

The Importance of Saying 'Yes'

John 21:1-19 | Third Sunday of Easter | May 4, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my siblings in Christ,

Shonda Rhimes, the creator of hit shows like Grey's Anatomy and Scandal, as well as new ventures in Netflix, once gave a Ted Talk on the importance of saying "yes".

I was skeptical. It's trendy to talk about "saying no" and setting good boundaries. Was Rhimes enabling workaholics to never say no to anything?

But that's not what she meant.

She said to **"say yes to the thing you're afraid of."** Saying yes to the things that will push you or be beneficial, especially when our first reaction is "no"—or, "I can't." Or "I'm afraid to try something new."

"Doing the thing undoes the fear." Maybe not completely, but once you've faced a challenge head on, doing it the next time isn't quite so intimidating.

Rhimes was on the Adam Grant podcast and discussed how to do those things that might seem scary.

She said, "A real leader goes forward when they know that it's the right north star. It is very easy to just sit back and keep doing what you're doing.

You have to seize those moments. If I'm gonna keep doing what I'm doing, what's my why? If the reason is "because it's comfortable", that might not be the right reason.

If you can say your why, you know you're right.

I can relate. I felt called to ministry a few times in my 20's. Each time this idea came up, I easily rationalized reasons why not.

I had clergy family members tell me not to do it. I had a job that took care of the needs of my family and quitting to go to school was risky.

A pivotal moment in my discernment was while I served in the role of treasurer at my church and had to share a message with the congregation—a "temple talk".

Speaking in front of everyone seemed scary. Intimidating. What would I say?

Sermon Transcript

So I prepared. Taryn helped me figure out the messaging. She made me rehearse. It wasn't easy, but doing the thing undid the fear.

Sort of. You see, this was just giving an end-of-year budget update. It wasn't a sermon. Yet, this was a pivotal moment because it was shaped by messages I heard, week after week while in the pews with our young family.

I had to give the why of the church—why did we, as a congregation, support the mission through our giving? That was easy—because I could see how Shepherd of the Hills in Edina was helping my family grow in faith and to witness how our church cared for our community.

Yet I still didn't have a good enough why for me. I still kept doing what I'd been doing for the past three years.

John 21, as we saw a few moments ago, is the end of the story. John has appeared to Mary Magdalene. Then to the disciples, without Thomas, behind locked doors.

A week later, Thomas confesses that this is “my LORD and my God.”

Today, a fourth resurrection appearance is a bit startling.

Why?

Because nothing has really changed.

Jesus has spent years with the disciples. He's called them, taught them, prepared them for what's next. He's given them ways to remember him and empowered them to follow in his footsteps.

Now that he's resurrected, surely everything must click into focus—OH!!!! That's what he meant!!!! The disciples MUST have figured out, hey we gotta go tell everyone the good news.

But they don't.

They've reverted back to their old ways. They go fishing. And it's not going well.

Jesus gives directions. He tells them to cast the nets on the other side. They obey and this time, an abundance of fish—153 to be exact, fill the net.

Now, at his word, and through the miracle, he is recognized. It's the LORD.

Why does that matter? What could be so significant about this?

Sermon Transcript

It's about what it means. It's about what's going to happen next.

Professor Karoline Lewis calls this a recalling of discipleship. Some Christians can tell you the day that they knew Jesus. Others can remember a teaching or event that made faith come alive. Others have recently affirmed their faith through confirmation.

Yet John 21 is a reminder of how important it is for all of us to be reignited—to get reenergized for the ministry that the Spirit is leading us towards. Being a Christian isn't a one-time moment. It's hearing God's call, over and again, and responding.

Jesus is calling the disciples again—and is recognized when he tells the disciples what to do.

Karoline Lewis, said this echoes John 2, at the wedding of Cana, his mother says “do whatever he tells you... and that leads to abundance.”

Then, when Peter feels guilty and ashamed that Jesus tells him three times that it's now his task to tend or feed the sheep or lambs, it's impossible to miss the parallel of Peter denying Jesus three times—yet this flawed, sinful human, is called to do powerful and miraculous things.

We live into this resurrected life. Easter is exciting! We do... but two weeks later, have we reverted to old habits? Old ways?

Are we struggling to get off the proverbial couch and do something? It's easy to just do what works. It's easier to stick to what we know. Peter clearly felt that way.

After I graduated from seminary, I didn't have a call. I had friends who got calls around the state. Around the country. With Oliver and his significant medical needs, we had to restrict our search for the Twin Cities.

That was daunting—there weren't a lot of openings for first-call pastors. I was told that it might be a long wait.

So I went fishing.

I called up the company I'd worked for before, where I'd been a manager. Maybe they'd have a job for me while I waited for an opening to be a pastor. I needed to get paid before student loan payments would kick in.

Sermon Transcript

But four years had gone by. That company had changed. Many of the leaders had changed. In some ways, I wonder if the Spirit was nudging to say, “what’s your why?”

I moved on. This wasn’t the path I was supposed to take. I wasn’t trained to do that work anymore. I was trained to be a pastor. To serve in the church. I was lucky. I ended up in a great church in Roseville by the fall.

Peter relied on muscle memory to go back to the boat. But that’s not what he had been training for with Jesus. He HAD been training to fish—to fish for people to follow Jesus.

Jesus, when he appears, reminds Jesus of his why: “go tend my sheep. Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep.”

And the last words, “follow me.”

At Faith, our mission is that we are “**Led by the Spirit to share God’s grace**” We see this message, every week in our bulletin... but have we forgotten this call? Is the Spirit nudging us to move forward?

Is there something that you’ve been meaning to do? Maybe it’s a new habit or spiritual practice you’re struggling to maintain. Maybe it’s a skill you’re trying to learn. Maybe it’s a dream you’ve had... that you keep saying no to because it’s too comfortable.

What would it take to take that step forward and lean into it?

Where is God in this? What’s your why?

I became a pastor because I found my why. There is brokenness, hurt, oppressed, and sin. It’s all over the place. I realized that I had a voice that could speak into how God is calling the church to be the light for a world that feels lost.

Sin doesn’t get the last word. Jesus rose from the grave as the light that overcomes the darkness. May the fourth—ahem—force of God’s light inspire us into what God’s calling us into next. Amen.