

SUNDAY 3 OCTOBER 2021**Peter – Do you love Me**

The Bible is God's story about people. And some of the most beautiful stories are the stories where Jesus spoke to ordinary people like you and me and that changed their lives. These people's stories have been caught up in God's Word and have been told over and over again for centuries, and it has changed people's lives for centuries.

One of the beautiful stories we read about last week was Jesus' conversation with Peter in Caesarea-Philippi, at Mount Hermon, where the idol Pan was worshipped. Speaking about the church for the first time, Jesus said that the church is built on the solid foundation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

There, Jesus subsequently handed Peter and all believers the keys that can open the Kingdom of God and open up in your life. If you open the door of *"I want to learn more about God,"* He will teach you through the Holy Spirit. I have seen people who are open to the Lord and radically changed by His love and mercy. I also saw the contrary, many people who were once part of Jesus' church, actively involved, believed, who retreated and closed the door to their hearts, how quickly things went wrong in such people's lives.

Now the picture is shifting to supposedly one of the last conversations Jesus had with His disciples before His ascension to heaven. This is the conversation with which John ends his book. It happened at the sea of Galilee.

It was the third time He had appeared to them. You will remember that the night before Jesus was crucified, He told the disciples that He was going to die and that everyone was going to leave Him. But Peter with his great mouth, as always said,

Mathew 26:33b-25a

"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." 34 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." 35 But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."

Now you all know that Peter did deny Jesus three times and the last time he cursed and said, *"I don't know @\$@ man."*

After Jesus' resurrection, He told them to wait for Him in Galilee, and now they are here, they didn't wait at the mountain near Capernaum, but they went fishing. Remember, their profession was to catch fish. Now one does not know whether they doubted whether Jesus would reappear to them, but went on with their usual work again, or whether they were just gone fishing.

Nevertheless, they went fishing and Peter took the lead.

John 21:2-3

Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didimus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

We don't know where the rest of the disciples were. Perhaps they were on the mountain, or at Peter's house in Capernaum, but Peter decided to go fishing, and 6 other of Jesus' disciples went along. Doubting Thomas, Nathanael, John, James, and two more. Perhaps Andrew, Peter's brother, and who knows, perhaps Matthew or Philip, for he and Nathanael were friends before Jesus called them.

They spend the whole night at sea, but caught nothing. On the way back, they saw a man standing on the beach, they didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus called from the beach.

John 21:5-10

"Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. 6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. 7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his

outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

- After Jesus asked them if they have caught something and they have said no, Jesus tells them to throw the nets on the other side of the boat. I wonder what they thought, would it matter two-three metres — the width of the boat.
- Jesus, when He began His ministry, also one day asked Peter to use His boat as a pulpit, and after He had brought His message, He told Peter to go deeper into the sea, to catch some fish. At that time Peter also said that they had caught nothing all night, but in obedience he did so and caught so many fish it nearly tore the nets. This time, John recognized Jesus and said.

"It is the Lord!"

- Peter was only in his underwear on the boat. He put on his outer garments and ran/swam the 100 meters to Jesus. He was not thinking, as usual, because now all his clothes are wet. And the other guys had to struggle alone to get the boat sidelined. He's the one who wanted to go fishing now he leaves them to struggle on their own.
- Who among you likes barbecue? And if you come from the Cape, it's snoek barbecue. Jesus also likes barbecues. For we hear here when they came onshore there was already a fish, (don't know where Jesus got it, perhaps caught from the side), and barbecue bread on the coals.
- Jesus loves to share. *"Bring some of the fish you caught, because now we're going to have a good barbeque."* Jesus loves to share with people. Fortunately for Peter, there was a fire to warm him and dry his clothes.

And see what happens next.

John 21:11-14

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

- Look at the details. Who would have wanted to count the fish now, while people are barbequing with Jesus. But someone did, there were 153. That's why I wonder if Matthew, the tax collector, the one who knows how to count, did go with.
- And then they ate, with Jesus. Jesus' appearance must have changed in such a way that although they know it was Jesus, they did not ask if it was Him. But Jesus shows them who He is by His actions:
 - The miracle of the 153 fish.
 - His goodness by making them a fire and inviting them to come and eat with him.
 - He breaks the bread again and gives them some fish.
- What I read between the lines is also Jesus' grace and goodness. They had to wait for Him at the mountain, about a kilometer or two away. But He came to them where they were in disobedience.

Let's talk about the incredible conversation between Jesus and Peter.

