



¹⁵ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my lambs.* ¹⁶ He saith to him again the second time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.* ¹⁷ He saith unto him the third time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, *Lovest thou me?* And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.* ¹⁸ *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.* ¹⁹ This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, *Follow me.* ²⁰ Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? ²¹ Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? ²² Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* ²³ Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* ²⁴ This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. (John 21:15-25)

After a feast of fish and bread - the third such feast (the first being the 5,000 of John 6 and the other three Gospels, and the 4,000 of Matthew 14 and the Gospel of Mark), the disciples have another feast by the Sea - a feast of love and Communion. It is interesting to note that these three feasts of bread and fish happened by the shores of Galilee or the adjacent mountain.

Now you will remember that Peter was aggrieved at having denied our Lord three times ere the cock crew on the night of our Lord's betrayal. *But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is*

a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, *Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:56-62) We would be perfectly justified in supposing Peter wept bitterly those three days until he knew of the Lord's resurrection. What a stinging embarrassment and self-disappointment to be looked upon by our Lord in that third denial!

Our Lord, even at the Garden Tomb, was aware of Peter's shame and hurt. Therefore, upon His resurrection, do you remember what the great angel said to the women at the Garden Tomb? *But go your way, tell his disciples AND PETER that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.* (Mark 16:7) Peter was the only disciple mentioned by name since our Lord desired that Peter be especially informed to alleviate Peter's great grief. And thus, we find Peter fishing on the Sea of Galilee with the other disciples on this beautiful Spring morning. After directing them in the catching of a great draught of fish, our Lord has prepared a breakfast of fish and bread for the disciples - but instructs them to bring their own fish as well. Fish and bread is not an unusual breakfast - at least not at my mother's table. On Sunday mornings we often had flour-battered, fried fish with biscuits. I can taste them yet!

Jesus is well aware of Peter's grief and guilt at his denial of our Lord three nights earlier. He wishes to relieve Peter of that guilt but, before that is possible, Peter must be made fully aware of it and repent. Repentance and forgiveness is an act of mercy on the part of God. He allows the repentance so that grace and mercy may wash away the guilt. So, immediately after dining, the Lord turns to Peter and says, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* In order to grasp the depth and magnitude of the following exchange between Peter and the Lord, we must address the finely nuanced terms used by both in addressing the subject of love. In His first two questions, Jesus uses the Greek term *agapao* for *lovest thou me*. *Agapao* is an exalted kind of love that is reverential and perfect. It is the kind of love with which Jesus loves us. When Martha and Mary of Bethany sent word to Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, the message was, *Lord, the one whom thou lovest (agapao) is sick.* When Jesus asks Peter *lovest (agapao) thou me?* Peter answers with a different verb all three times. That word Peter used for love was the Greek *phileo* which means a fondness, or brotherly love such as that brotherly love that typifies the modern Philadelphia. (*__~) The last time our Lord asks Peter, *Lovest thou me* He resorts to the same verb that Peter used. It was, perhaps, an acknowledgement on the part of our Lord that feeble man is unable to love with that same *agapao* kind of love with which our Lord loves us.

It is true if we love the Lord, we will certainly feed His sheep - each of them with which we come into knowledge of. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.* Often the Lord questions us and gives commands which escape our understanding. This is the present case with Peter in the text. Peter seems to be a bit frustrated at the repetition of the Lord's question: *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* The second time, Peter responds, *Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.* It is true the Lord already knew that Peter loved Him, just as Jesus knew Peter would deny Him thrice before the cock crew that fateful night. But, so far, Peter is oblivious to the hidden meaning in the Lord's line of questioning.

So on the third repetition of the question, the Lord uses a verb for love that is on Peter's level of love. The love of Christ had weathered the storms and torture of that night of betrayal, but Peter's had failed miserably. So, at last, when Christ asked the third time using the lower standard of love, Peter's eyes were opened. Peter's mind raced back to that scene at the courtyard of Caiaphas at which he had denied the Lord thrice. Bingo! After this event, there is no record of Peter ever failing of courage and faith again. In fact, he demonstrates inhuman Apostolic courage throughout his ministry. *18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.* *19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

The Lord then tenderly relates to Peter the manner of his death. Our Lord knew Peter long before Peter knew the Lord. He knew him when he was a child at his mother's knee. He knew him when he was a young and carefree boy going and doing whatever his youthful spirit opted. But the day will come, Peter, when your freedom of movement will be restricted by bonds. You will no longer dress in your raiment of choice, but other hands will dress you and carry you to the place of your own cross. Yes, we follow Christ today, and we will follow Him to, and thru, the cross. But we shall also follow in the glorious resurrection. Christ knows our future as well as our past.

In the next verse, there is a stark difference of personality, though not commitment, represented between the Apostle John and Peter. John is much younger and tender of heart. Peter is brash and impulsive. *20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? That disciple whom Jesus loved and who asked our Lord at the Last supper, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter remembers the close affinity of John to the Lord and is somewhat jealous. Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Of what concern is it to a private soldier what duties another private soldier will be assigned by the commander? We are simply to perform those duties assigned to us without question or waver. Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* We do not question the calling of others. We shall have enough to occupy our souls in our response to our own calling under God.*

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. I love John and, if you love the Lord, you are well advised to love John, too, for the Lord loved John with a special love - just as He loves all of His Children and Elect. Again, John advises us of the enormity of the works of God and of the only Begotten of the Father, Jesus Christ, which are not capable of being contained in the combined libraries of the world. It is quite appropriate that the word AMEN seals his Gospel and his Revelation at the end.