Feed My Sheep

John 21:15-25

Introduction:

Prior to this Passage: Peter, John and 5 other disciples went fishing on Sea of Galilee. Jesus appeared on the shore and called to them. They came in and He had bread and fish already prepared on a charcoal fire. They ate together. Then John notes that this was the third time that Jesus had appeared to them.

Note: Peter had already repented in tears for his denials,

Luke 22:61-62

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then ﻿﻿Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ﻿﻿“Before the rooster ﻿﻿crows, you will deny Me three times.” So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

Certainly confession was a part of that repentance. When Peter confessed his sin, what did Jesus do? He forgave him. (I John 1:9)

After the meal, Jesus taught them as He often did. (John 13-17 after the Passover meal and “the Lord’s Supper.) This teaching is mainly to Peter with the others listening in.

I. Discerning Peter’s Love – 21:15-17

A. Remembering Peter’s Fall – 21:15

1. Old Name – 21:15a

“Simon, *son* of ﻿﻿Jonah,”

 Jesus began by addressing Peter as Simon the son of Jonas. In the Gospels, Jesus addressed Peter this way on only the most important occasions. These were:

(a). His Call to Follow Jesus

“You are Simon the son of ﻿﻿Jonah. ﻿﻿You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, ﻿﻿a Stone). (1:42),

(b). His Confession of Jesus as the Son of God

“Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, ﻿﻿for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but ﻿﻿My Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 16:17),

(c). As He Slept in Gethsemane

﻿

“Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? (Mark14:37).

(d). The Prediction of His denials –

“Simon, Simon! Indeed, ﻿﻿Satan has asked for you, that he may ﻿﻿sift *you* as wheat.” (Luke 22:31)

What Jesus was about to say to him was extremely important! Jesus asked him three questions:

The First Question: “Do you love (ἀγαπάω) Me more than these?”

Note: there are two different words used for “love” in this passage -- ἀγαπάω and φιλέω.

The first is love of God for God and God for man. But, He commands believers to love one another with the same love; (I John 3:23) therefore we must be able to love in the “ἀγαπάω” way.

Since we have been born into the family of God, we are now able to love each other with that love which has been “poured out in our hearts.” (Rom. 5:5) It is love that flows out to others, not expecting anything good in return and even in spite of having received evil from the same source -- “love your enemies”

“More than these” - Who are the “these”, “τούτων”could be men (masc.) or things (neuter).

* If things, - fish, boats, etc.
* If men, - the other disciples.
* I suggest it is disciples.

Not - “More than he loved the other disciples.” But, He loved Jesus more than they loved Jesus.

Remember these words of Peter at the last supper? “Even if all are ﻿﻿made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” (Matt. 26:33)

Still Peter had denied that he was one of Jesus’ disciples and that he even knew Jesus - (three times).

2. Old Claim – 21:15b

“He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I ﻿﻿love (φιλῶ) You.”

Peter appeals to Jesus’ present knowledge not to his own past behavior. Jesus responds with a command not condemnation. He did not say, “You sinned; I’m finished with you.”

Previously Jesus had referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd (10:14). Now he was committing the care of His flock to this disciple who had failed Him miserably in the past.

He said to him, ﻿﻿“Feed My lambs.” [βόσκε τὰ ἀρνία μου]. (Feed my little lambs).

Previously, Jesus had called Peter to be a fisher of men – an evangelistic ministry. Now, he is to be a shepherd of the flock, a pastoral ministry.

B. Relighting Peter’s Flame – 21:16-17

The Second Question: “Do you have a burning love for Me?” – 21:16

“He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of ﻿﻿Jonah, do you love (ἀγαπάω) Me?”

Jesus uses the “ἀγαπάω” again. If the stronger meaning is intended, Jesus is not giving up on that kind of love.

Peter’s response, “He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I ﻿﻿love You.” Peter stays with φιλέω.

Jesus command - He said to him, “Tend My ﻿﻿sheep.” [ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου]. Shepherd my sheep

The Third Question: “Do you have a Brotherly Love (φιλέω) for Me?” – 21:17

“He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of ﻿﻿Jonah, do you ﻿﻿love (φιλέω )Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you ﻿﻿love (φιλέω)Me?”

Peter’s Response - “And he said to Him, “Lord, ﻿﻿You know all things; You know that I ﻿﻿love (φιλέω) You.”

Jesus’ command – “Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.” [βόσκε τὰ πρόβατά μου]. Feed or tend my sheep.

Note:

1. In all of this talk about sheep Jesus refers to them as His sheep.

2. Jesus gave Peter Acts to perform not positions to fill.

3. The three affirmations of love seem to offset the three acts of denial.

4. The one qualification that Jesus questioned Peter about before he commissioned him to shepherd His flock was love. Other qualifications may be desirable, but love is indispensable.

5. Falling down is not fatal; failing to get up is.

Later, Peter passed on these principle to elders. (I Peter 5:1-4)

II. Directing Peter’s Life – 21:18-25

A. A Word of Clarification – 21:18-19

﻿

“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish. This He spoke, signifying ﻿﻿by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ﻿﻿“Follow Me.”

Peter needed the lesson in dependence on God. He was strong-willed up to this point. He has learned, by experience where that can lead.

Later on he will be totally helpless. The “stretch out your hands” is a euphemism for crucifixion. It refers to the Roman soldiers fastening the condemned person’s arms to the crosspiece of his cross.

According to church tradition, Peter asked for crucifixion upside down because he felt unworthy to suffer as Jesus had. Traditionally he died in Rome about 67 A.D.

Jesus then said, “Keep on following Me.”

B. A Word of Correction – 21:20-23

1. Peter’s Meddling

“Then Peter, turning around, saw

1. “the disciple ﻿﻿whom Jesus loved following, ﻿﻿

2. “who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?”

Question: Why this long description of John.

Answer: Maybe to establish John’s intimacy with Jesus. He was the writer of 5 books of the N.T.

“Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what *about* this man (John) ?”

2. Jesus’ Settling

﻿

“Jesus said to him, “If I ﻿﻿will that he remain ﻿﻿till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me.”

The “you” and the “me” are both emphatic.

﻿“Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?”

That is none of your business. M.Y.O.B.

C. A Word of Conviction – 21:24-25

1. The Veracity of the Words of John – 21:24

“This is the disciple who ﻿﻿testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.”

Is John the writer of these words? - There are many views to that question. My answer is that John used “we” as many people in authority do instead of saying “I”.

The King of England or queen (if that’s all they have), might say, “We wish you a merry Christmas.” The return to “I” in v.25 supports that.

2. The Vastness of the Works of Jesus – 21:25

“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, ﻿﻿I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

Four Gospels were not enough to record all that Jesus said and did and 4 million more would not finish the job. (AMEN in the T.R.)