

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

106- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 3
Simon Peter- Part 2

Church July 21, 2024

Matthew 10:1-4

1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now as I told you last week- the word, "**first**" that Matthew quotes Jesus saying in verse 2 is the Greek word, *protos*. And this is a very important word because this word does NOT simply mean the "*first in a particular List*". This word actually means: *the Chief or the Leader*. So, God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the Apostle to write here in **Matthew 10:2** that Peter was the *protos* or the Chief or the Leader of ALL the Apostles.

Now when I bring this out- many of my Protestant friends get real nervous- because they are wondering if I am going to uphold the false Teaching that Peter was the first Pope; or that Peter was the God ordained "Head" of the Christian Church. No, I'm not.

I teach that Peter was the Chief or the indisputable Leader of the Apostles because that is exactly what the Bible says. And that means that the Apostles were NOT twelve men with equal Standing; and equal Relationship to Jesus. They weren't. They were all equal- in the sense that Jesus called all twelve of them to herald the glorious Gospel and to establish the Church on the "Rock" of the Divine Revelation that God gave to Peter:

Jesus is the Christ- the Son of the living God

... and that is the Revelation- the Confession- the “Rock”- upon which the Church of Jesus is built.

So, Peter was *definitely* the Leader of the Twelve. But there is absolutely no biblical Reason to take that Truth and then add to it- to say that Peter must have then been the Head of the Church or the first Pope- because he wasn't. The Bible does not teach that at all.

I can find absolutely no Evidence anywhere in the Scriptures to even suggest that Peter was even in the Ministry of the Church at Rome in *any* capacity. He was NOT a Pastor or an Elder or a Bishop or even a member of the Church in Rome. The only time Peter ever went to Rome was to be martyred. And when you read what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in the Book of **Romans**- he identified several people who were in that Church. Yet he never mentioned Peter. And that Omission would have been a very obvious Insult if Peter been the Leader of that Church or the "Head" of the entire Christian Church.

Now as far as the Office of Pope is concerned- there is NOT any shred of biblical Evidence whatsoever to even suggest that it is a legitimate Position that should be followed; or emulated; or occupied in the Christian Church. So, it is therefore correct to say that the Office of pope is an *illegitimate* Office- even as is the Patriarchal office of the Eastern Orthodox Church is illegitimate as well.

No Church seeking to humbly and joyfully follow the Scriptures would ever have a person installed in any Position in the Church where he acted or carried out the Duties assigned to the Pope. The Office of the Pope is simply a Title and an Office that is the complete *fabrication* of Man; and has absolutely nothing to do with scriptural Integrity. It has absolutely nothing to do with biblical Christianity; and it cannot be justified by anything that the Bible actually teaches. And that is NOT my Opinion- it is a Fact of the Bible.

But not only the Office itself- the Power and Authority that has been wrongly assigned to the men who have held the Office of Pope; as well as the Effort to uphold the Pope as the supposed “Head” of the Christian Church as well as the “Vicar of Jesus Christ” has done much Damage to millions of people over the Centuries. And that is because the “System” that allows for a human being to hold such an Office- is an *apostate* System that is fighting *against* biblical Christianity- not fighting FOR it!

But even though everything I just said is true- it is *equally* true that Peter was, in fact, the Chief or the Leader of ALL the Apostles. And there is really no Question about this.

So, we need to all be willing to deal with this man- biblically- and NOT add to; or take away from- what both Jesus Himself and the Scriptures say about this man named Peter.

Now as I told you last week- Peter was a fisherman by trade. And he lived with his brother Andrew- who was also a fisherman. And they had a fairly large family fishing Business.

So that's what Simon and Andrew did. They were fishermen and they were originally from a small village called Bethsaida. But later they moved to Capernaum. And Capernaum was the major town on the north tip of the Sea of Galilee back then. Now there are only ruins that remain today. And the reason there are only ruins that remain today- is NOT because all this happened over 2,000 years ago.

