

We face many questions in life. Most are little question like, “*How are the cowboys doing*” or “*Did you get any rain yesterday?*” etc. But then there are a few big questions that we face like “*When a man dies, where will he spend eternity?*” or “*What will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” or “*Are you saved?*” Perhaps one of the biggest questions ever posed to man was posed to Peter by Jesus after his resurrection. Even today it is an important question that Christians have to confront. It a question recorded for us in John 21. Jesus is talking with Peter and he said, ***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.***

Then Jesus asked his the question a second time and then a third. V17 tells us that it grieved Peter that he asked him a third time. ***And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*** In this experience with Peter we see a couple of things being accomplished by Jesus.

Jesus is trying to reassure Peter that he is forgiven. Many think, and perhaps rightly so, Jesus asked Peter 3 times if he loved him because 3 times Peter had denied him. It also serves as a recommitment on the part of Peter to the Lord’s service. In spite of Peter’s failure, the Lord recognizes that Peter was still useful in his kingdom. In essence, Jesus was saying, Peter it’s time to get back to work. This conversation came on the heels of Peter’s greatest failure – that time when he denied even knowing Jesus.

Just before Jesus arrest, he was with his disciples in the upper room and he dropped a bombshell by saying that one of them was going to betray him; then they went out in the garden where Jesus told them that scripture was going to be fulfilled. He said to them ***(Mat 26:31) All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*** Peter was taken back and said ***(Mat 26:33) Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*** With that proclamation Peter was setting himself up for a might fall. The Lord said ***(Mat 26:34) Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.*** (Mat

26:35) Peter said unto him, ***Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.***

Peter was about to learn that Jesus knew him better than he knew himself. So that very night in the privacy of the garden the silence was broken as Judas led a band of soldiers to apprehend Jesus where he was rushed off to a mock trial. All the while, Peter stood in the courtyard among the crowd watching what was going on and three different times he was questioned about his relationship to Jesus.

Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. *** This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. *** Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. The last time we are told that Peter even cursed in his denial. Perhaps the cursing was a way to refute the charge that his speech gave him away. About that time the cock crowed and the eyes of the Lord met the eyes of Peter as it began to seek in what he had actually done. ***And he went out, and wept bitterly.*** Peter probably wonders if things would ever be right between himself and the Savior again. So it is here in our text that Jesus gives him that assurance and recommissions him. ***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.***

There is a message in that for all of us. We have all at one time or another felt like we had betrayed Jesus. Maybe it the things we said, or our behavior. We may have even gotten to the point that we have fallen out of fellowship with him and we need to renew that commitment. Jesus is describing here for Peter and every one of us the kind of attitude it takes when we fail to come back to Jesus and renew that relationship.

Three things we need to notice. **First. To be right with Jesus, I must love him supremely.** You can see that in the first question that Jesus asked Peter. ***Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*** That phrase “*more than these*” attaches supreme significance. There has been a lot of speculation to what Jesus meant. Some think he perhaps motioned out toward the Sea of Galilee and Peter could see the fishing boats, the nets, etc. because that night they had been fishing all night long and Peter had been a fisherman before. So

perhaps Jesus was saying Peter do you love me more than the things in life that you consider to be so significant. Peter, do you love me more than your job, vocation, recreation.

A second consideration is that Jesus was speaking in terms of the other disciples and he was reflecting back on the boast that Peter had made. "Lord, I don't know about the other disciples, they may very well be offended by you and they may very well deny you – BUT NOT ME. Peter was claiming to have a superior love than all the others and yet he is the one that failed the most miserably and the most visibly. So Peter, swallow your pride. Do you really love me more than these?"

At any rate, what we see here is that Jesus is demanding that we love him supremely. Our relationship to him must mean more to us than anything else. *(Mat 6:33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* OR *(Mat 10:37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* The message is that we must love him supremely.

