



# SUNDAY SCHOOL MAY 4, 2025

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Old Testament.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Lamentations 3:19-26 .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Steadfast Love of the Lord.....	2
Overview .....	2
Biblical Context.....	2
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	3
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	3
Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation & Modern-Day Context .....	3
Summary .....	3
<b>New Testament (Gospel) .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>John 21:1-19 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Jesus Appears to the Seven.....	4
Overview .....	5
Biblical Context.....	5
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	5
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	5
Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation & Modern-Day Context .....	6
Summary .....	6



## OLD TESTAMENT

### Lamentations 3:19-26

#### *STEADFAST LOVE OF THE LORD*

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness  
is wormwood and gall!

My soul continually thinks of it  
and is bowed down within me.

But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him.”

The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul that seeks him.

It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.

#### *OVERVIEW*

Lamentations 3:19–26 is a pivotal section in the book of *Lamentations*, a poetic and deeply emotional response to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. While much of the book is a lament over suffering, this passage stands out as a moment of hope and theological affirmation. The author—often traditionally identified as Jeremiah—reflects on personal anguish but pivots to declare the enduring faithfulness, love, and mercy of God. This shift offers readers a profound message: even in the depths of despair, hope can be found in God's unchanging nature.

#### *BIBLICAL CONTEXT*

The book of *Lamentations* consists of five chapters, each a poem, forming a complex acrostic structure in Hebrew. Chapter 3 is the centerpiece and the longest, made up of 66 verses in triple-acrostic form (each set of three verses beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet). Verses 19–26 are nestled within this central lament and form a turning point from despair to hope.

In the verses leading up to this section (vv. 1–18), the speaker details intense personal suffering and the feeling of being abandoned by God. But in vv. 19–26, the tone shifts dramatically. The writer recalls God's past faithfulness and declares, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.”

This moment of theological reflection is often read devotionally to emphasize that suffering is not the final word for those who trust in God.



### *HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT*

Lamentations was written in the aftermath of one of the most catastrophic events in Jewish history—the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple (586 BCE). This devastation was not just political and military; it was deeply theological for the people of Judah. The city of God had fallen. The Temple, where God's presence was believed to dwell, had been destroyed. Families were torn apart, and many were exiled to Babylon.

From a political standpoint:

- Babylon had asserted dominance over the Near East, crushing Judah's rebellion.
- Zedekiah, the puppet king, was blinded and taken to Babylon.
- Jerusalem was looted, burned, and depopulated.

From a non-biblical perspective, Babylonian chronicles corroborate the siege and destruction, aligning with the biblical record. The trauma was both personal and communal.

Theologically, it raised urgent questions: Had God abandoned His people? Was the covenant broken? Lamentations wrestles with these questions through poetry, grief, and ultimately, hope.

### *HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME*

- **586 BCE:** Destruction of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
- **Post-586 BCE:** Likely time of writing for *Lamentations*. The immediate aftermath was marked by destruction, displacement, and national mourning.
- The emotional and theological processing in this chapter reflects a period just after the catastrophe when survivors were trying to make sense of it all.

### *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT*

Scholars often interpret Lamentations 3:19–26 as an embodiment of *the theology of suffering*—the idea that even in the depths of despair, human beings can discover profound truths about divine faithfulness. The passage does not deny suffering but refuses to let it have the final say.

**Metaphorically**, this pivot from lament to hope is like standing in the rubble of a collapsed house and still believing that home is possible again. It's a moment of radical faith.

**In modern-day context**, it can speak to:

- **Survivors of trauma:** Those who've experienced loss—whether war, personal tragedy, or systemic oppression—often resonate with this kind of emotional arc.
- **Communities facing devastation:** After events like natural disasters, school shootings, or social unrest, this passage offers a model of lament that doesn't end in despair but reorients itself around God's unchanging character.
- **Mental health perspective:** Lamentations 3 reflects a kind of “cognitive reframing” found in therapy—acknowledging pain, but choosing to remember a greater truth.

One scholar puts it this way: “Hope is not the denial of pain, but the defiant memory of God's presence amid suffering.”

