

96/58
J.M.

Scripture Lesson:- St. John 21: 15-22.

Text:- St. John 21: 15.

Introduction:- This is the question Jesus asked Peter at the sea of Galilee. The question usually has been interpreted to mean, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these six disciples who are here with you? Another student of the word of God renders it thus: "Simon, son of John, are you more devoted to me than you are to these things?"

The question resolves itself into, "Peter, do you love me more than material values?"

I.

A Return to Former Employment.

Several years before, Peter had been introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew and had become his follower. A little later Jesus had called him to be an Apostle. Peter had left his fishing business to answer this call. Since then he had been with Jesus, had heard his teaching, witnessed his miracles, and beheld his glory. He had confessed Jesus as the Messiah of God. When Jesus had made the announcement concerning his impending suffering and consequent death, Peter had protested most violently but later pledged his loyalty and devotion even to the point of death.

Event followed succeeding event in rapid and overwhelming succession. Peter, with the other ten, had deserted Jesus after a brief and ineffectual attempt at defense. Then Peter denied even a casual acquaintance with Jesus when confronted by humble questioners. Jesus had been arrested, raced through a mock

which was then carefully secured and guarded. But Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to to his followers.

Although Peter had bitterly wept because of his unfaithfulness and Jesus had specially appeared to him, he was burdened with a withering sense of failure, shame and guilt. In the hour of severe trial he had made a sorry mess of things. The future was dark and uncertain. Restless, impulsive man that he was, he could not bear to sit still for weeks doing nothing. What was he to do. It did not take him long to make up his mind. "I am going fishing!" That meant going back to his former employment which he had left when he answered Christ's call.

What is a young man to do when he is shatteringly disillusioned? When one is completely discouraged with respect to his calling and thoroughly disgusted with himself because of dismal failure, is this not the most logical course of action?

II.

It is in this state that Jesus found Peter. He was questioning himself. Should he go back to the old calling? Jesus faced Peter with these words. "Peter, what will it be: Christ things? Peter had come to his hour of decision. He must decide - once for all - what would he do. The alternatives were clear. The choices between material concerns and spiritual values, between making a living and making a life, between the business of catching fish and the vocation of winning men.

This is an hour that comes to all who hear Christ's call for service. It came to your minister when he had to decide to stay in the gospel ministry, or enter some other employment. It comes to young men and women who, in the deepest recesses of their hearts, hear the call

their shoulders. Then, they must decide whether they will follow secular pursuits with the most attractive stipends and the promise of position and security; or whether, at any cost, they will answer his call to special service in the Kingdom. The hour of decision comes to all who would live the Christian life. All must choose whether they will be devoted to Christ or material things.

Three times the question came from the lips of Jesus. It probed very deeply. Peter felt hurt. It seemed as though Jesus was doubting the sincerity of his profession of attachment and human affection. But had Peter not denied Christ thrice? Then it should not be too much to confess him that many times now. But there was more intent and purpose in the thrice repeated question than at first appears.

Jesus had a three-fold task for Peter. He was to feed lambs, tend and feed sheep. There is some support, however, slight, in ancient manuscripts for the interpretation that Jesus here meant the nurture of children, the tending of youth, and the caring for the aged. But whether or not this is involved in the words of Jesus at this point is immaterial. The specific responsibility of Christ's church is to every age-group.

Jesus was here telling Peter, "If you love me, I have a job for you! If we declare our love and devotion to Christ the same demand is made of us.

Conclusion: - Jesus pressed the issue. The time to make the decision is now. Facing Peter Jesus said, "Follow me!"

How human Peter was! He tried to postpone the decision by dragging John into the picture. Jesus replied with greater vehemence by placing the issue on a purely and intensely personal basis - "What is that to thee? Follow thou me!" When a person faces his moment of decision

Our happiness, our usefulness, our success in life, our very future hinges upon our response to Christ's call. Nothing but a complete surrender to His will and purpose for our life, nothing but a burning of all bridges behind us will suffice. Delay can be, refusal will be, tragic. Place ~~Christ~~ first in your life, NOW.

Scripture Texts:-

Mark 1: 15.	Matthew 26: 33
Mark 1: 16, 17.	Matthew 26: 34
Mark 1: 19.	Matthew 26: 35
Mark 1: 20.	Matthew 26: 69
Mark 1: 21	Matthew 26: 70.
Mark 1: 22.	
Mark 1: 23	