

John Ch21v15-25 - Do You Love Me?

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Nice to see you. Please turn to John's Gospel, chapter 21.

! Over the last few weeks, we've been looking at this short series of encounters with the risen Jesus. And what we can learn when people met the risen Jesus. There was Mary Magdalene, then Jesus met with the disciples, and then with Thomas.

And today, we're going to focus in on a particular event as Jesus meets with Peter. So we're going to read from John's Gospel, chapter 21, verse 15 through to 25.

John 21, starting in at verse 15. When they, that is, the disciples, had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, he said. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[1 : 46] He answered, yes, Lord. You know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep.

The third time he said, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me?

Peter said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, follow me.

[2 : 51] Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. This is the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, Lord, who is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he asked, Lord, what about him? Jesus answered, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?

You must follow me. Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that the disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die.

He only said, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.

We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. Well, if every one of them were written down, I suppose that not even the whole world would have room for the books that would have been written.

[4 : 07] Well, let us pray first before we look at this word together. Father, we do not have every word or every account of the Lord Jesus.

But we do have the word that you have provided. This eyewitness account written by John, recorded for us today.

And we pray that as we read this word, we would encounter afresh the risen Lord Jesus and experience his grace afresh so that we would love him deeply and follow him wherever he calls us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. What could be better?

After a long night of fishing, Jesus meets the disciples in their need. Have a look back at verse 9.

[5 : 24] When they landed, that is, the disciples, when they landed their boats, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Can you smell the barbecue? Verse 12. Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast.

What an incredible morning. The risen Jesus preparing food and inviting the disciples to come to them. But for Peter, all was not well.

That smell of burning coals brought back a flood of guilt and shame. It had all began about four weeks before.

Go back with me, please, to chapter 13. Here, Jesus has been talking about his death that was to soon come.

[6:34] And they are having dinner with Jesus. We'll pick it up in verse 37. So Jesus has been explaining that he will have to die.

Verse 37. Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me?

Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times. Well, a few days later, Peter had the chance to prove himself right and Jesus wrong.

Have a look at chapter 18. Jesus has just been arrested and Peter is following closely behind. And one of the servant girls confronts Peter. Chapter 18, verse 17. You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?

[7:50] She asked Peter. He replied, I am not. It was cold. And the servant's officials stood round a fire they had made to keep warm.

Peter was also standing with them, warming himself. Time passed. We pick it up in verse 25. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there, warming himself. So they asked him, you aren't one of his disciples too, are you? He denied it, saying, I am not.

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, that's when the soldiers had come to arrest Jesus. He challenged Peter, didn't I see you with him in the garden?

Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, a cock began to crow. Well, Peter had been so confident in his love for Jesus, wasn't he?

[9:01] I will lay down my life for you. But now he's blown it. He's denied Jesus, just as Jesus said.

Let's go back to chapter 21. So here we find Peter again, sitting by a fire, keeping himself warm. This isn't the first time Peter has seen the risen Jesus. He's seen him at least twice before. But no one had said anything about that night.

The guilt weighed heavy. Does Jesus still love me? The shame ran deep. Will he forgive me? The disappointment was great. Is there a way back for me? Now we know exactly how Peter feels because, well, we've all been there, haven't we?

[10:04] So confident of our own goodness. I will always love Jesus. I'll never turn my back on him. Sure, others might do it, but you'll not find me drifting.

I'm too loyal for that. And then the moment comes. You're out with friends. You get drunk. And you make an absolute fool of yourself. You're checking out your social media, scrolling along. And within a few minutes before you know it, you're scrolling through porn. You promise to read your Bible and pray. And it suddenly dawns on you that you haven't actually read the Bible in months.

You began with a gentle word. But as the conversation continued, you just let them have it. Maybe that's been your week.

[11:10] Perhaps it's been a pattern for years. And the guilt is weighing heavy. And the shame runs deep. And the disappointment with yourself is great.