John 21:15-19

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus

asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. 18 I tell you the truth, 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." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Three times Peter denied Jesus and three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. But there is much more hidden in the text here. It is the restoration of Peter's calling and also a sending out opportunity for Peter and all our believers, as well as a prophetic word on how Peter would die. Listen to how Jesus speaks to him. – **Simon.**

Before he betrayed Jesus, he was Peter. The name Jesus gave him, but now Peter seems to have returned to his old life, he is Simon. If your mother would call you in your full name, "*Peter Stephen Grobbelaar, come here,*" you know you're in trouble. It's almost as if Jesus is speaking to Peter like this here; "*Sihmon BarJona,*" and then Jesus asked.

do you truly love me more than these?"

He doesn't ask Peter if he believes, of course faith is important. But the Bible says the devil also believes and shudder. "*Do you love Me truly.*"

- Love gives faith a heartbeat.
- It gives life faith.
- It gives content and vitality to faith.
- Our faith is not in a religion or in an ideology, our faith is a choice for a Person, therefore it is a personal relationship. - This is the question of love.

Love is express the deepest form of community between two people. You who are married know what it has taken to connect you to one person. There are certain

things you can't do anymore, and you deliberately choose against them because you love the other person.

So the question is whether Peter can emphasize his creed with a declaration of love. Jesus can see that Peter has faith, but after his denial of Jesus, Jesus wants to know if Peter loves Him as he should. Peter's life did not show that he loved Jesus.

Before everyone he *says, "I will lay down my life for you,"* and he not only denies Jesus, he is not even there when Jesus rises. After His resurrection, Jesus said, *"Go and wait for Me on the mountain in Galilee,"* where we find Peter? Fishing.

It's easy to say you believe in Jesus, but your life must testify to your love for Jesus.

There's another important thing we need to see here. Jesus does not take Peter aside and then asks him this question in private. There is a reason why Jesus asks this before the other disciples who were there. Peter always told the disciples that he would be willing to die for Jesus. He publicly denied Jesus before many other people.

So Jesus asks him this question publicly.

"Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

What does Jesus mean when referring to **"these."**

Does Jesus ask him if he loves Jesus more than the other disciples. It's a possibility, I think rather, Jesus motions to the sea, his boat, the fish. Asking Peter, *"Are you're more fond of your stuff, and the things that drive you, than Me?"*

There's another important thing we need to hear here and our language doesn't help us. In the Greek language, there are four words that we translate with love. Agape, phileo, eros, indicating erotic love, love between husband and wife, and storge that indicates the love parents have for their children or for a cause.

So if Jesus asks Peter here if he loves him, he uses the word agape, or the verb agapoo. Jesus asks Peter do you **agapoo** me.

The Greek word: **Agapoo** means:

to have love for someone based on sincere appreciation and high regard

This kind of love is much more than just a feeling, *"it's an act of your will."*

- It asks obedience, responsibility, respect and dedication.
- It's the kind of love that makes you willing to sacrifice, to give everything, to deny yourself.
- The love Jesus asks of Peter is the love with which He loved the world. It is also the same word used when John says in John 3:16 that God loved the world so much that He sent His Son Jesus to the world.
- It's cross-love.
- That's the highest way of loving.

Listen to Peter's reaction. Nothing more of previous Peter. *"Meek and mild."*

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

He knows he can't hide anything from Jesus because Peter doesn't use the word **agapoo** to answer Jesus, but **phileo**. Peter answered and said, *"Yes, Lord, you know that I fileo you."*

Phileo means

to have love or affection for someone based on association

to treat affectionately or kindly

Jesus asked, *"Do you deeply love me, do you sincerely love me?"* Peter knows his life does not show that he deeply loves Jesus and that he is not willing to give up everything, especially his life. His actions up to now still reflect too much of himself. At least Peter is honest, for he knew Jesus knew all things, so he said: *"You know that I am your friend, and like you very much."*

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

It's God's grace. Because Jesus often spoke of His followers as sheep. He himself is known as the Lamb of God. Jesus is speaking here of lambs. In spiritual terms those who are still young in the faith.

The Greek Word means

follower of Christ, with the implication of helplessness and dependence

Now Jesus is saying to him, *"Feed my little ones, my young followers, give them spiritual food. Jesus said, "Not fish, but spiritual bread."*

Peter did not do what he said. He didn't lay down his life for Jesus. On the contrary, as I said earlier, he cursed and said *"I don't know the Man."* And as I said earlier, he did not sleep in front of the tomb the night before the resurrection and waited for the resurrection. He is not in the mountain where he should wait, he catches fish, back on his old ways. That's where Jesus came to find him. That's where He comes to get you and me every time. It is God's grace, and it is His forgiveness. This is one of those wow moments for me.

