

**John 21:18-23**

18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." 20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" 23 So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

The Scripture for today takes place at the very end of the Gospel of John it is the third post resurrection appearance to the disciples. Jesus finds his disciples out fishing. He builds a fire and is cooking some fish. Then he invites the disciples to share in some breakfast. Then he challenges Peter, "Do you love me? Feed my lambs." He challenges him a second time, "Do you love me? Tend my sheep." And yet a third time, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." Now imagine if you were Peter and the frustration you would have from this encounter.

I was working in the kitchen as a volunteer at our church camp Craig Springs. My wife Brenda was working in the nurses' station also as a volunteer. Our son Chris was working in the kitchen as paid staff. Chris asked me where Brenda was and I told him that she was in the nurses' station. Then he wanted to know what she was doing. I told him that she was helping someone that got sick. The other kitchen volunteer wanted to know who it was that got sick. I said "I don't know." Then she respond by asking if it was someone that she knew and again I said "I don't know who it is." Then she demanded a third time and I said "I do not know who it is!" It is very frustrating for me when I have to tell someone something three times. I felt the tension escalate very quickly and knew I had to take a time out so I left to cool off.

What is happening in the Scripture is that Jesus has completed his earthly mission and it is now up to the disciples to carry forward his legacy. Jesus trained his disciples to go out into the world and make disciples. So, Peter is commissioned to shepherd the flock. Peter needs to be leading the church but instead he went back to daily living in secular society. Jesus now has to send him in the right direction even if it hurt's Peter's feelings.

Imagine the scene when Jesus says "Why are you out here fishing? Do you love fishing more than me? Or do you love me more than these things here? Which do you love more me or the boat and the life of a fisherman? You have been trained and instructed to go out into the world and make disciples. You promised me a life of devotion and you swore that you love me more than anything else. You should be doing my ministry and mission but instead you are out here fishing. I pulled you away from this life into a life of a higher realm. If you love me as you say that you do - go make disciples. Those who keep my commandments are the ones who love me."

In today's Scripture Jesus tells Peter what lies ahead, His death will glorify God. Are we willing to take that trade? It doesn't seem to be very appealing. You can have a career as a fisherman or you go spread the gospel and be killed for it. We wouldn't take that trade but in reality every veteran has signed up to risk life for country. There are some things that people are willing to risk life for but these things take conviction and are things that people absolutely believe in. Jesus tells Peter "follow me." At this point Peter should say "Yes Lord!" Instead Peter looks at another disciple and says "What about him?" Peter wants to know about fairness. Is this fair? Is he going to die too?

It is a common misconception - comparing yourself to others. It is like saying "That other person is a bigger sinner than I am. That person over there is not as righteous as I am. I give more money than he does. I do more work for the church than he does." Imagine a murderer in front of judge that says "Why do I get punished, Ted Bundy is a bigger criminal than I am?" It doesn't work that way. The Scripture presents to us a very important lesson. It is never about the other person. Peter's issue is others when it should have been himself. It is a lesson on attitude. Once you get this lesson, it is a cure for resentment. There is no resentment when you realize that faith is all about your relationship with the Lord. It is about you - you and the Lord. It is about you getting right with the Lord. It is never about what someone else is doing or should be doing. Disciples are not to be compared and measured against each other. The Scripture presents us with a cure for resentment because resentment comes from judging the fairness of others. Peter is disturbed by the prediction of martyrdom and the perception of its fairness so he asks "What about him?" Jesus response is "What about him?" It is as if to say "What does that have to do with you? What is that to you?" It is a lesson on attitude because you have to mind your own affairs; to each his own. We are called by God to save our own selves and then help the Lord in saving the world. It is no concern of ours if other disciples answer the call. We are to shepherd and feed the flock.

The ultimate gift given to us is Jesus – the gift of his life and his love. Jesus calls Peter to share in the gift. To love Jesus is to shape your life according to the life of Jesus. Peter affirms his love for Jesus and so Jesus charges Peter to act on this love and care for his sheep. The charge to Peter is to love as Jesus loves. Peter's love for Jesus should translate into his care of Jesus' flock. Peter's care shows his love for Jesus.

You have affirmed your love for Jesus. You have made a public confession of faith and you have been baptized. Jesus has called you to discipleship – to care for his sheep. Not everybody can witness, give a testimony, or preach. But you can care for his sheep. The challenge to you from Jesus is to love as he has loved. Your love for Jesus should translate into care of his flock. Your care shows your love for Jesus.