The Reason there are ONLY ruins of Capernaum that remain today is because the Lord said that Capernaum would be destroyed and never rebuilt (**Matthew 11:23**). Now they have found the ruins of a synagogue there. And they have also found the ruins of a Church. And the Tradition is that the first Church in Capernaum was built over the Foundation of the home of Peter!

Now Peter was very eager and bold and aggressive and impulsive and very, verbal verbal. He was a very passionate man- who sinned greatly and loved greatly. But in the Bible, Peter also had several different Names. And, periodically, this man was called,

- *Peter*
- *Simon*
- *Simon Peter*
- *Cephas*
- *Simeon*
- *Simon-bar-Jonah*

... and there seems to be a *correlation* between Peter's Behavior and what Jesus called him.

For example, when Peter acted spiritual and strong and obedient to what Jesus had taught him- when he acted like a “rock”- then Jesus called him "Peter". But when this man was spiritually weak or even sinful- Jesus called him- "Simon". And it appears that when he was a little bit strong and a little bit weak- then what Jesus called him split the difference and he was called, "Simon Peter".

Now I don't want anyone formulating a Doctrine about this- but there *does* seem to be a correlation between the Way Peter acted and what Jesus called him. But other than this being true- I have no idea what this supposedly meant

For example- let's look at **John 21**. Now as you know in this Passage- Jesus had already risen from the Dead. And He told Peter- "*You go to Galilee and I'll appear to you there- after My Resurrection. And you stay there and wait for Me.*"

So, they go there. And Peter said, "*I'm not going to wait any longer- this is getting ridiculous. Why does Jesus want us to wait? Wait for what? But look, I'm not sure I'm really cut out for this, anyway. I don't understand what Jesus is doing. So, I tell you what. You guys can stay here if you want- but I'm going to go back and take up my fishing Business again.*" And so, Peter goes back up to where Jesus met him in the Beginning; and he gets back into his boat; and gets all his nets, and all his ropes, and all the paraphernalia, and he assembled all his old employees. And the other Apostles said, "*We're going with you*" because Peter was their Leader.

And so, they all went back down to the shore; got on the boats; and went back to what they were doing BEFORE Jesus called them to "*follow Me!*" So, Peter had *first* been called to Salvation. God *sovereignly* called him, the Way he later on described it in **1Peter 2:9b&10**:

9 ...you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Now, once God calls a wicked Sinner to Salvation- neither satan; nor anyone in the lost world can "*Un-call*" him. Almighty God freely and sovereignly chose to "set His Love" upon that individual BEFORE the Foundation of the World; BEFORE he was born; and BEFORE he had the Opportunity to do ANYTHING "Good" or "Bad". And NOTHING can change that! It is done. It is finished!

But there is another Factor to consider. You see, because the Call of God on that individual to Salvation is real and true and eternal- the individual MUST now live his Life as though he sees the Call of God into Salvation as being a *wonderful* thing; and something to *celebrate*; and NOT something to *grieve* over!

So, this sovereign Call to Salvation is also a Call to "*Follow Me!*" And because the Call to Salvation is eternal- the Call to "*Follow Jesus*" is also eternal. So, there is NO such thing as somebody being sovereignly called to Salvation and not also being called to "*Follow Me!*" Because the two things are actually the

SAME thing! Being sovereignly CALLED to Salvation is the same thing as being sovereignly CALLED to “*Follow Jesus!*”

So, we do NOT “Follow Jesus” for just a few Days; or for a month; or for even a year. We do NOT follow Jesus when we feel like it; or when it is convenient; or when it is popular. We DON’T just “Follow Jesus” in Church on Sundays; and then live our Lives the rest of the Week- as though we have NOT been called. No, since the Call to Salvation is both sovereign and eternal- the Call to “Follow Jesus!” is also sovereign and eternal. And that sovereign and eternal Call to Salvation now *consumes* us; and it takes precedent over every area of our Lives! And it does that- forever!

