

- I. When I think about Mother's Day I remember that moment when my wife Meg first became a mother. Now, I have shared too many times about the birth of our first child. Plus last time I think I got a little carried away and shared too many gory details...and we want to keep this more family friendly since it is Mother's Day and all. But for us mothers and fathers, do you remember that next day after the birth and sleepless night at the hospital, you are finally given your walking papers by the hospital? When mom is wheeled down to the exit holding your child who kept everyone awake crying all night and is now happily asleep since it's daytime. Remember, dad, when you walked in a sleep-deprived stupor to the parking lot trying to remember where you parked that car which now seems like a lifetime ago? And when you get into the car and try to install the car seat thinking it would be a piece of cake...which in reality it would be, but in your current state of complete sleep deprivation it now seemed like performing high level brain surgery? Remember, dad, finally getting the seat in after using language that would turn a Marine Drill Instructor red and you still had extra car seat straps left? Remember, mom, wondering if dad would ever pick you up, thinking perhaps he took the car and fled to Canada? Remember, mom and dad, wrestling your baby into the car seat for that very first time while they scream like you are waterboarding them? Remember driving home desperate for a moment of silence and starting to chant some idiotic phrase over and over again like, "It's ok honey, daddy and mommy right here, right here daddy and mommy!" feeling like your collective IQ just dropped about 100 points? Remember finally arriving home trying to wrestle junior or juniorette out of the car seat with baby fighting you back with Dwayne Johnson strength? And do you remember finally making your way through the door and onto the couch and asking yourselves, "What in the world do we do now? Or "Where do we go from here with 18 years (or in reality a lifetime) of parenting to go?" No nurses, no pediatricians, and no lactation consultants. Just the two of you and this beautiful miraculous yet very needy little guy or gal before you. What next?
- II. I think in some ways Peter and his fellow disciples had a similar feeling after the resurrection. The feeling of immense joy but also the responsibility of what to do with this news. Where from here? Let's read **John 21: 1-19** They had just experienced the trauma of watching Jesus flogged, beaten and crucified and then the unbelievable joy of the resurrection...but they don't know what to do next. In fact, many modern scholars look at chapter 21, this part of the gospel story, and argue that it is an add-on. In other words, they say John or a later disciple added this as an epilogue but that it wasn't part of the original gospel manuscript. The problem with this theory is that there is no proof of this...there was no manuscript of the gospel of John discovered without chapter twenty-one. Plus grammar and verbiage is very much like the rest of the letter. And this chapter truly brings closure to the story. So what do we make of it?
- III. Peter and the gang seem not sure what to do. So they return to the one thing they know what to do, fish. But this shouldn't surprise us. I think when we experience confusion, loss, change, uncertainty, even if it is paired with joy, we long for the known... the familiar. It's like when Meg and I got married and moved to Germany. It was an exciting and joyful time in our lives but also a bit frightening. So where did we first go to eat when we arrived? No wienerschnitzel for us, but Pizza Hut. We yearned for the familiar. And I think this is in part what we see with the disciples. And I love the scene John paints here. Here they are pulling an all-nighter fishing

with nary a bite. And the sun is just rising and this stranger appears on shore. The disciples had to be completely exhausted. Well, this stranger asks a question that really is more of a statement. Ron's translation- "You kids didn't catch anything, did you?! That is because all the fish are on the other side of the boat!" Now think how the disciples might have heard that. I can see Peter saying in a smart-alecky kind of way, "Oh, the other side. Now why didn't I think of that!" But regardless, something about this stranger led them to obey. And they hit pay dirt. So much in fact, John recorded the exact number...153 must have been an impressive catch. Then the disciple (Jesus' "favorite" disciple, who is John) is first to make the connection. This is no stranger. He tells Peter...and Peter cannot contain himself, puts his swimming trunks on, and dives in. The way I have always visualized this is like the scene from Forrest Gump when Lt. Dan shows up at the dock making good his promise to Forrest to serve as his first mate. Forrest is beside himself when he sees him on shore...he gets so excited that he jumps off the boat and into the water, as the shrimp boat careens into the dock. By the time Peter and the rest get to shore, Jesus already has breakfast going. And it is in the breaking of the bread, an almost communion-like moment, that they all fully recognize the resurrected Lord.

- IV. And then after breakfast, Jesus quizzes Peter. There is so much to this brief but poignant moment. How many times did Peter deny Jesus? How many times does Jesus ask him if he loves him? What does 3 represent? Completion. So we see Peter being welcomed back into the fold. I don't think this was for Jesus' sake but rather Peter's. Peter needed to be able to express his love and commitment to Jesus so he could fully forgive himself for his betrayal. I think this is an important step in repentance or our turning away from harmful and hurtful behaviors and attitudes. We have to be able to forgive ourselves before we can move on. But this wasn't just about Peter making amends...but Jesus' giving Peter marching orders, his mission, essentially where to go from here. He tells Peter to feed and care for "my sheep." And "to follow me." Jesus is returning to the sheep/shepherd analogy that is pervasive in the Old Testament (like Psalm 23) that John's gospel picks up in the New Testament. He instructs Peter to feed or teach his sheep and to care for them. Who are the sheep in this analogy? People. And Jesus made it clear earlier in the gospels that He is not just talking about the Jews or His followers, but even those who consider themselves far from the God, the so called "lost." The 1 out of 99 who strayed. So this becomes Peter's mission. It is the answer to the question, "Where do I go from here?" And in the book of Acts, we see that Peter takes Jesus' mission to heart. Never again, do we see Peter fishing for fish...from here on out, he is all about fishing for men and women who have strayed like Peter himself strayed...that God is calling back home.
- V. I want to take the rest of our time this morning and begin to answer the "**where do we go from here**" question as we become our own church. A few weeks ago we celebrated the resurrection. Among many things the resurrection tells us as Christ followers is that death is not the end, that evil doesn't win and that everything sad is coming untrue...and we can be a part of this movement of God to make it happen. So what do we do with that? What are our marching orders here at G3 as we become our own faith community in light of this truth?
- VI. Some of you know that I love hiking, backpacking, and such. And when I go, I always bring a map (**prop**). But a map doesn't work like a GPS. You don't just pick it up and it has a bright red dot

