

## Given

**John 21:15-25; Luke 24:13-35**

Online Sermon:

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When the Son of Man returns in His glory who amongst us does not want to be placed at His right side and acknowledged as one of His sheep (Matthew 25:31-46)? Whom amongst us does not dream of one day sitting at the Master's table during the great banquet in heaven (Luke 14:15-24)? While we



While we acknowledge that our works can't buy us a seat at His table (Ephesians 2:8-9), isn't our faith shown to be alive through our deeds (James 2:18)? One of the signs that we are saved by grace through

faith is the love we express toward one another (John 13:35). Christ's love as demonstrated on the cross compels us to no longer live for ourselves but to put the needs of others above even that of our own (2 Corinthians 5:14)! To avoid the guilt of neglecting the hungry or thirsty, our eyes must be open to the needs of others, especially those we may deem as the least in His kingdom. This aligns with the principle that true faith is accompanied by actions reflecting God's love and grace.

Turning away from selfish ambition and the constant inward focus on our needs, goals, and desires to serve others is undoubtedly a challenging task. Even in North America, where many have more than they truly need, there are unfortunately still numerous individuals with emotional, financial, social, and health needs that are genuinely heart-wrenching to witness.



What will it take for those in God's family to see and respond to these needs? As bearers of the image of

Christ, who sacrificed Himself for them (Hebrews 9:27-29), what would it take for us to see them as infinitely valuable to the Lord so much so that we set aside our busy schedules to extend the same comfort we have received in our troubles from the Good Shepherd (2 Corinthians 1:1-7)? Despite our ordinariness, are not the cups of cold water we offer in Jesus' name (Matthew 10:42) a reflection of blessings received that are joyfully shared? And what would it take for us to see that our good deeds serve not only as a powerful testimony of the love we've received from the Master but also as the exclusive means to store eternal treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-24)? Today's sermon will delve into how to be the sheep whom Christ commends as good and faithful servants, recognizing the importance of sharing His love with others.

## Given out of Love for Jesus

After Peter called down curses and swore that he did not know Jesus he went outside the courtyard and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). It's perplexing to consider how the one Christ deemed the rock on which He would build His church, and a key disciple, could fail so miserably (Matthew 16:17-20). Indeed, Christ's prediction was accurate; Peter's focus that night was more on "human concerns" (Matthew 16:23) than on keeping his



promise to "lay down his life for Christ" (John 13:37). Despite Peter's initial denial, he later encountered the risen Christ individually (Luke 24:34) and likely

witnessed the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples (John 20:19-23), including Thomas putting his hands in Jesus' scars. Nevertheless, the weight of his denial left Peter so broken that he decided to return to his previous occupation of fishing. In John 21, we learn that Peter, accompanied by Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, went fishing one night but caught nothing. Peter, feeling like a failure even in his former profession, struggled to haul in any fish. The turning point occurred in the morning when Christ instructed the disciples to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. Following His guidance, they caught an abundance of fish, so

many that they couldn't haul in their nets due to the sheer quantity (John 21:6).

This event served as a significant moment of redemption and restoration for Peter not because he caught a lot of fish but due to Christ's transformative love and grace. Corresponding to his threefold denial, Christ asked Peter three times if he loved Him! Upon the third time Peter became hurt for the implication of the question resonated deeply within his broken heart! Having denied Christ three times Peter assumed that his sin had disqualified him from his calling to be "sent out to fish for people"



(Matthew 4:19) but he was wrong for Christ was not looking for a sinless man like Himself to serve in His

kingdom but a confessing, passionate man who put His Lord, Savior, and King above everything and everyone else! Those who are born again of the water and Spirit (John 3:5) are invited to use their spiritual gifts to accomplish the divine tasks they have been assigned (1 Corinthians 12). To serve in God's kingdom and wrestle "against the powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12) is not easy, especially considering the constant temptation to chase after the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16)! Like Peter, Christ's love compels us, but its transformative impact is contingent on our love for Him above all else. The struggle for supremacy in our hearts among

competing interests leads to fragmentation and lukewarmness. However, surrendering all to the One who redeemed us at the cost of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) results in a life characterized by love extended to others. The abundance of love, grace, and mercy received from Christ compels us to naturally share these gifts with others.

