

## Jesus' Loving Interest in You

Elder Randy Slak

Read John 20:19-29

The Apostle John by all standards is the author of the Gospel his name is attached to, he also is the author of the three epistles that bear his name, and also the last book of our Bible by the name of Revelation. Roughly his writings account for 5% or so of the New Testament. He is referred to by himself as the Apostle Jesus loved, in chapter 21:20 and 24 of the gospel. John and his older brother James were often together, often fishing with their father Zebedee, as Jesus after calling Simon Peter and his brother Andrew to follow Him, Jesus saw these two brothers fishing also, and called them to follow Him. Jesus makes a most personal call to them to follow Him, and He will make them fishers of men. No qualifications are said to have been needed by these men to follow Jesus. Salome is said to have been John and James' mother. James and John were given the names, "The Sons of Thunder", by Jesus Himself in Mark 3:17. These two disciples are always listed right behind Peter whenever the list of Apostles' are mentioned in the Gospels. Why this name the sons of thunder? We are not told, but it could have something to do with their speech, tempers, or ambition. John is the Apostle who wrote more of our Bible than any other, only less than Luke or Paul. John has not always appeared to us as the Apostle of love that we see him come to be by the end of his writings, just as we are not mature in the faith after the first few days we began walking with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Mark 9 we see the inner circle of Christ's, Peter, James, and John walking up the mountain and seeing Christ transfigured and hear the voice of God. And then shortly afterward, talking with the other Apostles about which one of them was the greatest. Jesus knows it and asks what their discussion was about. Jesus calmly sits them all down and says, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." John's only audible words that are recorded for us come moments later when he says, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." Jesus says, "Not to hinder him, for he who is not against us is for us." John is learning, he is growing. Also in Luke 9, as Jesus gives them instructions to make arrangements for Him, in the village of the Samaritans, but the Samaritans did not receive Him, and when James and John saw this they asked, "Lord do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Jesus rebukes them, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." John is learning, becoming more like his Master wants him to be. But by the time we get to the cross, the crucifixion scene, from the cross Jesus says, to His mother Mary, "Woman, behold your son, and to John, behold your mother." From that hour John took Mary into his own household. Jesus picks John from all other possible choices to take care of his own beloved mother. This is a gospel of showing God is completely sovereign, that He is infinitely wise, and He is perfect in love. A very evangelistic message throughout this Gospel. Heavy on doctrine and theology, it shows the deity of Christ multiple times over, that Jesus is truly God and man, all of the time, unlike the Gnostics of the day believing He weaved in and out of both. John records no parables of Jesus, he records only seven miracles, five of which are not listed elsewhere. And John accentuates the human qualities of Jesus, as pain, as hunger, as thirst, etc.

And the Apostle Paul mentions John, James, and Peter in Gal.2:9, these three he refers to as pillars, they gave a pledge of agreement and support of Paul. John is an eyewitness of what he writes of. He has heard,

he has seen, he has looked at, and has touched with his hands these things that pertain to the Word of Life. And he has proclaimed these things to us so that we may fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and that through what is written that our joy may be made complete. John shares much with us in the Gospel he writes of things concerning the Father, things concerning the Son Jesus Christ, and things concerning the Holy Spirit, and as we head to the last chapter today, chapter 21, I would like to share three things today that our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ shares of His interest in us today. we will see:

