

Lovest Thou Me

Sermon Delivered on February 4th, 2024
AM Service

By: Pastor Greg Hocson

Text:

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16: He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17: He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19: This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Introduction

Before His arrest and crucifixion, our Lord forewarned His disciples that when He gets arrested and fall in the hands of His enemies, they will all ran and be scattered like frightened sheep.

Mark 14:27 And Jesus saith unto them, **All ye shall be offended** (forsake and run) because of me this night: for it is written, **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.** 28: But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

As we know, Peter didn't like the words "**all ye.**" "*Not me, Lord!*" Peter didn't like how the Lord included him with those who will forsake Him. So, Peter confidently claimed that though the other disciples abandon Christ, he will never abandon Christ. Though they all should desert Christ, he is not like the rest, he would remain faithful and steadfast.

Peter's response to Christ's forewarning is a strong and confident claim, saying, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."

Peter had no idea how he was the special target of the enemy.

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33: And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. 34: And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Peter had two problems here, as someone said, “*Peter had completely **underestimated** the fierceness of Satan’s coming attack and **overestimated** his own personal courage and commitment.*”

Now, we fast forward to [John 21](#). At this time our Lord had already died on the cross and resurrected from the dead and has shown Himself to His disciples. But even though the disciples have already seen our resurrected Lord, **they still were discouraged** and maybe **feeling guilty**, and **thinking** that they are **no longer qualified to be apostles**. Having ran and fled and denied our Lord, maybe **they felt** they are **no longer worthy to carry out the Great Commission**.

But our Lord Jesus Christ is **not through with them**. He has **not given up on them**. He has a plan for them. Remember His words to His disciples,

[Mark 14:27](#) And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28: **But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.**

Our Lord assures them that **He will gather them back** and also **assures them** of His **forgiveness** and **encourages** them. Let us see how the Lord did it and learn from Him how to deal with those among us who are discouraged, who have fallen, the wounded, etc.

So, knowing that the disciples needed encouragement and assurance of forgiveness, **He starts** with the one who has been **the most discouraged** and **the most downcast**, Simon Peter, the one who had denied our Lord three times, wept bitterly and wanted to go back to fishing.

Four headings this morning, a **Searching Question**, a **Sensible Answer**, a **Solemn Charge**, and a **Somber (Dark) Warning**.

I - A Searching Question

[John 21:15](#) So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

After they have eaten their breakfast, our Lord’s attention was on Peter. Our Lord will begin to restore Peter by turning to him and asks, “[Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?](#)” Do you love me? A very simple and direct and important question. This is probably most important question you could ever be asked.

[Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me **more than these?**](#)

More than what? More than these things, nets, boats, fishing? More than your career or vocation? More than you love your fellow disciples? More than these other disciples love me?

I believe our Lord meant the last one. Do you love me **more than these other disciples love me?** Remember how Peter confidently asserted that though all the other disciples forsake Christ, he will not. Peter boasted that his love to Christ exceeded that of the other disciples. Peter exalted himself above others not knowing his own weakness.

Remember now that Peter needed forgiveness, restoration and reassurance. He needed to know that he still is accepted in the beloved. So, mark carefully how the Lord began: **not with a word of rebuke or reproach, nor a word of condemnation**, nor even with a “*Why did you deny Me?*” but “*Lovest thou me more than these?*”

The Lord’s intention is not to open the wound and to hurt Peter but rather **to heal, to forgive, to restore, and to reassure.**

Note what this question was. It was **not** a question concerning his **faith**. It was **not** a question concerning his **works**. It was **not** a question concerning his **denial**. It was a question concerning **Peter’s love**. Love is one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are belong to the Saviour.

1 Corinthians 16:22 **If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.**

The question, then, “*Lovest thou me?*” is a very important question; because **it is not just about the outward conduct or behavior but goes into the very heart**, for if the heart or affection is wrong, everything else is wrong.

A soul-searching question

“We may know much, and do much, and profess much, and talk much, and work much, and give much, and go through much, and make much show in our religion, and yet be dead before God, from lack of love, and still go down to the pit.” - J. C. Ryle

Do we love Christ? That is the great question. Without this there is no reality about our Christianity. We are like Christmas trees—dead trees adorned with ornaments. Without love we are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. There is no life where there is no love.

II - A Sensible Answer

So, our Lord asked him whether he loved Him better than others. Listen to Peter’s response ...