Jesus uses people just as they are. He knows that you and I don't love Him as we ought to love Him, but all He seeks is honesty and humility and willingness. But Jesus isn't finished with Peter yet.

John 21:16

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep"

This question is directly focused on Peter. No more on "these thing" or "these people." Only you Peter, asked Jesus again: *"Simon, do you agapoo me, the highest, deepest, sacrificial love."* And then Peter answers the same. *"Lord, you know that I fileoo, I like you very much. "*

And then Jesus says and another Greek word is used, and Jesus gives Peter a second command. The first is feeding my lambs, (the young, the children), the second is looking after my sheep (adults). Take care of them, protect them. Now Jesus is talking about big sheep. This is translated that way.

a follower of Christ, with the implication of needing care and guidance

Jesus asked Peter this a third time.

John 21:17

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

This time it was taken care of that the adults too by giving them spiritual food. Now it's interesting now Jesus asks him, *"Simon fileoo you me. Do you like me?"*

And then Peter breaks down, here he stands grieved. He would like to love Jesus the way Jesus loved him, but he knows he can't. These are touching moments, Peter's heart is exposed. And it was necessary. It was necessary for him and it was necessary for the other disciples to hear it and it was necessary for the future of the church.

We know what happened next. We know that 10 days after Jesus returned to heaven, Peter preached to the people with zeal and proclaimed the name of Jesus. When he was arrested for his faith, he stood before the Jewish council and confidently told them about the salvation Jesus was bringing.

He travels the entire known world, writing two letters and leading thousands of people to the Lord. And when he was old, it came true, as Jesus had foretold.

John 21:18-19

I tell you the truth, 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." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" 20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")

We know that Peter then loved Jesus to the max. He was imprisoned so many times, tortured, and when the Romans brought Peter before the choice at the end of his life and gave him the chance to deny Jesus, he refused. They decided to crucify him and his wife. Indeed, as Jesus foretold, he would glorify Jesus when he was old, dying with opened arms. He had to watch while his wife was crucified. And he encouraged her with these words: *"Remember the Lord, remember the Lord."* And when they wanted to crucify him, he begged them to crucify him upside down, saying that he was not worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus. And there in Peter and his wife, showed agape love for Jesus.

If Jesus were to ask you and me this morning,

Do you love Me?

What will your answer be?

I don't know about you, but I'll say Lord *"I like you very much,"* but I don't know if I could say to Jesus, *"Lord, I love you with everything in me, more than all the other things in my life,"* And it's sad. How do you learn to love Jesus more?

I think we need to first look at how much Jesus loved us, and the cross is probably the supreme example of love. This is love without conditions. It is a love that is willing to give up everything. So that's our "benchmark."

So where do you begin?

- **Learn to know more about Jesus**

Learn to know Jesus better by reading the Bible. Who He was and what He did. Read more books, listen more to songs about Jesus. That's logical. You can't love someone if you don't know him or her.

- **Spend time in prayer**

I've talked a lot about this. But prayer is the way you can express your love. Make time to talk to God about your feelings and life. You don't always have to ask anything. Learn to praise and praise and worship Him. At these times you can say to him, "*Lord, I love you.*" Even if you may not feel that way.

- **Grow in faith and in trust**

Trust God more and more with your life. We often try to sort out our lives ourselves. Confess your faith in God more often.

- **Live under the control of the spirit.**

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to guide and help us. Your love for Jesus will grow if you deliberately put your life under the Spirit's control. It often demands choices against what you want and what others want and what the world wants. The world cannot be the norm, "**everyone does it.**" The question is what does Jesus expect of me? How does He want me to live? And it's about living in obedience.

- **Living in obedience**

Obedience is the expression of your love. If you begin to use His Word as the norm and establish your life accordingly, the Spirit will transform you into the image of Christ and He will grow the love of Jesus in you.

- **Associate with other believers**

There's no way you can love Jesus more if you're constantly hanging out with sinners, drunkards, unbelievers, god-deniers. Who will make your life full? With whom do you associate? Who's using your time?

The more you spend your time with people like you who are looking to grow their love for Jesus and what you believe, the more your love for Jesus will grow. That's why it is good to join a caring group or Bible study group.

- **Love as Jesus Loves**

Start seeing people around you as Jesus sees them. Jesus loved the world. Ask Him to show you His heart for the people around us. Start developing a compassion for people. That's the question for you and me.

How much do you love Jesus and are willing to ask Jesus? *"Lord, teach me to love you as you love me."*