

This is an act of restoration. Just by having this conversation with Peter, Jesus showed Peter that he forgave him. It is also an act of commissioning. Each time Peter reaffirmed his love, Jesus told him to take care of his sheep. Jesus asked Peter to show his love for Jesus by loving others.

Failure can teach us how much we need God. It can remind us that any success we have is because of Him and that He is the source of “every good and perfect gift.” (James 1:17) He bravely renewed his commitment. In fact he was a changed man after that morning. Peter became strong, powerful and authoritative. He preached at Pentecost so boldly that 3,000 people put their faith in Jesus. Peter became one of the key leaders in the early church. He took seriously his new commitment to care for Jesus' sheep. The disciple who failed became the disciple who could be counted on because he put his faith in the Lord of the second chance.

We need to face where we are in our love for God and we need to hear Jesus say: ‘If this is where you are right now, if this is the best you can give me now, I accept it because I know that more will follow from you if you begin to follow me. Just give to me whatever love you can give at this moment.’

As Jesus asked Peter, this morning he asks each of us again the same question, “Do you love me?” Let us answer to Jesus, saying “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” even though we are not ready enough to say it. If you failed to love God, your family, or your friends, let us start over and begin again. Each of us has some kind of love for Jesus that we can give him now. With that love, whatever it is, God can and will do great things for you.

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The Bible's Four Great Questions #4:

Do You Love Me?

John 21: 15-19

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Let me begin with a story about my grandmother. My grandmother was a special person in my life. She became a widow after my grandfather was killed by communists during the Korean War. She raised her four children by herself. She made money by farming and eventually selling her farm little by little every year and finally all of it to pay for my father's college/seminary tuition. When I started my ministry as a single in a rural area, she lived with me and helped me in many ways such as cooking, washing clothes, and accompanying pastoral visits. She was always on my side, even if I had a big argument with my parents.

Unfortunately, she had Alzheimer's disease for several years. She only recognized my father who was her only son. She didn't recognize my mother, my aunts, and my sisters at all. She couldn't control her mind and body. My parents tried to take her to a nursing home for better care, but she refused to stay there. So, she lived with my parents. My mother was her caregiver.

In addition to that, my mother had to take care of her own mother, as she was also in the early stage of Alzheimer's disease. She was living with my parents as well. I could not imagine how my mother took care of two elderly persons who had Alzheimer's disease. It was quite a burden for her. Two of my grandparents have now passed and are with God in heaven.

Seeing this unbelievable situation, I think of love. Love is not a word, but an action. Love is easy to say, but hard to practice. I believe that my mother showed 'love' by taking care of them.

This morning Jesus asks us, “Do you love me?” This is a very important question in our lives, between husband and wife, parents and children, friends, dating couples, and above all God and us. In today’s text, Jesus asks this question to Peter who was his closest friend and disciple. Jesus asked Peter this question three times.

Let’s take a look at some background: Prior to Jesus’ arrest, Peter had frequently boasted that his devotion to Jesus, his love for our Lord, was greater than that of the other disciples. Peter vowed to never leave Jesus’ side. But a few short hours later, Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus was tortured and crucified. Peter never talked to Jesus again after denying him the morning of the crucifixion. He didn’t get another chance to stand up for him. Peter had given the last 3 years of his life to follow Jesus. But the past few days of his life had been a whirlwind of failures and emotions. Peter had gone back to fishing. And finally Jesus met Peter on the beach.

Like Peter, many of us return to what we know when failure comes around. In the midst of our failures or depression, however, Jesus is looking for you. He wants fellowship with you. He wants to care for your every need. He yearns for your company.

Today Jesus asks the Bible’s important question: ‘Do you love me?’ Love is the most important and cherished word in any language and yet it is one of the most confusing words in English. We use a word, ‘love’ to talk about our commitment to God or our feelings in a romantic relationship or our enjoyment of a hobby. I love God; I love my wife; I love fishing.

An old farmer’s claim for compensation for personal injury was denied by his insurance company because at the time of the accident he said there was nothing wrong with him. So the farmer took the matter to court. The judge asked the farmer “Is it true that after the accident you declared there was nothing wrong with you?” “Well, your Honor, it was like this: I was driving down the road in my pickup with my cow Betsy in the back, when suddenly a big

semi-truck pulled out in front of me and I crashed into it. I went flying this way and Betsy went flying that way. When I came to, an officer was standing beside me. He said, “The cow is in bad shape. I don’t think she’s going to make it.” And he pulled out his gun and shot Betsy dead. Then, holding his smoking pistol, he turned to me and asked, “Now, how do you feel? Threatened by the smoking pistol, I said, “I am fine. There is nothing wrong with me.” Saying “I’m fine” can mean different things in different contexts. Likewise, using the word “love” can mean different things in different contexts.

Some of you might know that when Jesus asked, “Do you love me?” and when Peter answered, “Yes, I love you” each used a different Greek word for “love.” There are three Greek words translated “love” in the English language. Each of these words has vastly different meaning. 1) *Eros*: Physical or erotic love 2) *Phileo*: Brotherly love or friendship 3) *Agape*: God’s love...sacrificial in nature. Jesus used one of those words and Peter used another.

Jesus asks Peter for “agape” love and Peter offers “phileo.” Literally the question was “Peter do you love me enough to sacrifice everything?” Yet Peter literally answered “Yes Lord, You know I’m your friend.” Fortunately for Peter and the rest of us, Jesus meets us where we are, in spite of who we are.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter: “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” 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.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” (21:15-17)