

It Starts With Me

John 18:15-37, John 21:15-19

To share the love of God with others, we must learn to receive His love for ourselves.

Introduction

1. ME

Loving myself does not come easy.

This month, the month of February, we focus on “**Sharing the Love of Jesus**”. In the beginning, I talked about how the church will be focusing on Evangelism in the third quarter.

A new Gallup report found that only half of Americans belong to a church, which is down from 69% two decades earlier. Some have concluded that the rise of technology and the ease of joining a community online has attributed to this decline. This is a negative trend because it removes the element of human connection which is vital in terms of support, friendship, and purpose.

Everyone is craving for connection and community. There is no perfect time to evangelize than now.

Evangelism is sharing the love of Jesus with others, wherever we go.

As I was preparing for this message, I wondered what it truly means to share the love of Jesus.

And the first thing that occurred to me is in order to share love, I have to be filled with love. I have to obtain something to share.

I did a self-assessment within my own heart and discovered that I don't always know how to share love because **I don't fully understand it and I because I feel like I don't deserve it.**

In my human predisposition, my thoughts towards myself are; how I don't measure up, how I'm inadequate, how I entertain fear and doubt more than I should, how I have insecurities, how I can't possibly share the love of Jesus when I, myself, am so damaged and flawed.

I remember when Brandon and I were going through life coaching sessions with Nicole Williamson. At one session, God showed me a picture of myself. **I was holding a bat and I was beating myself with it.**

I can't tell you how gut-wrenching it was to see it. God was showing me that whenever I was hard on myself, whenever I felt like I failed, whenever I felt guilt or shame, I was literally beating myself. And each time I would beat myself, it grieved the Father because I felt like I didn't deserve His love and that Jesus dying on the cross was not enough.

Bible Verse

1 Corinthians 5:17-18 (The Passion Translation)

"Now, if anyone is enfolded into Christ, he has become an entirely new person. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new. And God has made all things new, and reconciled us to himself, and given us the ministry of reconciling others to God."

Application

The word **enfolded** means to hold or clasp (someone) lovingly in one's arms. So what this is saying is when you are held or clasped in the loving arms of Jesus, you are an entirely new person.

It's no wonder it would grieve God because it was as if I rejected the One who was enough to cover my failures and my guilt.

I saw that I was undeserving, What God saw was the blood of His son that was enough.

It was a nugget of revelation that set me free.

There is a disciple named Peter who received this revelation whole-heartedly and became someone who would not only be an apostle, but who would undeniably share the love of Jesus, bringing 3,000 new believers into the kingdom of God in one day.

2. THE LIFE OF PETER

Peter's life is a great example of how the love of Jesus changed him.

I love reading about Peter in the Bible.

So much of how he lived reminds me so much of myself.

He was a fisherman who recognized Jesus as Lord, laid down everything, to follow Him when Jesus said, "Follow Me."

Peter was the kind of man who would say yes and ask questions later. He was zealous. He loved Jesus.

But he was also overly confident, prideful at times, and feared men which was his downfall.

Peter made plenty of mistakes and failed many times. He was uneducated and sinful. Jesus knew that about Peter, but yet he loved him and included him in his inner circle of disciples.

This should give us all hope knowing that though we make mistakes and fail, Jesus still loves us. He enfolds us in his loving arms.

Peter was a Gentile. He was not born into a generational bloodline as were the Jews. He was uneducated in a sense where he wasn't brought up in the things of God. He had no understanding of the Torah. He did not grow up in the synagogue. He was never taught the ancient stories of the children of Israel and how God delivered them throughout history.

All Peter had was the assurance that Jesus was Lord and faith knowing that Jesus was who He said He was.

Though Peter called himself a disciple, he didn't exactly act like one when it came down to it.

When the time came for Jesus to be crucified, Peter denied who he was three times. It was the fear of man and being ashamed of Christ that he later realized was his biggest mistake.

Bible Verse

John 18:17 (The Passion Translation)

As he passed inside, the young servant girl guarding the gate took a look at Peter and said to him, "Aren't you one of his disciples?"

He denied it, saying, "No! I'm not!"

John 18:25-27

Meanwhile, Peter was still standing in the courtyard by the fire. And one of the guards standing there said to him, "Aren't you one of his disciples? I know you are!" Peter swore and said, "I am not his disciple!" But one of the servants of the high priest, a relative to the man whose ear Peter had cut off, looked at him and said, "Wait! Didn't I see you out there in the garden with Jesus?" Then Peter denied it the third time and said, "No!"—and at that very same moment, a rooster crowed nearby.

