

Sermon Notes on Jn. 21:15-23, