

# SERMON GUIDE

## The Gospel of John - Do You Love Me?

### John 21:15-19



11.19.2023

#### SCRIPTURE:

John 21:15-19

#### SERMON NOTES:

When we were 19 years old, my wife and I had been dating for several months. I was in the Army, stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. We spoke on the phone all the time, and I came home when I was able to on the weekends. One of my buddies, Ricky, would often come home with me because he didn't want to sit in the barracks all weekend. One night me, Ricky, and Katrina had been out in town and doing stuff, and we took her to her car to drop her off to go home. As we were leaving, Katrina said to me, "I love you." Now, neither one of us had said that to the other one yet. So this was kind of a big deal. My heart leaped in my chest and my mind raced for all that this meant. But before I could process even further, or even respond to her, she finished by saying, "and tell Ricky I love him too."

If you would have listened closely you would have heard "Hello darkness my old friend" playing somewhere. I got in the car and sat there. Ricky was like, "What's wrong?" I told him Katrina just told me she loved me, but then said she loved him too. He said, "Sweet."

Being told you're loved matters. Our hearts are made for it. We need it. And in our text today, we're going to see Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves Him, but unlike our need to be loved, Jesus' question, repeated multiple times, is doing something different than meeting a personal need. We're going to see that in our text today.

#### Exegesis of John 21:15-19

**15** 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." **16** 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." **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 everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. **18** Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." **19** (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

When they had finished eating the bread and fish Jesus provided on the beach, by the fire, Jesus began to talk with Peter (**verse 15**). It is important to recognize that He doesn't pull him off to the side. Peter is there with the other six disciples identified earlier in the chapter.

Three times (**verses 15-17**) Jesus asks the question to Peter, "Do you love me?" In fact, He asked him, "Do you love me more than these?" Meaning, "do you love me more than these disciples do?" This is not a question meant to highlight the other disciples' lack of love, but a question of the extent of Peter's love.

"Do you love me?" he asked Peter. What a question! Imagine standing before Jesus and hearing him ask you that question. Seth, do you love me? Matt, do you love me? Kristen, do you love me? Kesha, do you love me? Jose, do you love me? Fill your name in. The question Jesus asks all of us is: **do you love me?**

How should you respond? Well, you should respond honestly. Sadly, many in the world do not love Him. Many have love for Him that is lukewarm. Has He not done so much for us that would merit our love? In fact, John even writes in 1 John 4 that it isn't that we've loved God, but that He first loved us and showed it by providing Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. We have ample reasons to love Christ.

So what reasons do you have to love Christ today? To name just a few:

- He determined that there would be a you and brought you into existence
- Every enjoyment and blessing comes from His hand
- He laid down His life for your sins and makes you clean before the Father
- He sustains you in life through every up and down with grace that holds you fast
- He comforts and helps in your weakness and dark nights
- He gives you promises that He will fulfill, including walking with you through the valley of the shadow of death

Christ is worthy of our love today. I hope you will answer the question, "Yes, Jesus, I love you." And I pray that if you struggle to answer that way that you'd pray, "Jesus, help me to love you as you are worthy of."

In each instance when Jesus asked Peter "do you love me?" and Peter answers "yes" to Him, Jesus responds back with a statement. The first is, "Feed my lambs." The second is, "Tend my sheep." The third is, "Feed my sheep." The Roman Catholic Church tries to equate these responses to the establishment of Peter as the first Pope with governing rights and authority. What Jesus' answers provide for us is a clear sign that he has been restored, not just to fellowship with Jesus, but to service to Him. D.A. Carson makes the point that Jesus doesn't use nouns, but verbs. He doesn't call him to be pastor or the office of pastor. He calls him to tend and feed. Love for Jesus doesn't have to translate into some official title and office, but for all who love Him it should look like concern and attention to the tending and feeding of His flock. You care about His church, His people. This plays out in different ways you serve Him in the church and outside the church. We have many incredible people tending

and feeding God's people each week: women's leaders, those discipling kids, deacons, teachers that lead Bible studies at their school, pastors and elders, sports coaches that mentor young people and point them to Christ.

Consider that Jesus knows that Peter loves Him, yet He asks anyway. Why does Jesus ask Peter if he loves Him, when He knows that he does? And why three times if He knows the answer? Remember that Peter denied Jesus publicly three times on the night of His arrest. Why? Fear of persecution. Jesus asked him three times as a way of restoring Peter publicly before the disciples. Peter is upset that Jesus asked a third time because he knows that Jesus knows all things. So why does Jesus ask it three times? First, to restore Peter, but then also to ready Peter. The very next thing Jesus tells Peter is that persecution is coming Peter's way. In other words, the very thing Peter ran from before is exactly what awaits him in the future. And the question Jesus is asking him, "do you love me?," is crucial for Peter to answer if he's going to be able to endure what awaits him. It is a fascinating exchange.

Persecution awaits Peter. Jesus knows what is coming for Peter. It is thirty years ahead in the future, but He knows it. How? Because the Lord is sovereign over everything. He's not learning about things as they unfold. He's not guessing at things in hopes He gets them right. He is the Author of the story. And He is working all things according to His wisdom and in fulfillment of His plans. He's not guessing or learning as things unfold in your life. There is a deep and abiding comfort in knowing the Lord holds your future.

Jesus tells Peter that a future awaits him that he once tried to avoid. To be told that others will dress you and carry you to where you don't want to go, and they will stretch out your hands (verse 18). This is a reference to crucifixion. Indeed, this is how Peter will die in 64 AD. Jesus predicts Peter's death in 33 AD, but by the time John writes his Gospel, we are about 20 years after Peter's death in 80AD.