Now it is absolutely true that no devil or demon or evil person can snatch us out of the saving Hand of God! But it is also true that we ourselves CANNOT snatch ourselves out of God’s Hand- either! But if you truly understand the Depth of your Sins against God- then to be sovereignly and eternally called out of that horrendous Darkness and then to be called into the marvelous Light of God- is such an amazing Gift; such a breathtaking Blessing; such an Act of Love; and such an Example of the invincible, sovereign Grace of God- that it *transforms* us- forever!

And since all of that is true- how should we now act? How should we live our Lives? How should we behave ourselves- so we may demonstrate and show and display how grateful we are; how thankful we are; and how joyful all that God has done for us- has made us to be?

And what does the Call of God to Salvation do to our Disposition toward other people? For example, now that we have been sovereignly called to Salvation- how do we now treat our Friends and Family? But, even more importantly, how do we now treat our Enemies? How has the Call of God to Salvation changed the Way we see the Poor; the Sick; the Weak; the Aged; and the Helpless?

I know it is popular today to make Statements about important Issues by putting stickers on our Bumpers; and slogans on our ball caps; and Messages on our T-shirts; and even tattoos on our bodies.

But may I suggest that the very BEST place in all the world to show and demonstrate and display how valuable and important and meaningful we see that the sovereign Call to Salvation is- is in the Way we live our daily Lives. That we become the kind of people that this can be said:

... But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word (Isaiah 66:2b)

... that the Call of God to Salvation has made us to be a people who are Humble; who are contrite of Spirit; and a people who tremble at the Word of God!

But as Peter found out- the sovereign and eternal Call of God to Salvation- is also a sovereign and eternal Call to Discipleship. Because the Call to save is the Call to Justify. And the sovereign and eternal Call of God to Justify- is also the sovereign and eternal Call of God to Sanctify. And the sovereign and eternal Call of God to Sanctify- is also the sovereign and eternal Call to Glorify! The Apostle Paul put it like this in **Romans 8:29-32**:

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

So, Peter and the other Apostles were *first* CALLED out of their Sins and into Salvation. And many stop there. But then, *secondly*, God called these twelve men to become a “Disciple”- a Learner; and a Student. And many stop there. But then out from this literal Sea of Humanity that was following Jesus everywhere He went- God finally, called these men to be “Apostles”. Yet now that Jesus has seemingly left them; and now that Jesus has told Peter and the others to wait- Peter is saying, “*I’m done with this! I’m going fishing!*”

Now look, fishing is NOT a Sin. Making money through Gambling or making money by selling drugs; or making money by doing anything that is evil- is a Sin. But fishing is NOT a Sin. And for most people, who have NOT had the Lord call them into Salvation; call them into Discipleship; and call them into being an Apostle- being in the fishing Business is NOT a Sin.

But Peter going back to his fishing Business- WAS a Sin! Why? Because in **Matthew 4:19**, Jesus had said to Peter (and Andrew),

... Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

... and doing ANYTHING else- besides what God had called him to do- was a *horrible* Sin.

We need to understand that Peter was NOT returning back to his fishing Business simply because the fish were biting or because he missed it. No, in his mind- he was leaving Jesus. He was going back to his Business because things were not working out like he had planned; and he didn’t like what Jesus was doing.

Peter didn't understand what Jesus was doing and that Confusion was now translating into a Dislike. And so, Peter was doing what the ancient Jews did back in **Malachi 3:13&14**:

13 "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'"

14 "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?"

So, by returning back to his fishing Business- Peter was saying, "*It is vain to serve God*". And he was saying, "*What profit is it that we have kept His charge?*" Peter was saying that serving God was NOT worth it. That loving Jesus had no Profit. That there was NO Benefit in suffering for the Sake of Jesus Christ.