1)Jesus' loving interest in His disciples' dependency on Him

2)Jesus' loving interest in His disciples love for Him

3)Jesus' loving interest in His disciples following Him

### **Jesus' loving interest in His disciples' dependency on Him**

Reading and seeing Jesus' first and second revealing or manifesting Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, we see here a third one. Read **John 21:1**. We are introduced to a little band of believers on the beach of the Sea of Tiberias, or Sea of Galilee as it can go by both names as shown us in John 6:1. John now goes on to finish the last chapter of the gospel by adding this third manifestation. At the end of chapter 20, it would appear as though he was finished writing, but there is a little left to say, write, and report for our edification. Read **John 21:2**. We have seven people listed here. They were again altogether, as they have been for some time now. Fellowship with other believers is also that with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. These are indeed birds of a feather, they will always flock together. Where you see one disciple, there will always be more with him. They will show the world that they will always be united with Him, and also always be united with one another. These seven disciples were all picked out by the Master, even before the foundation of the world, 1Thess.5:9, "For God has not destined them to suffer wrath but obtaining salvation through their Lord Jesus Christ." Here again for the last time, much like the first, Jesus meets them at the beach, some three short years ago. Nearby on the other side of the lake on a grassy hill they were part of feeding thousands with very little food to begin with, there was the day on that steep slope that the devil-possessed swine ran down, and behind them the road that leads up to the hill to Cana of Galilee. Fishers of men is who these here were called to be. Again, today they will receive all they need to carry on as Jesus will soon depart from them, instruction, encouragement, love, exhortation, and guidance will all be given out to help them in the future. Let's look at this little band of believers a little closer. This is a cool bunch. **A)** Mentioned first is Simon Peter. Add Dad's comment. Here his name is mentioned first in a group of disciples. We all remember the public transgression he committed not long ago, one he wept bitterly about. We can empathize with him, can't we? Though he was a denier, the Master did not disqualify him from allowing him to continue to serve Him. Peter may be a bit impulsive, a bit impetuous, a bit too ready to do more than he said, yielding himself up to the impulse of the moment. But he has shined before, and he will shine again, more on him in point two later. **B)** Then we have Thomas, called Didymus, the twin, is now mentioned. First one listed was a denier, the second listed was a doubter. Thomas is slow, ready to say more than he meant, looking at the gloomy side, (Let us go up and die with him, John 11:16) Though he doubted the resurrection, until he touched the nail scarred hands

and put his hand into Christ's side, he wouldn't believe. Oh, but he publicly proclaimed before all the apostles the divinity of Jesus Christ as he proclaims, "My Lord and my God." **C)** Next, we have Nathanael of Cana in Galilee. But before we go to him, two things we can learn already; We must with open hearts and hands welcome back repentant sinners. A sure 70 times 7 principle. And that Jesus condescends, lowers Himself to manifest or reveal Himself to humble repentant sinners, He does not avoid them, He does not forget them, nor does He forsake them. Alexander MacLaren, "The little group was glad to have them, and welcomed them, as it becomes us to welcome brethren who have fallen, who come again saying, I repent." Nathanael, only twice we see him with Jesus. Here and under the fig tree, how does Jesus know him, he thought to himself, and Jesus says, "You will see greater things than these." He is a different follower of Jesus than the first two, one who is persistent, quiet, and continually growing in grace. I like Nathanael! **D)** Then we have the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. Jesus gave them the name the sons of thunder. He knows all of us and what we are like, maybe the reason He gives them this name, they were eager, energetic, not unwilling to invoke destructive vengeance, all out of love for Him. (Luke 9:54) (Later) They are the ones who want to be from their human ambition, and have a desire to sit one on His left, and one on His right in the Kingdom, again showing love toward Him. James loved Him so and was to become the first of the Apostles martyred, and John would go on to live a long life and be referred to be called the Apostle of love. And lastly, we have two others. **E)** Who are these two others, Philip, Andrew, no one knows for sure, maybe not worth mentioning anyway. But there is a lesson here about these two unnamed disciples. Alexander MacLaren says, "There is a place for common place, undistinguished people, whose names are not worth repeating in any record, there is a place for us one-talented folk in Christ's church, and we too, and have a share in the manifestation of His love. Undistinguished disciples have place in His heart, a sphere and function in His church, and a share in His revelation of Himself." **Read 21:3** Peter says I am going fishing. John and the rest of this little group agree and go with him. They went to Galilee as Jesus earlier instructed them to do. Peter wanted to get back to work until Jesus chose to come. It was sensible and the right thing to do. The best place to be found by Him until His providence discloses itself to us is about our daily work. Even if it is a secular, small, dirty, wet fishing boat, with plenty of slimy scales. It was the right place to be and the right thing to do for this little group I believe. You all might remember before the crucifixion in Luke 10:4, "Carry no money belt, bag, or sandals," they were absolved from some of these common tasks. But now afterward from the crucifixion, in Luke 22:36, Jesus says, "Take a money belt, bag, etc." Now they are under obligation to Him their Master to work, idleness remember is the devil's workshop, if a man doesn't work, neither let him eat. 1Thess.4:12, Make it your ambition... Alexander MacLaren states, "No shirking of daily tasks on the plea of wanting divine communications, keep at your work, and if it last all night, stick to it, and if there are no fish in the net, never mind, out with it again, and to be sure, sooner or later, you will see Him standing on the beach, and hear His voice, and be blessed by His smile."

