

Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

April 18, 2010 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

“Do You Love Me?”

(Text: John 21:15-19)

Context: The Apostle John writes his Gospel with an emphasis upon the words of our Lord Jesus. In this portion of the Gospel account, we hear how the risen Lord Jesus appears to various followers. He appeared to several individuals, including Peter, on the first day that He arose from the dead. He appeared to all of the disciples later on that first day of the week. Now, more than eight days later, Jesus appeared on the beach and prepared breakfast for the working fishermen-disciples who were in their boat. When they spotted Jesus on the shore, John yelled, “It’s the Lord!” Peter, at once, grabbed his outer garment and jumped into the water to hurry and see the Lord. They were not far from the shore. The rest of the disciples came to shore in the boat. Like excited and awkward children, the disciples ate breakfast with the Lord, not saying anything. After breakfast Jesus addressed Peter, individually, with some direct words that were intended to demonstrate, for all of us, something quite important and quite remarkable.

I. The Shame, Guilt, And Sorrow Over Sin That Sinners Experience Can, Easily, Lead Them Into Despair.

- A. Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love (agape) Me more than these (referring to the other disciples)?
 - 1. Peter responded with, “Lord, You know that I have affection (phileo) for You.”
 - a. He, humbly, did not want to assert that he loved (with agape, the noble, selfless, and sacrificial love) the Lord with his track record.
 - 2. Jesus asked Peter again if he, Peter, loved (agape) Him.
 - a. Again, Peter responded in the same way, “Lord, You know that I have affection (phileo) for You.”
 - 3. When Jesus asked Peter the third time if he loved Him, He changed the word for love from “agape” to “phileo.”
 - a. This change of the word for love caused Peter to grieve and he realized that, indeed, he only had affection for Jesus and did not love (agape) Him. (His quite imperfect affection for Jesus had not stood the test.)
- B. These three questions from our Lord to Peter were very intentional and purposeful.
 - 1. The three questions touched each of the three denials of the Lord that Peter had made on the night when Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and then stood before Pilate.
 - a. The inner pain that came with the memory of each denial hurt Peter.
- C. Yet, the three statements of Jesus, “Feed My sheep,” “Shepherd My sheep,” and “Feed My sheep,” were revitalizing absolutions and re-commissionings for this sorrowing-over-his-sins disciple.

II. The Lord’s Compassion And Perfect Patience Can Lift Up The Worst Of Sinners And Restore Them Into Fellowship And Service In His Kingdom.

- A. Peter was reinstated by Jesus into his apostleship and entrusted with feeding and shepherding the Lord’s dearly loved sheep.
 - 1. Jesus uttered a prophecy regarding the way that Peter would die (verses 18-19) that illustrated just how devoted and strong Peter would become in his future Gospel ministry.
- B. The Apostle Paul persecuted the followers of “the Way” (Christians) before he became a believer and an apostle of Jesus who was sent to the Gentiles with the message of Christ-crucified for sinners.
 - 1. Paul, also, grieved over his sins of persecuting Christ’s followers.
 - 2. Paul pointed to the “perfect patience” of God that had rescued even him.
- C. God has found even us and chooses to use each and everyone of us in ministry.
 - 1. Do you recall your “weak moments” and various denials of Jesus, which cause you to grieve over your sins?
 - a. Be assured that those sins have been paid for! You are forgiven!
 - b. Now you, and I, can share this good word (Gospel) with others.
- D. God is still on the search for more rebellious souls who He will lead into sorrowing over their sins in order to be forgiven and then enlisted in the army of believers who are proclaiming the love of God for all in Christ Jesus.
 - a. This is our work, our mission, here at Saint Timothy Lutheran Church.
 - b. God will bless us in our reaching out with His love and compassion.