Application

Peter did whatever was necessary to preserve himself.

For Peter, it was to reject who he was and what his relationship was to Jesus so that he wouldn't get caught and put in jail.

Peter decided that his life was more important than it was to follow Jesus.

At this juncture in Peter's life, he was still void of the revelation of the love of Jesus.

Up until now, he was the most zealous, the one who would stand up for Jesus while

he was being accused and persecuted, the one who rebuked Jesus for the foretelling of His death.

Unfortunately, he could only follow Jesus up to a certain point where fear was more powerful than love.

The good news is the story of Peter's life did not end with disappointment .

I want to encourage everyone here today that your story does not end with disappointment! God wants to continue your story with hope and love. He wants to break you from limitations and old systems that have been kept you in bondage.

Your story is about to change.

Peter's life was drastically changed when he had an encounter with Jesus.

We begin in John 21, Peter and the disciples were out fishing when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection.

Bible Verse

John 21:1 – 17 (New Living Translation)

1Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. 2Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

3Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

4At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. 5He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

6Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

7Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. 8The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore.

9When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

10"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. 11So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

12"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13Then Jesus served them the

bread and the fish. 14 This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

15 After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

17 A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”

Application

I wanted to break down this particular passage because there is so much treasure locked up in here.

Up to this point, I would assume after Jesus resurrection, the disciples were probably wondering what they were going to do with their lives. They no longer had Jesus to follow. So, they went back to the one thing they knew how to do. They went fishing. As they were fishing and spent most of the day, into the night, with nothing to show for it, they are met by Jesus at dawn. They probably weren't aware it was Jesus since they couldn't accurately identify who it was that was talking to them from the shore. **Isn't it fitting that Jesus would meet them at dawn, after their darkest hour of suffering?**

But Jesus asks them in an affectionate and tender way, “Children, have you caught any fish?” **He doesn't address them as strangers.** He affectionately calls them children as a way of asking a child, “What do you have here?”, with the intention of fulfilling a need. With much disappointment, they tell Jesus they caught nothing.

Jesus was getting ready to perform a miracle for them.

So Jesus tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship. They do as instructed and to their astonishment, they catch 153 large fish.

For the number of disciples present, they were probably hoping to catch a few fish, enough for a meal.

But, Jesus gives them more than enough. He gives them an abundance because out of that, they could sell the fish in the market to exchange it for money to further their provision so it could last beyond their immediate need, but to fulfill more than what they needed.

Ephesians 3:20 (The Passion Translation)

Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream,

and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you.

Another sign and miracle is when their net didn't break. None of them were prepared to catch this many fish so they probably didn't think to check their net twice before they threw it into the sea. **But, in Jesus miraculous way, what should've been physically destroyed, He doesn't allow them to lose one fish.**

Christ manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do.

When their own ability and skills failed them, the power of Christ came in opportunely for their relief. **When we are most at a loss, Jehovah—jireh, "The Lord Will Provide", shows Himself strong.**

After witnessing what just happened, not one of the disciples needed to ask who this man was, because every one of them knew it was the Lord. **When Jesus manifests Himself with miracles, signs, and wonders, there is no question He is Lord.**

Jesus decides to take this opportunity to talk to Peter. The one who denied and rejected him on his way to be crucified.

I love how in one commentary, it says that **Jesus looks at Peter, face to face.** In His resurrected state, Jesus took the time to dine with Peter and then to speak with him intimately, face to face.

I can only imagine what Peter was feeling at this very moment. Perhaps he was feeling a sense of unworthiness. Maybe he felt ashamed for what he did to Jesus.

Maybe he was holding a lot of remorse and guilt.

At this very moment, Jesus opens up with a powerful statement. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas". He calls Simon by his birth name. It was a name Jesus once used in Matthew 16:17 to bless Simon.

"Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."

Jesus could've started the conversation with judgement. It could've sounded more like, "Peter, why did you reject me? Why did you deny me? Peter, you hypocrite, you sold out on me!"

Instead, Jesus starts his conversation with Peter by **calling him by name, an intimate gesture that was said with loving kindness.** You can even say that Jesus was restoring Peter by openly and publicly calling him out among the other disciples. Though Peter denied Jesus publicly, Jesus took the opportunity to set the record straight with Peter by allowing him to profess his love for Jesus publicly.

You see, Jesus does not come to shame or bring harsh judgement. With His loving kindness and tenderness, He brings light and truth so that we can be restored.

Then Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" Meaning, do you love me more than these disciples?