### *SUMMARY*

Lamentations 3:19–26 is a profound theological and emotional turning point. It begins with raw honesty about suffering but transitions into a powerful declaration of hope grounded in God's steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness. Set against the backdrop of Jerusalem's destruction, the



passage illustrates how faith can survive catastrophe—not by denying pain, but by choosing to remember God's character.

In today's world, it remains a timeless source of comfort for those navigating grief, injustice, and despair—an invitation to wait quietly and trust deeply, even when answers seem absent.

---

## NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

### John 21:1-19

#### *JESUS APPEARS TO THE SEVEN*

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

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?"

They answered him, "No."

He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

So, they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."



Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?”

And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”

(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

### OVERVIEW

John 21:1–19 describes a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). The passage includes the miraculous catch of fish, Peter’s recognition of Jesus, a shared breakfast, and Jesus’ restoration of Peter through a threefold question: “Do you love me?” Jesus then commissions Peter to “feed my sheep,” and foretells the manner of Peter’s death, calling him again to “Follow me.”

### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Placement in the Gospel:** This chapter follows the initial conclusion of John in chapter 20, which seems to wrap up with the purpose of the book. Chapter 21 is often seen as an epilogue, addressing unresolved issues—especially Peter’s denial of Jesus.
- **Connections to Earlier Events:**
  - The miraculous catch parallels **Luke 5:1–11**, when Jesus first called Peter and others.
  - The threefold questioning mirrors Peter’s **three denials** in John 18:15–27.
  - The command “Follow me” echoes the original calling of the disciples and affirms Peter’s reinstated leadership.

### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Fishing Culture:** Fishing was central to Galilean life. The professional nature of the disciples’ fishing trip reflects their return to livelihood following the resurrection, possibly out of uncertainty about what to do next.
- **Post-Resurrection Tensions:** The early followers of Jesus were likely experiencing confusion, fear, and fragmentation. Jesus’ appearance aims to restore unity and direction.
- **Church Leadership:** As the early Christian community began to form, authority structures needed definition. This story underscores Peter’s pastoral role, legitimizing him among the apostles despite his earlier failure.
- **Roman Context:** Rome’s power loomed large. The image of a shepherd—one who leads not by domination but care—stood in stark contrast to Roman political authority.

### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Time of Events:** This takes place shortly after the resurrection, around 30–33 CE.
- **Time of Writing:** The Gospel of John was likely written **between 90–100 CE**, so this narrative reflects both the life of Jesus and the experiences of the early Christian community decades later.



- **Church Formation:** By the time of writing, the Christian community had expanded, and leadership roles like Peter's were being recalled to reinforce apostolic authority amid internal and external challenges.

### *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT*

#### **Miraculous Catch of Fish:**

- **Metaphor:** Represents the abundance that comes from obedience to Jesus. The net that does not break, even with a heavy load, symbolizes the inclusive and enduring nature of the church.
- **Modern Context:** In times of spiritual burnout or ministry fatigue, people may feel like their "nets" are empty. But renewal comes from listening to Christ's direction—even if it challenges our expectations or past methods.

#### **Breakfast on the Shore:**

- **Metaphor:** Jesus' preparation of a meal signifies care, presence, and communion. It bridges the divine and the everyday.
- **Modern Context:** Simple acts of care and shared meals can be profoundly spiritual. Christ meets us not just in worship, but in ordinary settings.

#### **Peter's Restoration:**

- **Metaphor:** Each "Do you love me?" offers healing for Peter's earlier denial. This is a story of grace and commissioning.
- **Modern Context:** Failure, even dramatic moral failure, does not disqualify someone from spiritual leadership. Instead, through honest reflection and love, restoration is possible.

#### **"Feed my sheep" and "Follow me":**

- **Metaphor:** This is a vocational call to care, nurture, and lead—not with control, but with love.
- **Modern Context:** Christians today are still being called to "feed" others—whether through teaching, pastoral care, social justice, or simply by living out faith visibly and humbly.

### *SUMMARY*

John 21:1–19 depicts Jesus appearing to His disciples after the resurrection, guiding them to a miraculous catch of fish and sharing a meal with them. Central to the passage is Jesus' threefold question to Peter—"Do you love me?"—which parallels Peter's earlier denial and leads to his restoration. Jesus then commissions Peter to lead and care for His followers and foretells his future martyrdom. The scene reinforces forgiveness, calling, and servant leadership.