

Text— John 21:15-19

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Today is the first Sunday after Easter; so, it is timely to think about some of the appearances which our resurrected Lord made after the first Easter morning and evening had passed.

Accordingly, prior to our Scripture selection, we read of the risen Lord Jesus making Himself known to His disciples as He stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, for while they were yet out on the water fishing, Jesus miraculously provided them with a catch of fish. It's surely an interesting occurrence, since, during the second year of Jesus' public ministry, Jesus had performed the very same type of miracle, which on that occasion blew the minds of Simon Peter, James and John. Furthermore, Luke 5:10 relates that at that time, "Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Thus, Simon Peter would become a preacher of Jesus Christ, thereby winning souls for the Savior.

Of course, we also remember that prior to Jesus' bitter sufferings and death, "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."— as Matthew 26:35 informs us. But what happened? None of the disciples stood firm with the Lord Jesus Christ, for we read in Matthew 26:56-58, "all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Hence, Peter made a big mistake in following Jesus to the high priest's palace, for thereafter Peter three times quite vocally denied knowing Jesus. But thankfully, Peter sincerely repented of his sin, for Matthew 26:75 reports, "Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." Yes, Peter wept tears of

repentance; and so, Jesus lovingly forgave him.

Therefore, our sermon text is a further interesting part of history in that it tells us about:

"PETER'S PUBLIC REINSTATEMENT TO SERVE CHRIST"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) How Peter was publically reinstated to serve Christ
- 2) What would be Peter's final acts on earth in service to Christ

-1-

In John 21:9-14, just prior to our Scripture selection, we learn that right after Jesus had miraculously provided the disciples with a catch of fish, "As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." Hence, we observe that the living Lord Jesus, in His risen and glorified body, spent a mealtime with His disciples on the shore of the sea of Galilee, which is also known as the sea of Tiberias. Then, Jesus turned His attention specifically to Simon Peter, as we shall presently consider as we enter our sermon text.

Verse 15, ----- (John 21:15)

The shore-lunch had ended. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith*

unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. Notice how Jesus worded His question to Simon Peter while present with other disciples, for *Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* Jesus was not showing meanness or anger to Simon, but was wisely instructing him to be careful to have and maintain a right, humble opinion of himself.

First, we note that Jesus did not call the man Cephas or Peter, meaning rock-man; rather, Jesus addressed him as “Simon” since, while at the high priest’s palace, he had not been rock-solid when he shamefully denied even knowing Jesus. Simon had failed to heed Jesus’ warning before that sad event took place; Simon had claimed superior strength and love for the Lord Jesus, instead of humbly acknowledging he was as weak as any other naturally conceived and born, sinful, human being. Matthew 26:33 relates that on that night in which Jesus was betrayed, “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Thus, Simon Peter had been a man with high self-esteem and self-confidence, rather than simply being a man with humble reliance on Jesus Christ.

My friends, are we not sometimes just like Simon Peter? Let’s admit it; we ALL are frequently overconfident in ourselves; and then, we fall into sin. Yes, we ALL deny Jesus at times by failing to stand up for Him and His Word when we have opportunity to do so, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”—declares Ecclesiastes 7:20.

Looking at our sermon text, it’s obvious that Simon had changed for the better, for his answer to Jesus no longer contained bragging or boastfulness; rather, Simon simply and honestly said to Jesus: *Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.* Simon did NOT say: “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee more than these others.” Instead, Simon rightly relied on Jesus’ knowing his repentant heart and mind. Fellow Christians, we too can rely on the fact that Jesus knows our love for Him is real, even

when we are sinful and weak. Yes, Jesus forgives us, as He forgave Simon, for 1 John 1:9 states, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Therefore, let us be ever grateful to Jesus Christ for paying for our sins and forgiving us our sins. Let us never forget the words of 1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.” Thanks and praise be to Jesus!

Notice that when Simon confessed his love to Jesus, Jesus then commanded Simon: *Feed my lambs.* Lambs are young sheep. Jesus’ lambs are the little children who believe on Him.

Consider what Jesus has to say about children who believe in Him, for we read in Matthew 18:2-11, “Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” Hence, Jesus holds the little children who believe in Him to be very precious, fine examples of humble, trusting faith.

Therefore, Simon Peter was to feed those little ones the Word of God so they would be sustained in the faith and grow in the faith. Likewise, all called preachers today are to see that the children in their congregations are fed the Word of God in its truth and purity, so that they may be sustained in the faith, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it behooves Christian parents, especially fathers, to have their little ones baptized and taught the Word of God, for Ephesians 6:4 clearly commands, “ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” And, Proverbs 22:6 directs, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Thus, the instruction of children in God’s Word is very important.

