

Title: Do You Love Jesus?

Scripture: John 21:15-19

Series: Bilingual

1. Introduction:

- a. The setting for our passage today is the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.
- b. Simon Peter and some of the disciples, impatiently waiting for a promised appearance of the resurrected Christ, decide to go fishing. After spending an entire night on the sea, they catch nothing.
- c. In the morning, a mysterious stranger beckons them from the seashore. He tells them to recast their nets. When they do so, the boats begin to sink under the weight of the fish caught.
- d. Peter immediately reasons that the mysterious stranger is the resurrected Lord and impulsively jumps into the water to swim to him.
- e. Shortly after Peter's swim, the other arriving disciples find a warm fire and breakfast already cooking.
 - i. But this tranquil scene is about to become uncomfortable.
 - ii. The Lord begins a conversation with Peter to reinstate him publicly. Peter, if you remember, had previously denied the Lord 3 times.

1. **Matthew 26:31-34** Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ (32) But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” (33) Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” (34) Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”
2. **Matthew 26:69-75** Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” (70) But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.” (71) And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” (72) And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the man.” (73) After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.” (74) Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed. (75) And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me

three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

- iii. In our passage today, Peter must confront these previous denials.
 - 1. Three times, Peter denied his Master, and he must now reaffirm his commitment three times.
- iv. In this way, Christ ensured that the church knew that Peter was forgiven and recommissioned to pastor the flock of God.

2. Verse 15: Peter’s First Opportunity to Affirm His Love:

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.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

a. **Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me...**

- i. Our English translation needs to capture the depth of the question being asked. In the original Greek, Christ uses the highest verb for love in his questioning. Simon, do you (agapaō) me?
 - 1. This verb means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men, the way God loves the Son.
 - 2. This quality of love is not an emotion but an action initiated by a deliberate choice, even if the person is unworthy of said love.

3. It expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is not motivated by superficiality. It is the love of wholehearted devotion of the entire person.
- ii. This is Christ's question to Peter. Peter, do you love me sacrificially, devotedly, and with your whole being?
 1. Peter stands before the one who knows all things. This question is put before him. The very question cuts Peter to his soul. He had once professed such love and then was proven to be a liar.
 - a. **“Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”** With this statement, Peter had sworn *agapaō*, sacrificial love.
 - b. But such a pledge was untrue. He had loved himself more than the Lord.
 2. Beloved, how would you answer this question from our Lord? What if the Lord substituted your name for Peter's?
 - a. Be careful! Do not think of yourself as being better than Peter! After all, have you not also failed the Lord multiple times?

3. We do not doubt that our Lord's love for Peter, you, and me is this kind of agapaō love. His whole ministry was a demonstration of this kind of love. But the question is, do we reciprocate this agapaō love?

b. Do you love me **more than these?**”

- i. Peter, in pride, had spoken about his superior love for the master. Peter boasted of being more faithful than all the other disciples. Therefore, before the other disciples, our Lord asks Peter if he still feels his love is superior.
- ii. In prideful self-esteem, Peter had placed himself above the other disciples. This trusting in self had brought about his fall. Therefore, in the presence of the very men he had belittled, he must now make his confession.

c. **Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.**

- i. Again, our English language fails us. Peter's answer differs from the Lord's question in two key ways:
 1. Peter no longer compares himself with his fellow disciples. He can never put them down again. He knows the extent of his failure. He was never as strong as he thought he was. Very few men are.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 10:12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

2. So, Peter, humbled by the memory of his fall, refuses to use the higher verb for love, which Jesus had used. For the love of wholehearted devotion, the love that Jesus was asking about, Peter substitutes the verb ***phileō***.

a. **Peter said to Him, Yes, Lord, you know that I have (deep) affection for you.**

b. He does not dare to affirm that he possesses the higher kind of love. He loves the Lord but knows his human limitations.

i. We dare to say that no one has ever loved the Lord in the manner which the Lord deserves.

d. Yes, Lord, **you know**:

i. So, instead of boasting about his perceived love, as he had done before, Peter now casts himself before God's sovereign knowledge. Peter says, “**You know** my heart and its affection for you.”