showing you where you are. Or Siri doesn't tell you to take a left at the big tree. You've got to figure out your location. But to do so, it helps if you know where you came from...where on the map you started. Last week we talked about where we came from as a church. Shared some about our "birth" story. How we were born with a God-given vision to "help those who feel far from God come home." We also talked about stones. Not kidney or diamonds but referring to Joshua 5 when the Israelites crossed the Jordan river with God's supernatural help and commanded the people to take stones and place them on the far side to remind them what He did there. We took some time to remember some of our own stones, those moments and people that God used to get us where we are today. But now let's focus on the future not the past. The "where from here" piece.

VII. So where do we go as we charter or become our own faith community? That is the question, right? Going back to the map analogy, once you figure out where you are by looking back from where you came, you need to determine where you are going. That was part of the issue with Peter and the disciples. They experienced this overwhelming event, the resurrection, but they didn't know where to go after that. I think they felt directionless until Jesus showed up. Anyone who has learned basic land navigation knows you need to find topographical land features for reference points to make sure you are going in the right direction. Like a mountain peak, a river, a hill, Hardees, etc. We too have some reference points at G3 as we move forward. We can call them G3 reference points. For one as we go into the future we are **not about building a building but about helping people connect with God and each other.** Not that we believe buildings are bad, evil or of Satan or anything but simply they are not our focus here at G3. Perhaps we will lease something in the future but we want to invest our resources on fishing for people not fishing for property. This partly comes out of my own personal experience over the years serving at various churches of all sizes, shapes and flavors. What I have seen is the more property a church has, the more likely the church will focus on the stuff, maintaining the building, cooling the building, cleaning the building, fixing the building, coming up with policies for the building, essentially keeping the building happy. I have seen too many times where the church instead of climbing the mountain God has for them (to stick with our map/hiking motif) ends up getting stuck on a hill or worse...lost because they are worried over the color of the carpet or spilling coffee in fellowship hall rather than seeing people coming to Jesus. So one of our key reference points to keep us heading in what I believe is God's direction is, to quote Stephen Covey, to keep the main thing, the main thing...fishing for people, the very mission Jesus gave to Peter. To continue to reach out to those who feel far from God. **We are not about constructing a building but growing a Christ-centered, loving community with a door wide open to all.**

VIII. We might say, okay, we already started that. We now have a church community of around 175. And we obviously don't have a building as you can see from the goal post dangling down. Sounds like we are going in the right direction on the map at least according to one of our key reference points. No doubt we are heading in the right direction but we are not even close to arriving at our final destination. There are literally thousands of people who feel far from God within just a mile or two from where we sit. How can we continue to reach out to our community? Besides inviting friends, family, neighbors and such to join us. If we were on a

hiking trip, the question would be, which trail do we take to get there? I like how Adam Hamilton puts it. He says, **“As Christ followers, we must be willing to do what is inconvenient, uncomfortable, sacrificial, and even risky in order to be a part of Christ’s redemptive work in the world.”** And in Peter’s case in our Scripture, this meant even his death. This is what Jesus is describing when He says that he will be taken to a place he didn’t want to go. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down. Now I am not saying this morning that God is calling us to die for this mission to reach people, but He is calling us to commitment...committing our time, our talent and our financial resources to this mission. And in fact, that is the only way we can get there. Now you might be saying, “Wait a minute Ron, I didn’t sign up for this...I am not even sure where I am faith-wise.” And that is fine. I respect and honor that. But if you have been coming and you are starting to feel part of this community, I ask that you consider what the next step of your commitment may be. As we become our own church we need everyone who feels part of this mission to be serving and giving in some capacity. Join our set up and tear down team, hospitality team (welcoming visitors to our worship gathering,) our Buds childcare ministry or Sprouts our children’s worship, our tech team, finance team, a trustee team, doughnut hole team. We about have a team for everything you can imagine. But we need everyone who can to jump in so no one burns out on the way to our destination.

- IX. To remind us why we do all this, I want to invite **Stephanie Rumsey** to come and give a brief word about how God worked through G3 to help her come home. This is why we do what we do. And why we continue in our journey. And I close this morning with what I believe is the next leg of our trip. I believe God is not calling us to be bigger but to go wider. In other words, not to just reach more people for us at G3 but to spread across this city...having G3’s meeting in other schools throughout Forsyth. The way we are set up and organized is relatively simple, requires fairly small amount of financial resources but the impact can be life changing. I believe this is where God is leading us. Will there be more rivers to cross, more mountains to climb, more pitfalls to avoid? You bet. But can you imagine how many lives can be transformed if we are willing to go down this path? So like Peter and the first disciples after the resurrection we ask “where now from here?” As your lead pastor, I firmly believe that is where. We don’t just grow bigger we grow wider....spread throughout Winston-Salem. And like new parents we get the joy, the honor, the privilege of seeing our child that is born next week grow up and have its own children and in the process seeing thousands of people come home.