If you remember, Peter said in Matthew 26:33-35 (The Passion Translation),

Then Peter spoke up and said, “Even if all the rest lose their faith and fall away, I will still be beside you, Jesus!”

“Are you sure, Peter?” Jesus said. “In fact, before the rooster crows a few hours from now, you will have denied me three times.” Peter replied, “I absolutely will never deny you, even if I have to die with you!” And all the others said the same thing. Jesus was recalling the time Peter spoke up and said that he would never deny Jesus. He wanted Peter to be drawn to true repentance. Jesus didn’t intend to rub it in Peter’s face. It was quite the opposite. Peter responded and said, “Yes, Lord. You know I love you.”

Notice how Peter doesn’t respond with the same manner as he did during the Lord’s Supper where his response was boastful and filled with self-confidence. He tells Jesus he loves Him, not comparing himself to anyone else. It’s a true and sincere love Peter responds with.

I love how Jesus uses this kairos moment to his maximum advantage. We learned that kairos means the right, critical, or opportune moment. When we have a kairos moment, God maximizes every drop of that moment to make a significant impact.

So, here, we see Jesus not only lead Peter through repentance, but restores him, and commissions him ALL AT THE SAME TIME!

Jesus tells Peter, “Then feed my lambs.”

Jesus was commissioning Peter to take care of His most precious treasure, His lambs, who were purchased by his blood. He commissions Peter to feed the lambs, the newborns, the weak believers; to nourish, comfort, and strengthen them.

Nothing he looks upon as a firmer and clearer proof and evidence of love to him, than to feed these lambs of his, and take care of them.

The second time Jesus asks him, He no longer probes the issue whether or not Peter loves Him more than anything or anyone else. Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. And again, Peter responds, “Yes, Lord. You know I love you.”

This time Jesus tells him, “Then take care of my sheep.”

Jesus sets Peter into the office of a shepherd. These are the lost sheep of the house of Israel and his other sheep among the Gentiles.

The third and last time Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?”

At this point, Peter is saddened that Jesus would have to question Peter’s love for Him. But, Peter responds, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

It was as if Peter allowed Jesus to fully judge his heart to determine whether or not he truly loved Him. In the eyes of man, Peter was imperfect and didn’t deserve such forgiveness. But in the eyes of Jesus, Peter was fully restored, fully forgiven, and equipped to take his position as shepherd and apostle.

This is such a powerful lesson for all of us. **In the eyes of man, you may be forgiven, but not fully trusted. But when Jesus forgives you, He fully trusts you with his most valuable treasures.**

3. THE LOVE OF JESUS

Application

When Peter finally received forgiveness and the full revelation of the love of Jesus, he went out with such boldness, not driven by his own zeal this time, but led by the Holy Spirit.

We see in **Acts 2** that the Holy Spirit came in such power that many believers began to speak in other languages. Many couldn't believe that they were speaking native languages that others could understand. It drew such a crowd of people that some began to spread disbelief and say it was because they were drunk.

But here was a defining moment for Peter. **In verse 14, it says, Peter steps forward.**

No longer do we see Peter hide in the shadows, ashamed of being a follower of Christ. We no longer find Peter using his sin as a stumbling block. We see him use it as a stepping stone.

We see him boldly step forward. You see, **it started with him.**

Peter had to realize how he fell short and how much he had sinned. But, he also had to receive the love of Jesus that has the power to restore and reconcile.

As Peter stepped forward, he preached his very first message that pierced the heart for all who had an ear to hear.

The Bible says that those who believed were baptized and added to the church, about 3,000 in all.

In the beginning, I talked about how the church will be focusing on Evangelism in the third quarter.

A new Gallup report found that only half of Americans belong to a church, which is down from 69% two decades earlier. Some have concluded that the rise of technology and the ease of joining a community online has attributed to this decline. This is a negative trend because it removes the element of human connection which is vital in terms of support, friendship, and purpose.

Everyone is craving for connection and community. There is no perfect time to evangelize than now.

Evangelism is sharing the love of Jesus with others, wherever we go.

The key to sharing the love of Jesus to others is to receive His love for ourselves. It starts with me...you...us.

It's impossible to share something you don't have possession of. If you don't have food, you can't share it with someone. If you don't have money, you can't share it with someone. If you don't know the love of Jesus, you can't share it with someone.

If you're struggling within yourself and your mindset is that of deserved punishment and retribution, God wants you to be set free from that.

The death and resurrection of Jesus was enough to remove every bondage, every chain, every barrier, every constraint, every curse, every dark structure, every old mindset!

When the words says, "all things made new", it means your past, present, and future. Every aspect of who you are is transformed and changed.