Verse 16, ----- (John 21:16)

Jesus asked a *second time*, saying, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Observe that Jesus emphasized that loving Him is vital; and, that love of Him was to motivate Simon to then feed Jesus’ sheep.

Jesus’ sheep are all those folks who believe on Him, for in John 10:27-28, Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Yes, Jesus’ sheep – all true Christians – hear Jesus’ voice, His holy Word. Therefore, Simon was to feed Jesus’ sheep – Jesus’ believing followers – the Word of God and not man’s philosophy, thoughts, or opinions.

Likewise, all called Christian preachers to this very day are to feed Jesus’ sheep the holy Word of God and not man’s philosophy, thoughts, or opinions. Jesus commands that His sheep be fed; and, in John 8:31-32, Jesus says to His believing followers, in no uncertain terms, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know

the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Therefore, love for the Lord Jesus demands that His Word be taught by all those called to preach and teach in Christ’s Church.

Verse 17, ----- (John 21:17)

The third time Jesus asked Simon if he loved Him was obviously a reminder of his three-time denial of Jesus, which is why it grieved Simon so much. Simon Peter was penitent and Jesus forgave Him, for sure. Nevertheless, Jesus was driving the point home to Simon that his love for the Lord Jesus had to remain steadfast and had to motivate him to continued faithful service, no matter what difficulties would come his way.

Note well that in this verse of our sermon text we are informed: *Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.* Accordingly, we see Simon being rock-like in his confession of Jesus Christ as his LORD who is ALL-KNOWING. Simon was indeed once again worthy of the name Peter. Peter surely loved Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.

Hence, *Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.* Again, Simon Peter was commanded to feed Jesus’ sheep, Jesus’ followers, Jesus’ Christians. LOVE of the Lord Jesus was to motivate Peter. Likewise, all called Christian preachers today are to be motivated by love of the Lord Jesus Christ to feed the flock they have been called to serve. In fact, by inspiration of God, the apostle Peter writes as much to elders or pastors, for we read in 1 Peter 5:2-3, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

Therefore, let us keep in mind that Peter was publically reinstated to serve Christ by Christ Jesus Himself, for He urged Peter to lovingly serve Him by ministering to young and old Christians alike,

feeding them aright by teaching them the Word of God.

Oh, it's necessary that the Word of God be taught in its truth and purity, for Proverbs 30:5-6 states, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." And, Romans 10:17 informs us, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we learn, "the word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe." Yes, it's as Psalm 19:7-10 declares, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Accordingly, let us cling to the pure preserved Word of God and to Jesus Christ, the Savior it proclaims.

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As we ponder the remaining verses of our sermon text, let us see what would be Peter's final acts on earth in service to Christ.

Verses 18 & 19, ----- (John 21:18-19)

Jesus never hid the truth from His disciples. Jesus never promised His followers that life in this world would be easy-street for them. On the contrary, before Jesus suffered and died for the sins of the world, He told His followers, as John 16:33 relates, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yes, we Christians have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we have peace of heart in knowing our sins are forgiven us for Jesus' sake; we know that Jesus has overcome the world because He has kept God's Law perfectly for us and

has paid for our lack of keeping it. However, we also know that in this world we have tribulation – persecutions, afflictions and troubles – because we don't love the wicked world, but rather we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Simon Peter would and did go on in loving service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter suffered for holding fast to Jesus Christ, exactly as Jesus had told him. Jesus doubly assured Peter, saying: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. And why did Jesus tell Peter that he would be bound and dragged where he would rather not go? Jesus said it, signifying by what death Peter should glorify God.*

Think about Jesus' words to Peter. Jesus Himself had been bound, led away captive, tried and crucified, His hands being stretched out on the cross of Calvary. Similarly, Simon Peter would be bound and his hands would be stretched out, as he too would be attached to a cross and crucified. Traditional history states that Peter was crucified at Rome under emperor Nero.

After Peter had been informed as to what his final act on earth in service to Christ would be, Christ *said unto him, Follow me.* Thus, Simon Peter was commanded by Jesus Christ to follow Him.

My friends, Peter did follow Jesus Christ. Peter in love of the Lord Jesus followed His instructions to feed Christians; and, it is still happening through the God-given words Peter penned as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, Peter followed Jesus Christ by dying on a cross; Peter did not give up the true faith; hence, Peter's soul is in heaven with Jesus Christ right now.

Fellow Christians, having seen Peter's public reinstatement to serve Christ as we've pondered our sermon text, let us endeavor to love the Lord Jesus Christ since He has loved us even unto death.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward regularly feeding on the pure, preserved, holy Word of God, that we as Christ's sheep may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him, for He is our Rescuer from never-ending ruin. Amen.

m.e.l.