Some context around Peter's death will help us. After Jesus' ascension to Heaven, Peter emerges as a central figure in the early Church. He stood and preached the first message at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell, and 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus. He was crucial in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) in bridging the division between Jewish and Gentile Christians. He traveled to different regions, taught the gospel and established churches. His travels eventually led him to Rome. His focus was to nurture the young faith of the believers in churches and help establish their leadership in the church. His letters were written as guides to help believers and leaders within these churches, especially as they faced persecution. While in Rome, as the church faced growing persecution under Nero, Peter was a bulwark for the church. But in 64 AD, a fire that devastated Rome was pinned on Christians by Nero, eventually leading to targeting their greatest leader (Peter). He had the chance to escape, but he chose to stay and continue his ministry. But he was eventually taken and sentenced to be crucified. Tradition has it that Peter refused to die in the same manner of Jesus, deeming himself unworthy of such an honor, and requested to be crucified upside down. So that is what they did. The spot where Peter was crucified is marked today and people visit there every day.

But I want you to notice John's statement and parenthetical remark (verse 19) he adds after Jesus' prediction. John tells his readers that Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death Peter was to glorify God. Let's explore this idea.

Does Peter's death glorify God simply because it was a martyr's death? No. He certainly glorified God in his willingness to die for Christ, and even his insistence not to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus because he was not worthy. These things certainly glorify God. But John seems to be saying something much more important. John seems to be saying that each believer's death is an appointed way in which we glorify God. We glorify God in our deaths.

How? By dying with faith. By dying with confidence in our Redeemer. By dying with courage as we pass through the curtain into eternal life. I've stood bedside on many occasions as people have faced death. It is a faith inspiring thing to see saints walk through the valley with confidence because the Good Shepherd is with them.

I want to take a moment to tell you about my son's God glorifying death. He battled health issues his whole life. But he loved Jesus. He trusted Jesus not only for the forgiveness of sins, but with his life and health. He trusted the Lord with his story. When Kaleb had been so sick in the hospital for several weeks, and it became clear he wasn't going to get better, Katrina and I asked him point blank, "Are you ready to be with Jesus?" And because he couldn't speak at that point because of his stroke two years before, he gave us two big blinks. "Yes." My son stared death right in the face and trusted Christ. I miss my little buddy, something fierce. But the way he lived, and the way he died, glorified God, and strengthens my faith today.

All of us will die one day. Unless the Lord returns first, each of us will pass through that valley. We glorify the Lord in our deaths, not because we know when it happens, you could die in your sleep tonight. We glorify the Lord in our deaths when we die in Christ, trusting and believing Him for all His promises.

After Jesus spoke the words to Peter, He told him, "Follow me."

What is incredible about this is it harkens back to the original call of Jesus to these disciples, "Come, follow me." This invitation to "follow me" is all encompassing. It doesn't mean to simply believe, but to lay down our lives and reorient them with Jesus as the center of everything. We recognize Him as King and Lord. He is the Master and we are the slave. His Word becomes our guiding authority. His promises are the basis of our hope. That's what Jesus means when He says, "follow me."

Peter was told to follow at the beginning, and he did. But there was so much he didn't know or understand. But now he stands positioned differently. Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. He has restored Peter and told him what still awaited him. And then He issues the call again, "Follow me." In other words, "Peter, you see clearly now what I'm calling you to. What remains now is for you to follow, no matter where it leads you."

Friends, that is the call to us today. He has been crucified and raised. He wants to know if we love Him. If so, we are to be about the things He calls us to do. He is to be the centerpiece and sun that everything orbits around. Death awaits us, and we are called to glorify Him in it. The question remains, and the call is issued for us, "Will you follow Him?"

Jesus speaks to you today, "Follow me."

## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

## BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
  - Read John 21:15-19 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
  - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
  - Additional Scripture:
    - John 13:37-38
    - John 14:15
    - Luke 22:31-32
    - John 10:3
    - John 6:35
    - 1 Peter 2:2
    - Luke 5:1-11
    - Matthew 4:18-20
- **REFLECT:**
  - Why does Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves Him?
  - What does Jesus say will be the evidence of that love? What does it look like practically?
  - What does Jesus say will happen to Peter as a result of this love?
  - Why does Jesus close with "Follow me"?
  - Do you know of people who followed Jesus faithfully into death? What did their lives look like?
- **RESPOND:**
  - Do you love Jesus?

- How are you feeding and tending His sheep?

- **MEDITATE:**

- John 21:17 -- 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 everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

- **MEMORIZE:**

- John 14:15 -- *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

## SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?

- **PRAYER:**

- Pray over any request from your group members.
- Administrative Pastor - **Tim Lance**
- Ministry - **Foster & Adoption**
- **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
  - Kaesi
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Bayad in Mongolia



- **Population in country:** 67,000
- **Global population:** 67,000
- **Christian Adherent:** 1.20%
- **Evangelical:** 1.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Buddhism
- **Primary Language:** Mongolian, Halh

- **Summary:** In the 13th century, the term "Mongol" grew into an umbrella term for a large group of tribes united under the rule of Genghis Khan. Ethnic distinctions among the Mongol subgroups are relatively minor. Tribal differences are usually not a political or social issue as Mongolia is a generally peaceful nation. The Bayad people are one of the Mongol tribes, residing in western Mongolia.
- **Prayer Focus:** Mongolian Christian believers can glorify him by reaching the Bayad people. Pray for the physical and material well-being of the Bayad people, that they would make schooling of their children a priority and would be able to care adequately for their families. Pray for the Bayad people to have spiritual hunger and discernment that will lead them to the cross.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>