

Law & Order, XV

Do You Love Me?

August 14, 2016

Welcome to where we're coming to know and grow in God's Word.



Do you love Jesus? Truly? For reals?

Well ... we'll see.

Jesus' third major appearance is at the Sea of Galilee where He feeds more than 500 brothers with 153 miraculously-caught fish.



And, when Simon-Peter realizes it's Jesus, he girdles his garment, hurdles overboard, and leaves the grunt work to those who clearly don't love Jesus as passionately as he.

But, when they row in, Jesus makes it clear He has a purpose for those fish; so, Simon single-handedly pulls in the net! Once again demonstrating his greater zeal.



Let's read **John 21:15-24 (BROWN)**:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, **do you truly love me more than these?**"

More than these, *what?* These *other disciples*.

Why would Jesus ask such a thing? Because, it needs to be asked! And, no doubt it delights the others that He asks it in front of 'em.



At the Last Supper, when Jesus had warned Simon that his faith would momentarily fail, Simon took Jesus to task, in front of 'em.



I have prayed for you, Simon, **that your faith may not fail.** [Though, it *will* lapse] And **when you have turned back,** [which he does when Jesus appears to him at the tomb (Luke 24:12; 1 Cor 15:5)] **strengthen your brothers.** [Which he doesn't; but, keeps it to himself till he's called out (Luke 24:34)] But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." – Luke 22:31b-34 NIV

Later that same evening, on the Mount of Olives, when Jesus says that He, the Shepherd, will be struck, and His sheep scattered ...

Peter declared, “**Even if all [these] fall away, [and let’s face it, they probably will] I will not.**” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.” **But Peter [compelled to keep digging that hole ever deeper] insisted emphatically,** “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And **all the others [who’d been deemed by Peter as something less than Peter] said the same.** – Mark 14:29-31 NIV



Fast-forward: after Peter disowns Jesus while facing, not death but a servant girl; publically swears he’s not a disciple; fails to confess, and strengthen the rest, when Jesus appears to him; and, now girdles and hurdles himself ...

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, **do you truly love me more than these?**” [Because, **passion isn’t love; and, excitement isn’t obedience**] “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Feed my lambs.**”



Ever notice he doesn’t address Jesus’ *actual* question? And, his “You know” downplays the gravity.

How often do you avoid or downplay the tough questions?



“I know that / know it; I want to know if you know it.”

Like a **stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn;** [KJV: “*Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer*”] **can the Lord now feed them like a lamb** in a broad pasture? – Hosea 4:15-16 ESV

Yes. *How?* **By turning bull-headed disciples into soft-hearted shepherds who relate.**

“Return, faithless people,” declares the Lord ... Then **I will give you shepherds after my own heart,** who will lead you with **knowledge** and **understanding.**” – Jeremiah 3:14-15 NIV

Of *what?* His way.

[The Lord] gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads ... – Isaiah 40:11 NIV

And, **if we truly love Him, we’ll desire to care like Him.** That means searching for the lost, bringing back the strays, binding up the injured, and strengthening the weak. (Ezekiel 34:16)

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, **do you truly love me?**” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Take care of my sheep.**”

He means, **“Care for ‘em the same way I’d care for ‘em.”**

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The **hired hand** is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he **abandons the sheep and runs away**. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away **because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**” – John 10:11b-13 NIV



What’s he care about? Compensation. *What’s in it for him?*

Simon was like a hired hand who ran when the wolves came.

Jesus has to break his pride to change his heart. The same way He does with all us *stubborn heifers!*

How much of your faith is based on the reward you’ll receive?

That’s how a hired hand thinks, not a loving shepherd.

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was **hurt** [*lypeō: made sorrowful; affected with sadness (we call this godly sorrow)*] **because Jesus** [wouldn’t let up, and] asked him the third time, “**Do you love me?**”

Why does Jesus ask three times? Because, that’s how many times it took to get through Simon’s thick hide and into his heart.



Too much can be read into the terms of endearment (“agapaō” and “phileō”), in this exchange. They’re used synonymously in scripture, the way we use “adore” and “cherish”. However, the first two times Jesus asks if Simon (agape) loves Him, and Simon says, (*phileō*) “like a brother”. But, this third time Jesus asks, “*Do you (phileō) love me like a brother?*”

This hurt. Maybe because his brother, Andrew, an Apostle, was there; and, they both knew Simon would’ve died for *him*.

He said, “Lord, **you know all things;** [the good, the bad, and the ugly things I’d rather ignore; but, you’ve also seen my bitter tears, and self-loathing, and fears of not measuring up to the others, and the bravado that masks my insecurities, and all the reasons I overcompensate for my lacking in every way, and my desperate need for You; so, I know that ...] **you know that I love you.**” [*phileō: like a brother*] Jesus said, [with a warmth that conveyed there’d be no need to ask again] “Feed my sheep.

When Simon finally lowers his guard and exposes his heart, it allows Jesus’ gentle questions to sink in and do their job. Years later, when Peter writes, we can see the impact this had.

Always be **prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. [*Especially if it’s a servant girl in the high priest’s courtyard*] But do this with **gentleness** and **respect**, keeping a **clear conscience** ... – 1 Peter 3:15b-16a NIV

Don't settle for being a hired hand whose heart isn't in it.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers [Let's be shepherds, not sheep; and certainly not stubborn heifers. Feed His lambs. **Tend His flock as your own; and, your own as His flock**] — **not because you must**, but **because you are willing**, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And **when the Chief Shepherd appears**, ["Instead of receiving a public interrogation like I got ..."] you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. – 1 Peter 5:2-4 NIV

Because, among other things, it'll reflect all the ways He was able to shine through you down here in the darkness.

I tell you the truth, when you were **younger** [*neos: recently born*] you **dressed** yourself [lit. *girded yourself* (same term used when Peter prepares to jump out of the boat)] and went where you wanted; but when you are **old** [*gēraskō: deprived of force and authority*] you will **stretch out your hands**, [in surrender and willingness to be led] and someone else will **dress** [*zōnnymi: gird*] you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. [If he chose to follow Jesus] Then he said to him, "Follow me!" [Allowing Simon-Peter to show everyone present that he was willing to lay down his life for his Lord. And, they got up and walked through the dense crowd of brothers] Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. [On the lookout for any wolves, like Judas, among the flock] (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" ["Are all of us going to die horrible deaths ... or just me?"] Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? **You** must follow **me**." Because of this, [and the fact that people are quick to spread everything but the truth] **the rumor spread among the brothers** [who had overheard them] that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" [It's important to note how **carefully** Jesus chooses His words] This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Do you love Jesus?

Truly?

For reals?

Well ... we'll see.

Literally.

It'll be evident in how you tend His sheep.