But we need to remember that no matter how prosperous it may be; no matter how "normal" it may seem; and no matter how many other people are doing it- for Peter to stop following Jesus and for him to go back to what he was doing BEFORE he was sovereignly and eternally called by the incarnate God- was the equivalent of Peter saying that following Jesus was NOT worth it; that following Jesus was NOT no longer what he wanted; and it was the equivalent of Peter *leaving* Jesus and returning to his former Life! So, Peter is now going to try to forget what has happened to him with Jesus and everything else for the last 3 years and just go fishing again.

And with all that in mind- let's pick up this Story from **John 21** in in verses 3- 7:

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

4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

5 So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No."

6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

Now there is so much here- probably enough for four or five Sermons. But I want to stay with Peter. So, Peter has now successfully abandoned following Jesus and he is now back at fishing. And those who fished in the Sea of Galilee oftentimes would fish all night long. And so, after trying all night- they had caught nothing.

And then they saw a guy on the shore- and he asked them if they had any fish. And when they said, “No!” He said,

Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.

Now the Reality is that fishing on one side of the boat had NOTHING to do with catching fish. Either the fish are biting or they aren't. But what was going on here- is that Jesus- acting as God- had total Authority over the fish. And so, Jesus *guarantees* a catch. And then He sovereignly *commanded* the fish- that were avoiding the net all night long- to obey Him and go into the net!

And when that Miracle took place- the Apostle John knew Who that Man was. And so, he said,

It is the Lord!

No one does what Jesus does! No human can do what Jesus does! And John knew that. And so, he had paid enough attention during his time with Jesus to be able to recognize Jesus when things like that happened!

Now Jesus *could have* simply condemned them. I mean they had all left their Posts and were fishing to get away from Jesus! And all they deserve right now- is Condemnation! But if Jesus does not rescue these men now- they will be lost. And the sovereign Call to Salvation would prove to only be temporary!

So, Jesus acts- sovereignly. He does NOT use another man here. Jesus uses Himself! And the Reason Jesus acts now- SOVEREIGNLY- to rescue these men from their Sin of *abandoning* Jesus; and trying their hardest to walk away from the Call to Salvation- is because Jesus is the ONLY one who CAN act! These men are in NO position to rescue themselves. And what Jesus is doing right here on this beach on that day- is the *fulfillment* of what God spoke through the Prophet in **Ezekiel 36: 22-27:**

22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations

will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Peter going back to his fishing Business and the other Apostles following him- was the equivalent of all of them “*Profaning God’s Name*”! It was them breaking the 3rd Commandment and “*taking the Name of the Lord in Vain!*” Because at this moment- these men, whom Jesus called *first* to Salvation; and then, *secondly*, He called them to be disciples; and then, *thirdly*, He called them to the Office of Apostle are leaving Jesus! These men are in the Process of *abandoning* the Call of God on their Lives; going back to what they were doing before God had called them; and then acting as though it had never happened!

But it DID happen! And that CALL is both Sovereign and Eternal! And so, Jesus acts- in His absolute Sovereignty to do for these men- what He said He would do- over 500 years earlier,

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes...

... and when John said, “It is the Lord!”- Peter jumped into the water and swam as fast as he could to meet with Jesus! And now look what happened in **John 21:9b-14:**

9 ... when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught."

11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.

**13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise.
14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.**

Now with the naked eye- this looks like Jesus is simply fixing them breakfast. But in reality- in the Spirit- Jesus is sovereignly washing them and cleansing them and changing them so they will embrace the sovereign and eternal Call of God that is on them.

So, now look what Jesus is now going to do with Peter in **John 21: 15-17**

15 So 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, "Tend My lambs."

16 He said to him again 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, "Shepherd My sheep."

17 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 all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Jesus asked Peter a very important Question:

Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?

These? These *what*? Is Jesus asking Peter, "*Do you love Me MORE than these other men love Me?*" OR is He asking, "*Do you love Me MORE than you love these other men?*" What is Jesus asking Peter about? And *why* is Jesus asking Peter if he loves Him?

When we read the New Testament- Peter stands out. And Peter is understood by most of us- precisely because he is like us. He has all the Failures that we are so familiar with in our own lives. Paul is somewhat aloof and mysterious- but we get Peter.