What does the risen Jesus have to say to fallen and failing people like you and me? Well, if we were to answer this with a song, we would all now sing, Our sins, they are many.

His mercy is more. Well, let's see what Jesus has to say to Peter and to us. First, I want us to see the gentle grace.

Notice the way in which Jesus graciously deals with Peter. Grace takes the initiative. Now, maybe Peter had no hope of any restoration at all.

Perhaps he just didn't know how to broach the subject. Well, whatever about Peter, Jesus takes the initiative and he comes to Peter.

[12:22] Verse 15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John. Now, why does he address Peter as Simon, son of John?

Well, those were the very first words that Jesus spoke to Peter almost three years before. John records it in chapter 1 where it tells us that Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon, son of John.

You will now be called Peter, which means rock. The first words that Jesus spoke to him are now bringing him back to that very beginning when he first met Jesus.

When Jesus intervened in his life. And now Jesus addresses him with those same words. In other words, Peter, I showed you grace then.

And I will show you grace again. The risen Jesus takes the initiative and comes to us.

[13:36] But not only does it take the initiative, grace also shows us our deep need. Verse 15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Do you love me more than the other disciples love me? Well, Peter had been so confident, you remember, in front of his peers. I'll lay down my life for you.

I love you more than anybody else in the whole world, Jesus. But this time, Peter is humble.

There's no sense of superiority. Look at the rest of verse 15. Yes, Lord, he said. You know that I love you.

Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He answered, yes, Lord.

[14:47] You know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked him the third time, do you love me? Peter is hurt inside. He's grieving.

You see, asking him a third time mirrors his three-time denial. Peter is hurt because now he comes to see the extent of his sinful failure.

But now he's owning it all and his response is not self-righteous, but a humble confession. Look at the rest of verse 17. Lord, you know all things.

You know that I love you. Lord, you can see my heart. You know my true self. Yes, in my failure, I love you.

[15:58] You see, the gracious words of Jesus speak afresh that no matter what our worst day is, no matter what our best day is, we are always in need of grace.

But third, grace provides a way back for people like you and me. With the confession of Peter, there comes a command.

Peter says, you know that I love you. What does Jesus say? Feed my lambs. Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Take care of my sheep.

Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Feed my sheep. Now, these are not three different commands, but one command said in three different ways.

The risen Jesus is calling Peter to care for God's people by feeding them God's word. Now, while the apostle Peter would go on to have a unique role of recording and writing the words of God, we can say it is the responsibility of all believers, isn't it?

[17:19] All of God's people are all called to care for one another. And how do we care for one another? By feeding them God's word.

By bringing God's word to bear in each other's lives. But let's not forget the main point. The risen Jesus provides a way back for Peter to serve.

Not only was he lost, not only was he a failure and had fallen, not only is he forgiven, but now he is invited to serve.

The gentle grace from the risen Jesus proves that what Jesus had said previously are true. Jesus said this, My sheep listen to my voice.

I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hands.

[18:26] Here is grace that comes alongside and says, I will never ever lose those who belong to me no matter how many times you fail or fall.

I have you in the grip of my hand. This is the beauty of God's grace. There is no shame so dark.

There is no guilt so deep. There is no disappointment so great where grace will not meet us.

You and I may wander away as lost sheep, but he will never abandon us. His grace reaches to the darkest depths of our sin.

His grace intervenes in our life, showing us our need and providing us a way back in which we can serve him.

[19:31] Together we sing our sins they are many. His mercy is more. So we see the gentle grace of the risen Jesus.

Second, let's look at the costly love. Peter did love Jesus. He had said it three times, you know Lord, you know that I love you.

Well, sometimes words are easy, aren't they? Peter must learn what it truly means to love the Lord. So listen to what Jesus said to him, verse 18.