## Given for the Life of the World

After Peter and John had visited the empty tomb, two of Jesus' many disciples decided to head out towards the village of Emmaus. As they walked, they started talking about everything that had happened over the last three days (Luke 24:13). As they were talking Jesus came up beside them but were somehow



“kept from recognizing Him” (16). When Jesus asked them “what are you discussing together as you walk along,” with their “faces downcast” (17) they proceeded to tell Him of the source of

their intense sorrow! They explained that Jesus of Nazareth, a “prophet powerful in word and deed before God and the people” (19) was sentenced to death by the chief priests and rulers and subsequently crucified, dashing their hope that “He was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (21). They went on and told

Christ that some of the women saw the empty tomb and had seen a vision of angels who said Jesus was alive (23)! Even two of Jesus' apostles investigated the tomb and found no body. They had hope ... maybe? Jesus then told the two men that their lack of belief was foolish for what they described having happened to Christ was predicted by the prophets and necessary for Him to come into His glory (26)! Since it was nearly evening Jesus decided to remain with the two men (29). “When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them” (30). It was at this point “their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight” (31)! Reflecting on this encounter, the disciples realized that their hearts had burned within them as Jesus explained Scriptures concerning Himself (32). Upon returning to Jerusalem, they were overjoyed when the Eleven informed them that the Lord had risen and appeared to Peter (34).

In the encounter of two disciples with Jesus, we discover the profound truth that “to be given is to live for the Life of this world.” When our faith falters, and our hearts are broken, rendering us too weak to approach the Lord, He graciously comes to us. The Lord often communicates with us, much like His audible exchange with Elijah in a “gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:11-13), through His Spirit and His word. Amid the storms of tribulations, He invites us to be still (Psalms 46:10), to listen attentively, and to understand our place within His grand narrative. Like the disciples in this narrative, our eyes are opened only when we embrace the truth that “God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is then that we recognize how, in all circumstances, the Lord's glory can and must be reflected

through our thoughts, words, and actions. Adopting a posture of openness to be loved, disciplined (Hebrews 12:6), and transformed by the Good Shepherd allows us to witness and experience His grace and mercy. Although the Lord played the



role of a guest in the story, He took on the role of the host, breaking the bread and giving thanks. Similarly, we are called to share the radical love and comfort we have received from Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

by reaching out to the world in love and practicing radical hospitality. We must extend open arms to the broken, listening, loving, praying for them, and lifting them up to the Great Physician, Jesus, who can heal their brokenness and dispel the darkness of living without hope (Isaiah 61). This calls for a compassionate outreach to those in need, embodying the transformative power of God's love in our interactions with others.

## Conclusion

Turning away from selfish ambition and the constant inward focus on our needs, goals, and desires to serve others is undoubtedly a challenging task. The self-giving of our Lord

who died once and for all to atone for humanity's sins is the example of other-focused love that we as His children are to emulate. With joy, we cast our nets of love and hospitality to anyone whom God sends our way, recognizing that amidst their storms, we can find parallels to our own struggles, akin to Peter being lifted from the drowning seas of unbelief and sorrows. We know what it like to be pressed on every side with tribulations that threatened not only the stability of our lives but also any sense



of peace but at the same time we also know what it is like to stand firm in our faith and feel unspeakable joy because the Lord has made us the weak, frightened, broken, and sinful into the strong, brave, and

forgiven masterpieces of His love and grace. So, we take the time to be holy, stand still, and learn from our Master what it means to deny oneself and put the needs of others above that of our own! We practice radical hospitality not just because we are commanded to do so but because the Lord is our portion who is so intensely valuable to us that we are able through the Spirit to put aside all other challenges for mastery over our hearts. Though we still have moments of brokenness and times of lackluster faith, our cry is not just Abba Father save me but also a cry for strengthen and give me the wisdom to share Your love that I have received with others! May I give my life to serve others as You gave your life for me!