Because it is Peter who *overestimates* himself while he *underestimates* Temptation. He always thinks he's more committed than he actually is. He even thinks he loves the Lord more than he really does. And so, Peter actually thinks he can face any Trial- triumphantly. And it is when he hits rock bottom that he realizes he can't.

Now the Context here is that even though Peter has seen the risen Christ- at this moment- Peter is very low- he is actually a broken man. Nothing is working out the Way he though they would and the Way he thought they should.

Now the Disciples have not yet received the Holy Spirit at this point- so, they have not yet been infused with Power. And so, it's very easy for them to just fall back into the Way their Lives were before they met Jesus.

But the Lord is not about to lose any of them. And so, the sovereign and eternal Call that they received and obeyed 3 years ago- is going to work for Peter right now. And when it works for Peter- it will also work for the rest of them. Because they simply CANNOT "un-ring" that Bell!

But what Peter is finding out now- is that the Call to Salvation; the Call to Discipleship; the Call to be an Apostle- this Sovereign and Eternal CALL- is a CALL to love. And it is that Love that will *empower* these Apostles to do what they have been chosen to do.

So, what is happening now to Peter is a very simple and straightforward Infusion of God's Love. But even though it is simple and even though it is straightforward- it is also THE single most Powerful Force in the Universe! Because, you see, the CALL of God to Salvation; to Discipleship; and, in their case- the CALL to their apostolic Office- is also a CALL to love.

To Love God should be the most normal and natural thing we do. And it was- until Adam sinned. And so, today- in this broken and evil world- for anyone to love God- genuinely, truly love God- is a Miracle! And it is wholly UNNATURAL; and it is completely NOT normal! That's what the Fall did. It made the ONE THING that is the MOST Basic; the MOST Normal; and the MOST Natural thing in the Universe- loving God- to be THE SINGLE MOST Strange and Odd and Uncommon thing anyone can do.

And that is why Faithfulness; and Obedience; and the Willingness to Suffer- for God- is so hard to find. Because those three things:

1. Faithfulness
2. Obedience
3. Willingness to Suffer

... all flow out from Love. A very simple and basic and powerful and Life-changing Love for one single Man- Jesus Christ!

But Christianity is the ONLY Religion where EVERYTHING we do; EVERYTHING we sing about; EVERYTHING we pray about; EVERYTHINMG we want; and EVERYTHING we embrace- is *based* in Love! It is *bathed* in Love; it is *fashioned* and *molded* and *shaped and directed*- by Love!

Every Sacrifice that Christians make- is because of Who we love! Every Deed we engage in- is because of Who we love!

And so, THE SINGLE most important Question that Jesus could ever ask us is,

“Do you love Me?”

... so, simple. So straightforward. Yet so powerful!

And it’s always been that Way. In the Beginning, God said,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

ALL the Commandments; ALL the Effort; ALL the Ordinances; ALL the Sacrifices; ALL the Work- EVERYTHING is based on one thing:

DO YOU LOVE JESUS?

When you study the Life of Peter and the other Apostles- there is only one thing that can motivate the kind of Devotion they had- LOVE! These men said what they said and did what they did- because they loved Jesus! **2Corinthians 5:14** says,

... the love of Christ controls us ...

... the Love of Christ *constrains* us; *motivates* us; *drives* us; *empowers* us!

The Bible NEVER calls for a Life of Legalism; a Life of Law; a Life of Dread; a Life of Fear; or a Life that is *driven* by Commandment. It ALWAYS calls for us to love God and to be motivated by that Love to Obedience.

On the night before His Crucifixion in the Upper Room, Jesus said this to His Apostles in **John 14:15**:

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments

Now look carefully at what Jesus said here. Us keeping God’s Commandments does NOT come *first*. What comes *first* is us loving God. And the Obedience to God’s Commandments naturally and normally flows out from that Love.

