just getting away for a little weekend fishing trip.
- 'Fellows, have you caught any fish?'--in yesterday's passage, Jesus calls out to Mary by name, in a familiar tone of voice, and she immediately recognizes him. Here, Jesus seems to purposely disguise himself. Jesus hasn't ever called them 'fellows' in the entire book, and this just doesn't sound like how Jesus talks in John. I imagine him using a funny accent to keep his identity hidden for the moment.
- 'they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it'--they don't recognize his voice or appearance, but they do recognize the fish. One final time, John makes reference to a part of the story he never told. In Luke's version of the story, Jesus first grabs the disciples' attention with a similar miraculous catch following an empty-netted night (Luke 5:1-11). Here he does it again.
- 'they found breakfast waiting for them'--the big catch isn't even strictly necessary. Jesus already has plenty of fish for breakfast cooking over the fire. I love the fact that the resurrected (and possibly ascended) Jesus just stops in for breakfast ... and cooks it! This combination of the miraculously large catch and the breakfast out of nowhere remind me of the feeding of 5000 with a few loaves and fish (6:11). With Jesus, there is always more than enough.
- 'There were 153 large fish'--I wonder which of the disciples counted. Maybe they were wondering if they'd broken a record.
- 'This was the third time Jesus had appeared'--this shows that, while chapter 20 may not have been written with any knowledge of chapter 21, chapter 21 is consciously building on chapter 20.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

- ‘do you love me more than these?’--I believe ‘these’ is the other disciples, not the fish. In other words, Jesus is asking, ‘Do you really love me more than the others do?’ not, ‘Do you love me more than fishing?’ Peter had previously claimed that he was ready to die for Jesus, even if all of the other disciples scattered (13:37).
- ‘Then feed my lambs’--Peter isn’t a fisherman anymore; he’s a shepherd of Jesus’ flock. Jesus brings together themes from a few of his major discourses from the last week before his crucifixion: the good shepherd and the hired hand (10:11-13); the feet-washing, at which Jesus says, ‘you should also wash one another’s feet’ (13:14); and the story about the vine, when he gives his new commandment, ‘Love one another’ (15:17). Now that Jesus has moved on, it’s not a time for Peter to go back to his old life, but to step forward, taking over Jesus’ mission and experiencing the same love from the Father (16:27-28).
- ‘A third time he asked him’--it seems a little mean to keep at him in this way. I think Jesus asks Peter three times because of Peter’s three denials (18:15-18, 25-27). Peter gets to--or has to, depending on how you look at it--commit himself as many times as he denied Jesus.
- ‘Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time’--another possibility for the three-fold question is it’s a feature of Middle Eastern culture. For instance, even today in some Middle Eastern cultures, if someone offers you hospitality--for instance some food or coffee--if you decline, they’ll ask three times. The first two times you refuse, it could just be you being polite. The third time, you’re assumed to actually mean it. Maybe that’s what Jesus is doing; he’s making sure Peter isn’t just giving the polite answer. Peter is hurt because he truly meant it from the first.
- ‘when you were young, you were able to do as you liked’--there’s no more running off on fishing trips. Peter has responsibilities now.
- ‘by what kind of death he would glorify God’--Peter, like Jesus, will be crucified; he’ll be led to death as a prisoner, and he’ll stretch out his arms for his death. Weirdly enough, I think this grim prediction is actually Jesus’ big affirmation of Peter. Earlier, Jesus had said Peter wasn’t ready to really follow him:

‘But why can’t I come now, Lord?’ [Peter] asked. ‘I’m ready to die for you.’

‘Jesus answered, ‘Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter--before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.’

Now, he’s ready. Jesus believes that Peter does love him, and will feed his sheep, and will follow him, to the very end.

- ‘What about him, Lord?’--I think this is what chapter 21 is all about. Chapter 20 completed Jesus’ story. Chapter 21 lets us know what happened to Peter and to the beloved disciple. It’s like those scrolling recaps at the end of a movie that tell us what the characters go on to do with the rest of their lives.
- ‘what is that to you?’--it seems that there’s a little competition between Peter and the beloved disciple. You’ll recall the whole running race to the tomb (20:3-4), and now this. Jesus nips the competition in the bud. It’s not a contest between them. Both of them are just meant to follow

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week six

Jesus wherever he leads them, trusting in Jesus' good shepherding. What the other one does makes no difference.

- 'This disciple is the one who testifies to these events'--the author finally reveals himself. He doesn't give us a name ('John,' for example), but he does tell us that he's the beloved disciple.
- 'But that isn't what Jesus said at all'--it wouldn't be right to end our study of John's gospel without one final example of people take Jesus overly literally. This time, it's not even a spiritual metaphor. He's just exaggerating for effect. 'Can't you take a joke?' John seems to be saying. Maybe this is John's biggest reason for writing chapter 21. Rumors have gotten out of control that he will never die, and he's trying to quiet them down.
- 'we know that his account of these things is accurate'--who's 'we'? Just the sentence before, the beloved disciple reveals himself as the author. Now, there's some 'we' who are doing the writing, vouching for him. Maybe this is just a one-line 'signature of witness' from a wider group of people. Or perhaps chapter 21 as a whole is an addendum written by someone else. It could even be after John's death, in which case the problem they're addressing is why John died when Jesus had allegedly promised he wouldn't. Maybe John died just before publication, or maybe this is like a second edition, with a new afterword.
- 'the whole world could not contain the books that would be written'--one last time, John lets us know that he has picked and chosen a very few examples of the things Jesus did. They're just a handful of signs of what Jesus did, and of what Jesus can do for anyone who believes in him.

Taking It Home

- For you: It feels a little strange to me that Jesus' final instructions are, 'Follow me,' as if it's something new. Isn't that what they've been doing ever since John the Baptist first said, 'Look, it's the Lamb of God,' way back when (1:35-37)? Why tell them what they already know? Maybe Jesus knows that they would need some constant reminders to keep following him. In what ways do you feel like Jesus is currently asking you to keep following him? Where do you feel like Jesus is leading you? Are there any open doors before you? Closed doors? Are there any inklings of what Jesus might be asking you to pursue during this season? Tell Jesus you want to follow him and ask for his help to do that today.
- For your six: The disciples are so blown away by Jesus' abundance that they awkwardly (putting on a cloak before jumping into the water seems like an odd choice) bumble through the water to get to him as quickly as possible. Pray that your six would be blown away by Jesus' abundance. Ask Jesus to give them a taste of that abundance today.
- For our church: Breakfast on the beach with Jesus --I want in! I love the supernatural abundance of it, the togetherness, and feeling of relaxation. Ask Jesus to help our church be like the breakfast feast he offers to his disciples. Ask Jesus to feed us, sustain us, and give us all that we need. Ask Jesus that all of our church's gatherings--whether large or small--would feel like an intimate gathering place of friends and Jesus.