

Do You Love Me?

Text: John 21:15-19

1) Asked of Peter

Suggested Hymns:

2) Asked of us

609, 610, 369, 359, 617

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 21:15-19, ¹⁵ *So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”*

¹⁶ *He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”*

¹⁷ *He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.*

¹⁸ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We have before us one of Scripture’s most intimate and touching scenes — the denier is questioned as to his love for his Master.

Only a short time before his denial, Peter had made his boast of loyalty. We read in Mark 14:29-31, ²⁹ *Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.” ³⁰ Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even*

this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” ³¹ *But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all said likewise.* However, a few hours after this was said terrible things began to happen.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said, *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.”*¹ Judas, the betrayer came and kissed Him. The enemy came and took Him prisoner. The disciples fled. Christ was being falsely accused in the high priest’s palace.

Peter was by the fire, warming himself, and there this bragging, boastful disciple committed that three-times-spoken denial recorded in Luke 22:54-62. *But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”* ... later *Peter said, “Man, I am not!”* ... ⁵⁹ *Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”*

⁶⁰ *But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.* ⁶¹ *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* ⁶² *So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*

Now, a few days after the resurrection, Jesus was host to seven of the disciples and put the question three times to Peter who had denied Him so shamefully, *Do you love Me?* That is our theme for today. *Do you love Jesus.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Do You Love Jesus Asked Of Peter.

Let us consider this question in the light of Peter’s boasting and privileges and faith.

“Simon, son of Jonah, you made your boast of loyalty but then you denied Me three times, *Do you love Me?*”

“Simon, son of Jonah, you drew your sword ill-advisedly one moment and then denied Me the next out of fear, *Do you love Me?*”

“Simon, son of Jonah, you were favoured above your colleagues, ***Do you love Me?***”

“Simon, son of Jonah, as spokesman of the Twelve you made that exemplary confession, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”***² Was that merely lip-worship, tongue testimony, or did it come from the heart?” “Were you not Peter the Rock, will you retain the name Peter the Rock? ***Do you love Me?***”

What was Peter’s answer? ***“Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”*** “Yes, Lord, despite my base denial I love You.” “You know that deep in my heart I love You. That shameful denial — I have repented of it. Lord, You know that there is no deep-seated, basic unbelief or infidelity in me. You know that I love You.”

Yes, ***“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”*** You know my sitting down and my rising. You understand my thoughts afar off. You compass my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Omniscient Lord, Knower of every human heart, ***You know that I love You.***

What was the effect of the questions of Jesus? Peter was grieved. It hurt Peter. It did not anger him. It caused him sorrow because Jesus said to him the third time, ***“Do you love Me?”*** The Master seemed to question his love, and his sincerity. He seemed to doubt the genuineness of Peter’s affection.

The Saviour may well have had a cause to wonder, humanly speaking; for that so-sure disciple denied Him when the rooster crowed, just as Jesus had foretold.

How easily Peter might have continued in the way of denial! The thrice-repeated question drove deeply into Peter’s heart and soul. Three times the question, ***“Do you love Me?”*** Three times the affirmative answer, ***“You know that I love You.”*** Three times the command, “Feed My lambs,” “Tend My sheep,” “Feed my sheep.”

This has been called the reinstatement of Peter after his shameful denial of knowing Jesus. Again he is commanded to exercise pastoral care over the lambs of the Lord, and over the sheep of the great Shepherd of Souls. He had denied his Lord, Peter had, but he also repented. He went out and wept bitterly, and Jesus forgave him and gives him new commands.

What was the result? Peter obeys the command and serves his Lord faithfully unto death: preaching,³ performing miracles,⁴ and suffering for Christ.⁵

Peter's loving of Christ, serving of Christ, feeding His lambs and sheep, led to martyrdom.

Jesus said at the close of our text, ¹⁸ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”* ¹⁹ *This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”*

This was a prophecy of Peter's death. According to tradition Peter was put to death under Nero by crucifixion. Thus he glorified God in his death.

What a glorious end, dying a death to the glory of God! How different from the death of the fellow-disciple who went and hanged himself!