**Read John 21:4-14** Here our Risen Lord on the seashore shares in the toil of His servants on the restless sea. It is a wise thing to stick with the drudgery, mundane, day after day common tasks. It is a good remedy and medicine to see us through good times and bad. We have seen this fishing scene before, haven't we? Luke 5 shows us an all-night effort and again nothing to show for it, but tired and aching backs and arm muscles. Jesus says, "Let down your nets for a catch, and the nets begin to break,

enough to fill both boats, Peter says to Jesus, "Go away from me for I am a sinful man." But now this time, with having the same overnight outcome, and again a voice says, "to cast the nets on the right-hand side of the boat, and a catch of 153 is netted, and now knowing he is forgiven, jumps into the sea and heads to shore, knowing that it was the Lord. Who else could it be? Jesus calls them children, and says to them, "You do not have any fish do you? As with life, we cannot always expect that our nets will always come back full. Most likely, we will send them out again and again, so too our Christian walk will at times be seen as apparently shown as to having no direct results. But if we stay consistent, diligent, and follow our Master's instructions obediently, we will one day see our labors were not in vain. We sow in tears; we reap in joy. (Psalm 126:5) We clearly see Jesus taking an interest in these seven poor men's lack of success fishing, He cares enough to know if their old ragged nets have yielded up any fish or if they are still empty. This surely teaches us, that that which interests us is not without interest to Christ. Charles Spurgeon comments, "How comprehensive is the love of Jesus. There is no part of His people's interests that He does not consider, and there is nothing that concerns their welfare which is not important to Him. Jesus cares about your meaner affairs. The breadth of His tender love, is such that you may resort to Him in all matters, for in all your afflictions, He is afflicted, and like as a father pitieth his children, so doth He pity you."

As Jesus showed them the inadequacy of feeding thousands with five loaves and two fish, they answered Christ no, admitting their failure to catch even a single fish, knowingly needing to learn to continue to stake their utter dependence upon Him, for without Him they can do nothing. So, they bring their large catch of 153 fish to shore. Alexander MacLaren states, "They are coming on shore after a night's hard toil, they will be faint and weary, let Me feed their bodies before I deal with their hearts and spirits. Their works that He will help them accomplish, will not be forgotten, will not be left on earth, and will not be kept in the grave." Our scriptures show us our works are not in vain, will not be forgotten, and will follow with us to heaven. Rev.14:13, says just that and Heb.6:10, "He is not so unjust as to forget our works and love that we have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints."

## **Point #2 Jesus's loving interest in His disciples love for Him**

A) It is significant and beautiful that the only thing that Jesus Christ cares about to ask here is about the sinner's love. Peter in this case, but we all have a part in this. It applies to us too. Jesus knows that if He has the heart, the rest will follow. He does not ask Peter if he is sorry for what he did, or does he promise to not do it again. No, No, No. We always see a superior love for us from Christ, Peter will show with his response a slightly inferior love toward Him. More on this shortly. Great English Puritan John Durant states, from his book called *Discovering the Glorious love of Christ*, "Love is the commanding affection of the soul, consisting in the expansion of the soul, consisting in the expansion of the heart as it moves towards a person or thing, in hopes and workings for it's good. If love is only in the lips, it is without life, and may be suspected as counterfeit. But when men not only speak but act love, then love lives and is demonstrated to be love indeed. Where love is in truth, it will be seen in act."

B) Jesus says to Peter after they finished breakfast, Simon Son of John, do you love Me more than these? He refers to Peter by his name prior to his apostleship as at the time they first met. His first name meant

pebble, a light, unstable thing, now to be Peter which meant rock, a solid, courageous person. The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, Jesus uses the Greek word for love (agapou), verb, from agape, a most superior love. Peter answers these two questions with another Greek word for love (phileo), a more inferior love. The third time Jesus comes around, He uses the word phileo, and Peter uses the word phileo again as well as his response. So, you could say that Jesus concludes like this, if you give Me the lesser, inferior love, it is ok. I will educate and bring you up to the greater, superior love, that which He most desires from Peter. You ask, why the same question three times? Most would agree due to the three times that Peter denied His Master, kind of like having the twelve baskets of fish/loaf baskets left over for twelve apostles. A public transgression deserves a public confession and promotes a public profession. Peter's faith, though sifted as wheat by Satan, though it did not fail because Christ paid for him, and was exhorted by Christ in Luke 22:32, that now he should go strengthen His brethren, these, the lambs and sheep.

C) Lastly, let us be able to say to Christ always as Peter did, "Lord you know all things, You know I love You."

