

OSS- Loving God

Today we are going to conclude our study of Our Salvation Story and I want to use Peter as an example to illustrate some closing thoughts about our series.

We will start by opening to Lk 5:1-11. We read, *One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee,^[a] great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. ² He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. ³ Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon,^[b] its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." ⁵ "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." ⁶ And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! ⁷ A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. ⁸ When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." ⁹ For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. ¹⁰ His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" ¹¹ And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*

Luke records this event at the start of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The text notes Jesus using Peter's fishing boat as a platform to preach. After speaking, Jesus instructs Peter and his partners James and John, to go back out into the Lake to catch some fish. Peter objects noting they had fished all night without success, but he relents and goes back out and lets down his nets. Luke tells us the boats were then overwhelmed with fish and Peter, seeing it all, confesses his sin. Jesus then recruits Peter, along with James and John to join him, and become fishers of men. In this vein we can view the rest of the gospel accounts as a three year tutorial as to how Jesus teaches his disciples to be this new kind of fishermen.

Now turn to Mt 28:8-10. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, (most likely Mary the wife of Cleopas) go to the tomb and an angel meets them and tells them the Lord has risen and to go tell the disciples. As they go, Jesus meets them. We pick up the text in verse 8, *The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."*

In verse 16, we get an additional insight into what Jesus had instructed the disciples for Matthew records; *Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.* So, not only were the disciples to go to Galilee they were to go a mountain there and wait (some have supposed this area is where Jesus had fed the five thousand).

However, from the other Gospel accounts, we note the disciples didn't immediately follow this command. We know from Lk 24:34 and 1 Cor 15:5 that the Lord appeared to Peter later that resurrection day, and from Lk 24:13-31 we know Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the Emmaus road. In Mk 16:14 and Jn 20:19-25 we note He then appeared that first Sunday night to all the apostles

save for Thomas, and then a week later He appeared in Jerusalem with Thomas present (Jn 20:26-29). So, the disciples did not leave for Galilee until a full week after Jesus had commanded them (through Mary) to go.

Now we get to Jn 21:1-13. The disciples have made it back to Galilee. John now records the scene. *Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee.*^[a] *This is how it happened.* ² *Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),^[b] Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.* ³ *Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.” “We’ll come, too,” they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.* ⁴ *At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was.* ⁵ *He called out, “Fellows,^[c] have you caught any fish?” “No,” they replied.* ⁶ *Then he said, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.* ⁷ *Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore.* ⁸ *The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards^[d] from shore.* ⁹ *When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.* ¹⁰ *“Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said.* ¹¹ *So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.* ¹² *“Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.* ¹³ *Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish.*

Note Peter says, *I’m going fishing*. This is a profound statement. Just a few days earlier, while appearing to the disciples, Jesus had told them in Jn 20:21, *Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.* Sending them to do what? To be fishers of men! But now Peter, just a few days later, who is supposed to be waiting on a mountain in Galilee says I am going back to what I know. And the rest of the guys follow. It as if the last three years did not matter to Peter. The Lord is gone, we had a good ride, and now I am going to back to my old way of life, to what I know, and the place I have lived, and finish my days! But then, Jesus comes to them. He serves them breakfast and now after they eat, Jesus asks Peter some penetrating questions in Jn 21:15-17 (and these are the same questions we must ask ourselves).

¹⁵ *After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?^[e]” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.* ¹⁶ *Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.* ¹⁷ *A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”*

Now Jesus, publicly before the other six disciples who are there, asks Peter three questions. They are all the same. *Do you love me?* Jesus knows the greatest motivator in anyone’s life is love. Love has many objects, for some it is money, for others it is power, or prestige, or status, it may be their spouse or children. For most it is themselves. And what we love structures and orders our day. It organizes our relationships and what we prioritize in our lives.

Peter has stated he is going back to his old life. *I'm going fishing*. So, Jesus meets him for breakfast and asks him this profound question. *Do you love me?* Because we will follow what we love. We will serve what we love. We will sacrifice for what we love.

The word for love in the first two questions to Peter is the Greek word *agape*. It is selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love. Peter responds with the Greek word *phileo*, which is brotherly love. Peter knows he cannot respond with *agape* because he is incapable of it. In the third question, Jesus uses *phileo* to Peter which grieves him. Jesus questions even Peter's friendship love. Peter then appeals to the omniscience of Christ to read his heart.

Note in each of these three questions Jesus is directing Peter to an alternative career path. In other words, Christ is saying to Peter, do you love me more than fishing, more than your old way of life, more than your old relationships, more than where you used to live? This is to all of us a universal question, do we love Christ more than (you fill in the blank)? Peter, If you do, then this is your life's new direction: you are to feed my sheep, tend my sheep, pasture my sheep. In other words, Peter, your job is no longer fishing. It is caring for my sheep. And here is the vital point: The motivation for Peter to accept this new way of life is not compulsion, it is not duty, rather it is love.

Jesus is not necessarily asking you to do what he asked Peter. But Jesus is asking each of us, do you love me? because Christianity is not,

- a. Knowing doctrine.
- b. Checking the salvation or eternal life box, and getting hellfire insurance.
- c. It is not your old life, cloaked in the trappings of the new.
- d. It is not a set of ethics.
- e. It is not a social club.

Rather it is a relationship between you and God; it is knowing Christ as Jn 17:3 states, *now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*. This is Christianity—it is knowing Christ. Note the following three men. We know them well. Note they did not seek eternal life, salvation, justification, or any of these fancy theological things we have been discussing. They just wanted to know God.

- a. Moses, Ex 33:13, *If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you* Ex 33:18, *Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."*
- b. David, Ps 63:1, *You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.*
- c. Paul, Phil 3:10-11, *I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

So, a few comments on our Love for God.

1. Love of God comes because *He first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19). Our love is a response to his love, and I express that love because I want to, not because I have to.
2. Loving God is not a feeling. It is a decision. Emotions will follow the will.
3. Loving God involves your whole being, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength* (Deut 6:5).
4. Loving God is always expressed: you cannot help but show it, and if you do not, one can reasonably question your salvation.
 - a. Desire for the WOG, Ps 119:97, *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*
 - b. Desire for communion with God through prayer, Ps 63:1, *You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.*
 - c. Desire to obey his commands, 1 Jn 2:3 -4, *We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. ⁴ Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person* (see also Jn 14:15, 14:21).
 - d. Desire to love people, 1 Jn 2:8-11, *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister^[b] is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister^[c] lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them* (see also 1 Jn 4:20, 1 Jn 4:12, Jn 13:35, 1 Jn 3:14).
 - e. Desire to see Him, 2 Tim 4:8, *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*
 - f. Desire to like the things he likes, Rm 12:9, *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*
 - g. Desire to hate the things he hates, Ps 97:10, *Let those who love the Lord hate evil.*