John 21:15 ... **He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.**

By this response, Peter is showing a sign that he has learned his lesson. He gave a very good answer. A wise (discreet, sensible) answer. Peter learned a valuable lesson. Few weeks before this conversation with Jesus, he would have answered, “**Although all shall be offended (forsake and run and deny), yet will not I.**”

Peter before this, was proud. He thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he was careful to answer. He would not say that he loved Christ better than others.

One application:

It is not wise for us to compare to each other. It is not wise for us to think that we love better than even the least of God's children.

I believe that is **a good sign that we have grown in grace when we stop thinking and claiming superiority over others.**

Someone has said, *"The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem."*

[Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.](#)

He would confidently say that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others.

Peter did not bring up his good works before our Lord, as being the evidences of his love. He did not bring up his weeping, penance, alms giving, prayer and fasting, service, gifts and offerings, ministry, etc. Peter was wise; he did not bring any of these before Christ. But he appealed to Christ's omniscience.

"Lord, I cannot say how much others love you, I cannot say that my love surpasses others' love for you; but You know that I do love You."

[John 21:16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.](#)

Lord, You know that I love you. You know me more than I know myself.

Then the Lord asked him the third time ...

[John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?](#)

That Peter was "**grieved**" does not mean that he was offended at the Lord because He repeated His question, but I believe he was touched, and became deeply sorrowful, as he recalled his threefold denial.

[John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.](#)

Peter learn not to trust his own heart or judgment, he leaves it the One who knows all things. He would not trust his own heart any longer. So, he appeals to Christ Himself to decide.

He rested on the Lord's knowledge of his love; thus there was both humility and confidence united.

"Lord I don't love you the way I ought to, but Lord, You know that in spite of my awful failure and my present weakness and deficiency, I do love You."

Peter learned from his experience.

Just a note:

Two Greek words are used in this verse, namely “agape” and “phileo.”

Agape - Highest and purest form of love

Phileo – Brotherly love (you know that I dearly love you.)

III - A Solemn Charge

Feed my lambs...feed my sheep...feed my sheep.

Do you love Me? Then one of the best evidences you can give is to feed my lambs, feed My sheep. **Do not starve my lambs and my sheep.**

Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

If you love Me, here is the way to manifest it. Take care of my lambs. Take care of my sheep. In other words, take care of my church.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**; 26: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Our Lord has great love and concern for the church.

Now, we are not all called to be Pastors. We are not all called to feed the lambs and tend the sheep as Pastors, but we all can help feed and tend for the sheep and the lambs. In our church there are many different areas where you could show your love to Christ and His lambs and sheep.

There are children to teach, young people to minister to, young believers to disciple, brethren to pray for, etc. We can show our love by helping to care and tend for the lambs and the sheep.

Jesus saith unto him, **Feed my sheep.**

I see **grace, mercy, kindness, forgiveness, confirmation** here. Not only was Peter freely **forgiven**, and fully **reaffirmed to his apostleship**, but also was entrusted to him that which was dearest to our Lord—His church; His sheep! Jesus Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, and now **He commits His sheep and lambs to Peter’s care**. What a privilege and honor our Lord gave Peter who had denied Him!

IV - A Somber Warning

John 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19: This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Here, **Christ predicts the manner of Peter's death**. This could refer to **crucifixion**, and according church tradition that this is how Peter died. According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down as a martyr for Christ's sake.

He was crucified upside down by his own request because he did not want to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus Christ because he said he is not worthy to be executed the same manner our Lord was.

Remember the words of Peter in ...

Luke 22:33 And he said unto him, Lord, **I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**

In another occasion Peter said, "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? **I will lay down my life for thy sake.**" John 13:37

At that time when Peter said these words, he was not ready, he failed our Lord. But later, after experiencing the resurrection of Jesus Christ and after receiving restoration from Christ, Peter eventually fulfilled his desire. He followed the Lord even unto death. He laid down his life for Christ's sake.

Closing Exhortations

Our Saviour put a serious and sincere question to Peter, not for His own information, but for Peter's examination and for Peter's restoration.

Self-examination should be our daily habit as Christians. It should be perpetual practice. Socrates once said, "*An unexamined life is not worth living.*"

Do you love the Lord? Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you love the Saviour? May we be able to say with Peter, "*Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.*"

AMEN!