But Peter is the one who has to get this *first*. He is the Leader; the Chief. And then he will demonstrate it to the others. And so, when Jesus asked Peter that Day,

Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?

... He was asking Peter if he loved Him MORE than Peter loved the fish that was before him on that beach!

We need to remember that Peter had just *abandoned* everything that Jesus had taught him for 3 years. And he was in the Process of leaving Jesus completely! And how did that Abandonment and that Leaving Jesus take shape? When Peter returned to his fishing.

So, when Jesus asked Peter, “*Do you love Me more than you love what you were doing before you met Me?*” He referred to this man with the name that he had before He met him. Jesus called Peter,

Simon, son of John

... and that startled Peter!

That’s what everybody called him *before* He met Jesus. But why did Jesus call him that? Because at that Moment- Peter was acting like he had never come into Contact with the incarnate God. Peter was, at that moment- acting like he had never met Jesus!

And then after Jesus got Peter’s attention- He asked him,

... do you love Me more than these?

“*Do you love me MORE than you love your fishing Business?*” Because if you do- *why* are you here? *Why* did you leave Me? So, Peter answered Jesus,

Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.

Okay, great! I’m glad you do love Me. But if that is true- you CAN’T stay here. If you truly love Me- you MUST do what I have called you to do. And what is that?

Tend My lambs.

... so, then Jesus asked Peter *again*,

Simon, son of John, do you love Me?

Do, you? Do you *really*? Are you *sure* you love Me? And Peter answered,

Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.

Really? Then *why* are you here fishing? *Why* did you leave? *Why* are you contemplating returning back to your fishing Business? You know, Peter, talk is cheap. Anybody can *say* they love Me. But I really want to know if you really love Me. Because if you do really love Me- you will also love what I say and what I have called you to do. And in your case- it isn't fishing. So, what did Jesus call Peter to do?

Shepherd My sheep.

... and then Jesus asked the *third* time:

Simon, son of John, do you love Me?

... and this third Question really bothered Peter and John wrote,

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."

... and then Jesus said,

Tend My sheep.

My Friends, we CANNOT say we love Jesus- and, as we say that- be living in abject Disobedience to Jesus. Because our Actions *contradict* our words. And since – in Christianity- ALL of our visible Actions flow out from our invisible Love for Jesus- then our Actions are the visible and tangible Proofs of the Depth and the Consistency of our Love for Jesus Christ.

And then while Peter's head was still spinning, Jesus said to Peter,

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go. (John 21:18)

Now *why* did Jesus tell Peter this- right on the heels of Him asking Peter three times if he loved Jesus? Jesus was telling Peter that there was going to be a lot of things that Peter did not want or ask for- that would come his Way in the Future- even to the extent of how Peter was going to die. But if Peter will simply prove his Love for Jesus by striving to obey what Jesus had called him to- he would be blessed and he would be pleasing to the Lord. But now look what John wrote next,

John 21:19-22

19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

Notice that Jesus told Peter two more times what He told him on the Day He first met him, "*Follow Me!*" And so, Jesus was saying, "*Peter, don't worry about what you can't control. You keep your eyes focused on following Me- and by doing that- you will prove that your Love for Me is genuine and real! And the Proof that your Love is genuine- will be seen in your Faithfulness to Me; your striving for Obedience; and in your WILLINGNESS to suffer for my Sake!*"

Now one of the Reasons Jesus did all of this with Peter is precisely because Peter was the "*protos*" the Chief and the Leader of all the Apostles. And so, as their Leader- Peter needed to understand that EVERYTHING that God will use these men to do later on- would ALL flow out from their Love for Jesus Christ. And so, Jesus is teaching Peter what real Love looks like- so that he will then teach the others.

O, what a great Lesson Peter learned that Day! That EVERYTHING we do today- MUST flow out from a genuine and real and simple Love for Jesus! And that simple but profound Love- will *empower* us to be found Faithful. It will equip us to be Obedient. And it will enable us to be willing to suffer for the Sake of the Gospel- with JOY!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