Often the case is that we love the Lord but not supremely. We are willing to make a partial commitment to be but not totally. *(Mat 15:8) This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* If asked, all of us here would say we love the lord; but we might have to think before answering that we love the lord with all of our heart – supremely. That was the problem with the rich young ruler. He loved the lord and kept many of the commandments, but he didn't love him supremely - he loved his riches more. He wanted to inherit the kingdom of God but not enough. Sad to say, this is the attitude of many today. I hope that doesn't describe you.

Second. We must love him actively. Every time Jesus asked Peter of his love, he commissioned him to go to work. Three times Jesus tells Peter to go and feed my lambs; feed my sheep; feed my sheep. Jesus was making the point that the kind of commitment he desires is more than lip service. As been said, *"Talk is cheap."* The

lord wants a kind of commitment of us that motivates us to do something. **(1 John 3:18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.** It's a lot easier to state you love than to show your love. We talk and even sing about "*Oh How I Love Jesus*" but when it comes down to doing something, it's not there. We sing "*We'll Work Till Jesus Comes; We'll Work*" but then the weeks comes/go and we do nothing in the service of the Lord because it's an intrusion into our time. One measurement of our love for the Lord is keeping his commandments. **(John 14:15) If ye love me, keep my commandments.** Soberly and honestly, I want you to reflect back on last week and consider what you did for the Lord. Peter, do you love me, then feed my sheep.

No. 3. He wants us to love him openly. Jesus made Peter answer this question repeatedly. Now it seems that they were in hearing distance to the other apostles because Peter hears the Lord's comments to John. So there is no indication that the Lord took Peter off to the side and asked him the questions privately. It seems Jesus knew the answer to his questions of Peter's love and yet he still asked him publically. The reason is because it was something Peter needed to say and it was something the others needed to hear. The other disciples needed to hear the renewed commitment because the time was soon to come that Peter was to play a very prominent part in the preaching of the gospel and the church. These disciples needed to know where Peter's loyalties were and that his relationship with the Lord was right again.

Today there are a lot of matters that we can take care of privately with the Lord or maybe with a few others; but there times when people do things in a broad way and is known far and wide. They bring shame and reproach on the church and they slip back in w/o any kind of acknowledgement of where they stand. So there are times when people have a renewed determination and a recommitment to the Lord needs to be made know publically for the benefit of others. In addition, a recommitted dedication is something that Jesus wants to hear.

This is one reason for coming together to worship. It is an open and public expression of our devotion to the Lord and it needs to be done on a regular repeated basis because he wants to hear it. The Lord is glad that you expressed your love to him last week, but he sure likes to hear it again this week and next week and the week after. Expressing his love for Jesus was something Peter needed to say publically. I've heard it said that IMPRESSION WITHOUT EXPRESSION LEADS TO REGRESSION. You have a love in your heart for somebody else but if you don't expression that emotional feeling then that relationship will fade and that feeling will regress and before long it will be gone. So while you may say to yourself, "In my heart I really love the Lord but if you don't express it; you'll lose it.

There was a preacher who built a little room in the attic that was used as a place of study and prayer. He would go into that room often and the family knew that when he came home and went upstairs to that attic room that it was time that he needed alone, and they were not to bother him. One day was an exceptionally difficult day and when he came into the house he went straight to the room without saying anything to anybody. He closed the door and got down on his knees and just before he started to pray, the door swung open and there was his eleven year-old daughter. And when his eyes met hers, she realized that she made a mistake. She ran over to him and put his arms around him and hugged him and said, "Dad you've been so busy lately we haven't had much time together but I just want you to know that I love you." Then she turned around and was gone just as quickly as she appeared.

The preacher wiped the tears from his eyes and while still on his knees he lifted his eyes toward heaven and said, "Father, I've been so busy lately that I haven't spent much time with you; but I just want you to know that I still love you."

Do you need to make that kind of statement to the Lord this morning? To have a right kind of relationship requires a superior, active, and open love that is unashamed. If there was a time when the things between you and the Lord were better than they are now, they why not repent and make them right?

Invitation