1. Love for Jesus is an absolute prerequisite for serving Him and His kingdom. And in tender mercy, Jesus is willing to call into ministry those who claim nothing more than a humble yet very precious type of love.

2. As far as human hearts go, Peter deeply loved the Lord. He could never love on the level that Jesus loves, but he knew that he loved Jesus and that his love for Jesus was ever-increasing.

e. Accepting his answer, **Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs.**

i. The grace of our God is incredible. Peter is to make his love for the Lord evident in how he will Pastor the Lord's Lambs. He will no longer look at the lambs of God as being beneath him, but he will devote the entirety of his life to feeding the lambs of God the sound doctrine that makes all the difference. In other words, love for the Son is evident in our love for His lambs.

3. Verse 16: Peter's Second Opportunity to Affirm His Love: He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

a. Our Lord's second question differs from the first. It probes deeper and is more painful. It is as if Jesus were saying, "**Simon, by your silence about the other disciples, you have shown that you no longer believe that you love me more than they do. But now, dropping the comparison, do you really love me sacrificially and devotedly?**"

i. So, Jesus again uses the same verb used before, *agapaō*.

- b. Peter's response is also the same, although probably filled with even greater pain. He said, "**Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you.**" He does not dare to revisit his previous pride.
- c. Jesus said to Peter, accepting the answer, "**Tend my sheep.**" As a pastor, Peter was commanded to feed Christ's Lambs. Here, Peter is commanded to tend Christ's sheep. The pastoral heart feeds, keeps, and protects the sheep of Christ.
 - i. Every pastor must understand their role as those that feed and tend. Every pastor must realize that the lambs and sheep belong not to the pastor but to the Chief Shepherd. The word **my**, used by Christ in this passage, is a possessive noun substitute.
 - 1. So, the pastors tend to and feed the Lord's flock.
 - a. **1 Peter 5:4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - 2. This flock is not theirs. They are undershepherds who have been granted a great privilege and obligation.

- a. **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

4. Verse 17: Peter's Third Opportunity to Affirm His Love:

He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, 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 everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

- a. This time, Jesus comes down to Peter's level, using the very verb for love, which Peter had used. **Jesus said to him the third time, Simon son of John, do you have affection for me?**

- i. The fact that Jesus had now asked the question in this form grieved Peter. This is understandable. Put yourself in Peter's place. How could Peter not be grieved when Jesus seems to call into question even his **affectionate love**?
- ii. Within his heart, Peter is convinced that he possesses this humbler love. But he has learned his lesson. He does not dare to appeal to anything within himself. So he appeals once more, and now more emphatically than ever, to his Lord's omniscience. Peter says, “**Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you affectionately.**”

iii. Peter believes his affectionate love is real but has learned the danger of trusting in himself. So, who better than the omniscient Lord to know the truth of our love? Peter asks the Lord to reveal the truth about his heart's affection.

1. Beloved, do you love Jesus? Will you not ask God the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of your love?

a. **Psalms 139:23-24** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

b. **Jesus said to him, “Feed my (dear little) sheep.**

i. In response to Peter’s submission to the Son’s sovereign knowledge, Christ recommissions Peter for the third time. Peter does have an affectionate and deep love for the Lord. The three denials have been replaced by Peter’s admission to a humble love that sovereign knowledge accepts as true.

ii. So Peter is called once again to **feed Jesus’ (dear little) sheep.**

1. In our passage, believers are seen, first of all, as lambs, for they are weak; in need of the strengthening food of the Word; secondly, as sheep, prone to wander and dependent in everything; in need of being shepherded; and finally, as dear sheep, immature and in need of the tender and loving nourishment of the Word.
2. Beloved, this should not be an insult but a point of celebration. Our Lord knows us and, in His great love, has set up undershepherds to protect, guide, and feed His sheep.

5. Benediction:

- a. **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

**Public Reading of Scripture:
1 Peter 5:1-4**