### **Point #3 Jesus's loving interest in having His disciples follow Him**

**Read John 21:18-22** Jesus continues to speak to Peter with truly, truly, in the Greek, Amen, Amen, Yes, Yes, to be sure, to be sure. To gird is to gird oneself for action. It implies independence, self-reliance, it was what Peter did when he was younger, but when he is up in age, someone else will gird him and bring him to a place he will not wish to go. This is a picture of Peter, a prophecy of how Peter will be a martyr. Did Peter understand all that will happen, we don't know. But by Peter's response to Jesus about John's future, in the next two verses, we can only surmise Peter knew it would not be an easy, comfortable finish to his life on earth. Peter may have had an attitude of acquiescence about himself here. Simply put, acquiescence is a reluctant acceptance of something without protest. Do we yield to those divine commands from our Lord and Master, and say, "I must, because I ought, and therefore, I will." John Newton said, "I am not what I want to be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what one day I will be, but I am not what I was, and by the grace of God, I am what I am." Jesus says to Peter, "follow Me," after that last prophetic comment. Two things Peter must excel at, submission to His authority, and imitation of His example. It won't be easy, but Jesus will not ask Peter to do anything more than He has done already for Peter. The cost to pay as it will for Peter may cost us greatly, but we need to choose to keep close to Him. I think you may have a question that Alexander MacLaren will answer for us. He states, "So what business has Jesus Christ to demand that a man should go after Him to the death? Only this business, that He has gone to the death for the man!" Oh, you have a bright, blessed, beautifully hopeful future if you follow Him. And so, Peter asks this question, to Jesus, what about this man? And Jesus answers, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." God is sovereign, do you see? He lays out our lives, each and every detail, for each and every day, each and every one of us is different. But we will finish the course, "He who began a good work in you, will continue to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Remember the hymn, Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because He lives, Peter will stretch out his hands and be martyred, and because He lives, John can face and endure his exile to the island of Patmos, and because He lives you and I can face and endure the toils, troubles, temptations, and

tribulations that we will face in our lifetime. Alexander MacLaren states, on Peter's death as a martyr to come, "Peter is shut up in prison and delivered once, at the very last moment, when hope was almost dead in order that he might understand that when he was put into another prison, and not delivered, the blow of martyrdom fell upon him, not because of the strength of the persecutors, but because of the will of his Lord. "If it be Christ, for me to live, it can also be, it can be gain for me to die. Though we are a bit uncertain of what the Lord has planned in the future for us, we could say as John may have said after hearing Jesus' words to Peter, "I do not know, and it doesn't much matter to me, if I am to go to find Him, great, if He comes to find me, great again. Whatever it might be, I know that a patient tarrying/waiting here will lead to a more becoming like Him, so I leave it in His hands. I will close with a true story as told by D.A. Carson,

He was sent by his mission to Bolivia as a missionary. He was about 6'4", skinny as a bean pole. Went down there single, to learn the language, and well, eventually met a single missionary woman and were married. At the time this story begins their little daughter was three and a half years old. The mission decided to send him back to Trinity to do a PHD in New Testament in order to better prepare pastors and up the level of training down there. Six months into this PHD study, his wife was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. He withdrew from the program. He had family in the Twin Cities and elsewhere and his home church helped in giving him much support. She went through chemo and a double mastectomy. It was a miserable year. At the end of it he came back and continued with his PHD. Six months later he was diagnosed with advanced stomach cancer. Although there are a lot of good cancer hospitals in Chicago, none of them would touch him. They recommended hospice care. The mission decided to send him up to the Mayo Clinic. They said, "We are not going to guarantee anything, but would start him on drugs that were really designed for abdominal cancer. After about 6 months, he lost a lot of weight and had to eat every 3-4 hours because he only had about one tenth of a stomach. But he came back and continued his program, another 6 months passed, and his wife's cancer came back, and... she died. Some time passed, and he came back again and finished his PHD before he returned to his beloved Bolivia with his nine- and one-half year old daughter. He spoke in our church and his 40 minutes were taken up with expression for nothing more than thanking God for His goodness and grace. He was giving testimony for all the kindness that was shown him, for the love his parents displayed to him, for the love showed him by them at the Divinity school, for the medical assistance they had received, and for the gift of the real hope that he would see his wife again. That the Lord spared him to still serve alongside his nine and a half year old daughter. He spent the whole time in gratitude. Carson ends," And I want to tell you that is simply normal Christian leaving, anything less is abnormal. Believers in Christ, whether your life will be taken and ended by martyrdom, whether your life will be taken and ended by some disease, or whether your life will be taken and ended by old age, remember this, "That your Lord and Master Jesus Christ has prepared as good a house for you as for Himself, and along with the Father, desires that you should come into His house, and dwell with Him there,...FOREVER!

