



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)

In completing today's devotional in the Gospel of St John, we come to a glorious sunset on the Gospels – a sunset that gathers all the beauty and color of Christ into one intimate moment with His disciples – and with us. The Gospel of John is my favorite book out of all the other sixty-five books of the Bible and, although they are all equally important in expressing a vital message to us, I nonetheless feel so warmed and strengthened in reading John's accounts of these remarkable titles: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (1:1), *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* (1:29), *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory.* (2:11), *Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.* (2:16), *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night.* (3:1-2), *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (3:8), *And he must needs go through Samaria.* (4:4), *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.* (4:7), *Rise,*

take up thy bed, and walk. (5:8), *The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*(5:25), *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea.* (6:18-19), *I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* (6:35), *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst.*(8:3), *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*(8:12), and the fountain of beautiful stones continues flowing throughout the remainder of John's Gospel. I ambitiously believed that I could summarize the beauty in less verses, but see that I cannot for the book is too full –so, I fell short of my purpose.

Though John closes with a sunset of glorious beauty and truth, we are sure to have the privilege to revisit the Day Star and Son of Righteousness at any moment simply by opening our Bibles and learning of Him! The great glory of a sunset is that the Sun must set ere we can witness an even more brilliant dawn and Sunrise.

Though today's text is about all of the disciples, including you and me – it is more centered on that one disciple most grieved by his renunciation of Christ and whose guilt bears down upon his shoulders like a huge and powerful stone. He boasted of going the distance with Christ, but Peter had fallen asleep thrice in the Garden the night of Jesus' betrayal, and it was Peter who conspicuously denied the Lord of Heaven three times during the night of Christ's mock trial. You will recall on the last denial, the cock crew as Christ had prophesied, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. *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 crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* (Luke 22:60-62) Can you imagine those tears of grief shed by Peter? Do you believe Peter wept only briefly and felt restored? I think not! Peter dwelt upon his denials for the three days that Christ was in the Tomb, and all of the following week, before seeing the Lord on the Shores of Galilee. There was a dark and heavy stone in Peter's heart that had not yet been rolled away. Do you know that when we wound the Lord grievously that His love is constant still? The Lord made a special provision for Peter in the Angel's message at the open Tomb: *And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 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 16:5-7) Did you note, fellow lovers of God, that the Angel tells them to carry the message to Peter in particular. Why? Because Christ wanted Peter to know that He remembered him in love, and held a special regard for his hurt.

Peter and the other disciples have come to the shoreline of the tranquil Sea of Galilee for a breakfast of the Lord's own preparing. As they sit and eat, Peter may have felt a guilt that prevented his looking into the eyes of the Lord whom he loved. 15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? "Do you love me, Peter, not simply with a brotherly love as you feel for your true friends and brothers, but with a greater love of sacrifice and care for the Good Shepherd of the Sheep?" It is apparent that Peter knew not where such a question was leading, but it certainly was a leading question. He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. It is impossible to love the Shepherd without, at the same time, loving the little lambs for whom He gave His life. Do we, friends?

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. Peter may be a bit perplexed at the repetitive question, but he answers Christ in

the spirit of knowing that nothing is hidden from the Lord. It must be pointed out here that lambs who are well-fed will become grown sheep. For the Christian life to be full of beauty and service, it is important that we reach the little children for Christ so that they may become grown children for Christ.

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.* Yes, Peter was grieved the third time Jesus asked this question for the memories flooded his soul of his third denial outside the court of the High Priest. But, in spite of Peter's weakness, he KNEW that Christ could see his heart full of love for Him.

You will note in the three questions addressed to Peter, the Lord did not refer to the disciple's title in the same manner as He did in Matthew 16:18 (*Thou art Peter*) – a Stone of the Rock of Israel. I believe Christ did not annul that title; He only withheld its use due to the need for Peter to be reconciled and fully converted.

18 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.* This statement reveals that Peter, being fully converted, will indeed do that which he boasted of doing earlier before his courage failed him. *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.* (Luke 22:32-34) Peter's mind was attentive to every Word now that flows from the lips of Christ. He knew, deep in his grieving heart, that Christ had forgiven him and extended the honor for Peter to die a like death as his Lord. Peter will die the same death, and drink from the same Cup, as our dear Lord and Savior. 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?* We are often no sooner restored to our favored place in Christ than the devil sets into our hearts a bit of covetousness or greed. Peter is following Christ to a place apart from the others who are gathered around the fire when he glances back and sees following that one disciple that love compels to follow Jesus regardless the summons. Though humility restrains him from mentioning his own name in the Gospel he records, I will tell it – it is John, and I love him for his humility and love!

21 *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?* Peter knows that Christ has forgiven his failures and restored him as an apostle, but he also knows of the special measure of love the Lord holds for the younger John. Peter, out of a tinge of jealousy, asked if this man perhaps will be as blessed as Peter is with Christ. "What shall HE do?" Such a question is not pleasing to our Lord. None are worthy of their calling (me very assuredly most of all). But when God calls us to a service, He will enable us to perform it. If, in the heat of battle, a field commander orders a battalion forward to the line of battle, it would be most inappropriate for that battalion commander so ordered to ask, "But what of the 3rd Battalion? What will they do?" What another battalion, or officer, will do under command of the Field Commander is of no concern to the one receiving orders. His only duty is to obey the order addressed to him. What God has commanded of you will fill your plate enough without concerning yourself over the calling of another. 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? We learn from this last verse that we are not to read meaning into the Words of Christ which does not exist. God's Word is simple, and direct, and needs no addition of meaning by our feeble hands.

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. All who know Christ, then and now, know of the veracity of this testimony given in the Gospel of St John and recorded by the very hand of John. It is very important to be a Bible scholar and to learn the words and meaning of scripture diligently, but it is even more important to know that the testimony of God's Word is true and above question.

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. As we admitted in the devotion for John 20, the books, banks, mines, and seas of the world could never hold all of the works of Christ as Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and Lord. He created the seas, the dry land, the vegetation, the animal life, and you and me. He created the Sun, Moon, and Stars. His works precede, and will succeed, the Creation in Eternity. Is it improbable that man could ever account for all of these mysteries and sciences put into play by the same Finger that wrote upon the sands outside the Temple when a woman taken in adultery was maliciously brought to Christ?

John concludes His Gospel with his customary 'Amen' with which he concludes most of his other writings. Have we said AMEN to all that God has said? Have we read and studied His whole Counsel to us? If we would have more of the Light of the World, we must read for effect so that the Holy Ghost will have something wherewith to REMIND us. A flashlight needs a casing and a light bulb (the WORD), but it also needs the battery (Holy Ghost) to make the Light (Christ) of the bulb fully illumine our hearts. Have you done, friend?