

Do You Love Me?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus above all else and the consequences of loving something more than Him.

Scripture: Matthew 22:40, John 21:15, 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Loving Jesus", "Spiritual Restoration"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches on the impactful encounter between Jesus and Peter by the sea, where Jesus lovingly addresses Peter's denial and reaffirms his love and calling. Jesus first tends to their physical and emotional needs before addressing the spiritual, showcasing His compassion and understanding. The core question 'Do you love me?' remains pivotal in our relationship with Christ, emphasizing the importance of loving Jesus above all else, including ministry and religious practices. The church in Ephesus serves as a cautionary tale, showing how one can be doctrinally sound and active in ministry yet have left their first love, prompting a call to repentance and restoration.

Transcript

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep" (John 21: 15-17).

I have often been challenged by this scene as Jesus meets his disciples for breakfast at the sea. This is probably the most important moment in the life of Peter as this discussion would determine his future as either an apostle or a fisherman.

Before questioning Peter and the others, Jesus first took care of their physical and emotional needs. Firstly Jesus took care of the frustration of having toiled all night and having caught nothing by providing them with a bumper catch. Secondly He prepared a meal and ministered to their hunger. John says that "when they had eaten breakfast...". What a loving, sensitive and caring Saviour who even understands that it is hard for us to concentrate on spiritual matters when our stomachs are grumbling! Indeed He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

I pray that we may learn from Him and care for one another in the natural in order to smooth the way for the spiritual. Did Jesus have the right to be confrontational, angry and frustrated with Peter? Of course He had. But rather He lovingly took care of the needs of those who had fled from and denied Him in His hour of need. How often do we not rush in with a confrontational attitude and thereby cloud the real issue? We thus place the offender on the defensive instead of being in a position to examine himself. Notice too that this is the risen, glorified, almighty Christ who bows down and prepares a meal for these weak followers! Would that we could learn the real meaning of being servants of one another - even serving those who we deem to be failures in the Kingdom.

I could image a dozen questions I would have wanted to ask Peter, had I been in the Lord's position. (Even though the conversation happened between Jesus and Peter, there is no doubt that Peter was acting as a representative of the others present.) I would have asked questions like: Peter, how could you deny me? Peter, do you realise what you have done? Peter, tell me that you didn't mean it. Or maybe I would question whether he had learnt anything or maybe whether he had a better understanding of the theological implications of his denial and of the death, burial and resurrection. But Jesus has only one question: "Do you love me". That is still the only relevant question today. Everything else hangs on this question in the same way as "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

If we love Him, we will love His word, love His people, and obey His commandments. The inverse is, however, not true. Some love His word or His people. Some even do all the right things, but they do not love HIM first: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing" (1Corinthians 13:1-3).

Is it possible to do all these things and not love Him? You better believe it! There are many who love preaching, people, theology, the meetings, worship etc, without loving Jesus first! There are even many men in the ministry who love the ministry more than they love Jesus!

You say this is not possible! Yes it is. The church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 was just such a church. They had everything in place. Their doctrine was straight, they knew the difference between true and false apostles, they were in all the meetings, they were even working hard for the church. But Jesus has one accusation against them - they had left their first love. Notice, they had not lost it (as most Christians quote this verse), but they had left it. The difference between leaving and losing is the one is a rational decision while the other is an involuntary act. We choose to leave something but when we lose something, it normally just happens without us being actively involved. The Ephesian church had made a decision to leave their first love.

In speaking of the "first love", Jesus does not have in mind the wild infatuation they had when they first got saved. The "first" is not first in order of time, but rather first in order of priority. In other words, Jesus is no longer their number one love. What should have been their number one love had been dethroned by another love. A close study of the text shows that right doctrine, the Bible, worship, liturgy, church order and a host of other religious things had taken the place of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of these people.

It is important to note that leaving your first love is not a minor little issue which can be ignored or explained away. Jesus said they had fallen! This is more than stumbling - they were flat on their faces and they had lost everything even though they still had so many other things to boast of. Yes, many may be doing, and believing all the right things and still be fallen.

Dear friend, please allow me to ask you the same question: Do you really love the Lord Jesus and is He number one in your life? If you have come to love anything more than Him, you are spiritually fallen. And if so, Jesus calls you, as He did the Ephesians, to repent. That means turning around and relegating everything else to second place in your life and placing Jesus in the number one position again.

(To be continued)

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