

5.05.19 ~ John 21:15-25, Jesus' Final Words to Peter

Deuteronomy, 10:12-13, "What does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good."

Clearly, we are to live a life of love. Jesus said (Mark 12:30), "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength," and (Mark 12:31), "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Our Lord makes it clear in John 14, on the night before His crucifixion (verse 15), "If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments," (verse 21), "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and disclose Myself to him," (verse 23), "If anyone loves Me, he'll keep My word. My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

Read John 21:15-17... Peter was the name given by the Lord, to Simon. Peter had fallen in his faith, even denying that he knew Jesus; and now, he had gone back to his old occupation, fishing, instead of waiting upon the Lord at the designated mountain in Galilee. Jesus' calls him Simon, son of John, like when your mother or father calls you by your full name, e.g., "Michael Allen Hale," I knew I was in trouble when my mom called me that way.

Peter is called out by the Lord, and three times the Lord asks him if he loves Him. "Simon, son of John," do you love Me?" Peter had rejected the Lord, basically declaring his love for something other than Christ.

Jesus says, "Do you love Me more than these?" Meaning the boat, the nets, fishing, i.e., Peter's former way of life. Does Peter love his old life more than Christ? Is he really willing to give all that up and follow the Lord? Jesus is saying, "Do you love Me enough to do that? To give it all up and to follow Me no matter what?"

Jesus uses the word *agapaó*, the noblest, purest, highest form of love; this is sacrificial love, divine love. "Do you really love Me, Peter, more than anything?" "Are you willing to live for Me?"

Peter replies, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." But Peter uses the word *phileó*, meaning brotherly love, the kind of warm affection, and friendship.

Peter couldn't honestly say to the Lord, "Yes, You know that I love You above all things, even my own fears and my old comfortable way of living." Truth be told, Peter had denied Jesus three times, out of fear, at least Peter had enough sense not to be a total hypocrite and say, "Of course I love You, above all things." Instead Peter says, "Lord, I have great affection for You." He didn't claim to have *agapaó*, but he did claim *phileó*, as if he were saying, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. It's not the *agapaó* that it should be, but it's real."

Jesus then said to him, "Tend" or "Feed" My sheep [the verb *boskó*, meaning "Pasture My lambs"]. The personal pronoun "My" is very important here, whoever we shepherd doesn't belong to us, they are God's.

Peter was no doubt recalling this moment when he writes to the Elders in 1Peter 5:2, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care," for we are under shepherds (verse 4), "Christ is the Chief Shepherd."

No congregation belongs to a pastor or an elder. No Sunday School class belongs to a teacher. No believers in a family belong, in a spiritual sense, to their parents. They belong to the Lord, they are His.

In verse 16 Jesus again says to him "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Again, the Lord uses the word *agapaó*. Peter says, "Yes Lord, You know that I love [*phileó*] You.' To which Jesus responds, "Shepherd My sheep," meaning those who belong to God. Jesus is basically saying to Peter, "your fishing days are over, you are to shepherd [take care of] those who belong to Me."

And then in verse 17, Jesus says "a third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?'" But this time Jesus uses the word [*phileó*] for love, the word Peter had been using, asking Peter, "Do you really *phileó* Me [love Me like a brother]?" "Do you really have strong affection for Me? Like a dear friend? Do you really?"

Jesus probes deep into Peter's heart, it's painful. Notice John tells us, "Peter was grieved because Jesus said this to him a third time." Jesus even questions as to whether or not Peter even has *phileó* love for Him.

"Again, Peter answers, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [*phileó*] You.'" Then Jesus says to him, 'Feed My sheep,' i.e., tend My sheep, pasture My sheep, take care of My sheep. This is your full-time occupation now, you are a fisher of men, not fish. Your job, what you were made for, is to love and care for My little lambs, My sheep."

So, three times Peter had the opportunity to tell the Lord he loved Him. And although Peter really couldn't defend his use of a lower type of love *phileó* instead of *agapaó*, the highest level of love, the Lord accepted him saying, "Pasture My sheep."

We are truly dirt people, clay pots, cracked containers, and yet, the Lord wants to use us anyway, even though our love is not always the deep, committed, willful, sacrificial *agapaó* love that we have received from God through Jesus Christ the Lord.

How about you? What level of commitment do you have in serving Christ? "Do you love Christ more than your job, your home, an all-expense-paid vacation to your location of choice, or whatever you might dream up?"

You can usually tell where a person's priority is by what they do, how and why they do it. A committed believer and follower of Christ is compelled to serve the Lord and to love [*agapaó*] the sheep of the Lord's flock, even more than his own comfort, ambition, and pleasure.

Read John 21:18-25... Jesus now says to Peter, "Truly, truly, I say to you," "when you were younger, you used to gird [dress] yourself and go wherever you wanted." In the future, you'll be taken prisoner, bound and made to "stretch out your hands." He's telling Peter, that when he gets old, he is going to be arrested and crucified.

John tells us in verse 19, "Now this He [Jesus] said, signifying by what kind of death he [Peter] would glorify God." Wow! Peter is now told he's going to be crucified as an apostle of the Lord. Think about it, Jesus has basically told Peter he will serve the sheep of God's pasture, and then sometime in the future when he is old, he will be arrested [bound] and then crucified.

Then Jesus says to him, "Follow Me!" Think about this, where did Jesus end up after His ministry? Carrying the crossbeam to be used at His own execution. Lucky you Peter, you get to die the same death as your Lord and Savior. Jesus, in His own death, He brought glory to the Father; in Peter's death he will bring glory to Christ.

Verse 20 says, "Peter turning around, sees John, the one who asked the Lord," at the Passover meal, "who at this table is going to betray You?" Now, in verse 21, "Peter asked Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' So, I'm going to be crucified, but what about John?"

"Jesus says to him' (verse 22), with mild sarcasm, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?' Don't worry about him. 'If I decide he's going to live until I return,' that's none of your business. 'You are to Follow Me!'"

Some people thought (according to verse 23) that John would not die. But that is not what Jesus said or meant, truth be told, we should not compare the length or condition of our life to that of other believers.

By the way, John died in exile, on the Isle of Patmos at the end of the first century. In fact, John was Peter's traveling/ministry companion, from the Day of Pentecost through the first part of the book of Acts; they were constant companions, serving the Lord together, feeding the sheep of God.

John makes it clear at the close of this gospel that he was the eyewitness of these things (verse 24), "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." The apostle is basically authenticating his own gospel, by saying, "It's the truth."

Back in chapter 20:31, John gives the reason for his record of Jesus' life and ministry, "These things have been written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing might have life in His name."

John closes his gospel with verse 25, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."

John was not omniscient, he was just a man who loved and served the Lord. He had no idea about the future world with all its fascinating technological inventions, like cell phones, internet, Google Search, and the Cloud.

John didn't know about that, but he did know that if everything Jesus ever did was written out in full, and everything He ever said was recorded, the world wouldn't be able to contain the full story of the Lord.

But you know, one day we will be with the Lord in heaven, and we will have an eternity to ponder these things, although I sense that we will innately know them.

But for now, we have God's marvelous, supernatural, and authoritative revelation to us, in the 66 Books of the Bible, along with His Holy Spirit who lives in us, protects us, provides for us, and works to conform us to the character and nature of God's Son, as He reveals the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

In our Lord's last words to Peter, we are made aware of God's great and merciful love for all of His sheep.

May we each be found faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins, and raised from the dead to demonstrate the eternal life that He grants to everyone who repents of their sin, confessing Christ as Lord, believing in Him as Savior; and all of this is for the Glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

Pastor Mike

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