Peter truly loved his Lord, and he fed the lambs and the sheep, witnessed and testified for Christ, until finally in his old age he paid the last full measure of devotion. This was the life of an impetuous disciple, but in many ways a noble and loveable character who comes to an end in a glorious climax. The denier dies for the cause of Jesus whom he had once denied.

2. Do You Love Jesus Is Asked Of Us

The Lord may well have put this searching question to the other disciples. The Lord might well put this question to each one of us: *“Do you love Me?”* Do we love the Lord? Suppose the risen, scarred Christ would have put that question directly to each one of us? What would we answer?

It is a timely question. In the light of our neglect of spiritual things Jesus asks, *“Do you love Me?”* Or in the light of our ardent pursuit of earthly interest Jesus asks, *“Do you love Me?”*

Or in the light of the times when we have denied Him. Or in the light of our selfish, self-centred living. Or in the light of the times we have disobeyed Him. Or in the light of our failure to help the needy. Or in the light of our lack of

interest in His cause displayed in so many ways. Or in the light of our frequent neglect of prayer, His Word, His house, His Sacrament. He well might ask, “*Do you love Me?*”

What is the effect of this question on us? How does this soul-searching question affect us? Does it arouse anger, resentment, indignation, wrath, or does it cause mourning, grief, sorrow, and wretchedness?

If it arouses anger, resentment, indignation, and wrath, does not that seem to indicate that there are some of the symptoms of the hypocrite in us, that we are not at heart the disciples that we ought to be, and that we do not really love Jesus and are not showing it as we ought?

If, on the other hand, this question arouses sorrow, grief, desolation, if it hurts, would not that seem to indicate that we love Jesus sincerely and honestly and that it grieves us to think that the Saviour doubts or questions our devotion and love?

It grieved Peter to have the Lord put this question three times. It did not anger him. It caused him sorrow.

What is the result in us? Should not our love show itself more and more? Christ says in John 14:15, ¹⁵ “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” We dare not claim to love Him and not strive to do His will. There can be no deep-rooted denial of Christ, no living in unbelief or sin, and then claiming to love Him. We prove our love by sincere and strict obedience.

We are to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind, and that includes Christ. Scripture says in Romans 13:10 that *love is the fulfillment of the law*. The doing of Jesus’ will is the proof of our love.

The blessings of loving Christ are given in John 14:23, “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*”

If you love Christ, the Father will love you, and the Father and the Son will make their abode with you. Yes the wonderful blessings of such a life! Yes, the peace, the hope, the joy, the courage, etc., which are experienced by those people who love Christ and have God abiding with them!

Again, we read in James 1:12, ¹² *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Eternal life is promised to those people who love Jesus. Of course, there can be no genuine love of Christ with a denial of the claims that Jesus Himself made. If we truly love Him, we shall believe His every word.

The absence of love for Christ is scathingly denounced by Paul in the end of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, ²² *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!*

If we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and all that loving Him implies, that is, believing His Word, following Him, keeping His commandments, etc., we are accursed, lost forever, and doomed eternally.

So in conclusion. — How can we fail to love Jesus when we consider all that He has done for us? All that we are and have is due to Him; all that we hope to be is due to Him.

He is our All in all, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Saviour and Bishop of our souls, our God and Lord, Saviour and King; with us always, preparing a place for us, strengthening, upholding, forgiving, meeting our every need.

Yes, how Jesus loves us! Should we not love Him, too? And to think that the love of the world, the love of money, the love of pleasure, the love of sin, the love of self and indifference, so often crowds Christ out of the hearts of men.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist, ⁶

Thee will I love, my strength, my treasure;
Thee will I love, my hope, my joy;
Thee will I love in fullest measure,
With ardour time shall ne'er destroy;
Thee will I love, O light divine,
So long as life is mine. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 26:38

² Matthew 16:16

³ Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26

⁴ Acts 3:1-8; 9:32-35, 36-43

⁵ Acts 5:40-42; 12:3-5

⁶ Hymn 359