Very truly, I tell you, Peter, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. You were young, you were free, you could do what you liked.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands as if on a cross and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

[20 : 39] love. Well, what did Jesus mean? Well, verse 19 tells us Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Then he said to him, follow me. You see, to love Jesus is costly.

It's not just a word. It means being willing to give your life for Jesus. Peter had said it, I will lay down my life for you, but now he comes to understand it, that following Jesus is an invitation to come and die with Jesus, to forsake ourselves and to give our all to him.

Now, we mustn't get confused. We don't love to earn grace. We love sacrificially because we have experienced grace deeply.

In other words, love is not a payment for grace, it's the measure of our joy. remember how Jesus expressed his costly love for us?

[22 : 04] You can follow it here on the screen. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus understood what costly love was all about because Jesus was mockingly dressed in a purple robe and crushed with a crown of thorns.

Jesus was led by Roman soldiers to a place he didn't want to go, to a place of execution and Jesus with his arms stretched out was nailed to a cross.

Why? To lay down his life for the sheep because on the cross he takes our sin.

He's judged for my shame. He is condemned for my guilt. All my failings and all my flaws Jesus dies for me so that I might have life and have it in all its fullness.

[23 : 20] You see when we stop and when we consider the costly love of Jesus for us when we see that Jesus suffered hell for us to secure heaven for us the question is not why should I love but how can I not love?

Jim Elliot some of you will know this story was a young husband and father he was a missionary in 1950 to the Yauka Indians of the Amazon rainforest his aim to share the love of Christ and on one of his early visits to these people Jim and his three friends were killed Jim knew that it would be dangerous he knew it could cost his life and he had written in his diary some months before and this is what he wrote he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he could never lose did you get that?

he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he could never lose Jim had tasted something of the unlimited depths of God's grace and the only response that he could give was to lay down his life be ready to give his all because he loved Jesus and so we will all want to sing our sins they are many but his mercy is more so there's gentle grace there's costly love let's see the personal call the gift of grace is great the life of love is costly but that cost for each one of us is going to be different look at verse 20

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them that was John the disciple John who wrote the gospel we're reading verse 21 when Peter saw him he asked Lord what about him we're just like Peter aren't we we're always wanting to know the details of other people's lives what's their calling going to be okay I have to serve but how are they going to serve what about him what about her I'm doing more than them they're doing less than me who what did Jesus say verse 22 if I want him to remain alive until I return what is that to you you must follow me in other words what the risen

Jesus calls you to do or calls me to do is actually none of each other's business it's the Lord's business Jesus may call you to much suffering or he may call you to little suffering the point is following Jesus is costly but it's going to be different for each and every person we all have our personal call Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Germany during the second world war he preached the gospel faithfully and he stood against the Nazi regime and he had written a book called The Cost of Discipleship here's what he said each must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection but each has a different share some

[27 : 50] God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering and gives them the grace of dying for Christ while others he does not allow to be tempted above that that they are able to bear but it is the one and the same cross in every case!

a few years after writing that book Bonhoeffer was taken off to the concentration camp where he was eventually hanged his personal call was the grace of dying for Christ and the gospel that is what the risen Jesus called Dietrich Bonhoeffer too for one the call may be much suffering but for another person it may be a little suffering a little rejection but to all of us the risen Jesus is saying don't worry about him don't worry about her you must follow me you see our life is not to be spent comparing with others instead as we wonder at God's grace we will discover that we will be able to love at great cost we will serve in ways we never thought possible we will go where we never thought we could imagine we will give more than we ever thought our love for

Jesus will know no bounds as we experience the measureless grace of the risen Christ and so together we sing our sins they are many his mercy is more let us pray together whatever our guilt whatever our shame and whatever our disappointment right now Lord you know our hearts you know all about us you see deep within thank you for your offer of grace today thank you for your costly love in giving your life so that we might have life and be restored thank you for calling us thank you for enabling us to serve you help us that we may follow you and may we help each other to follow the

Lord as you have called us in Jesus name amen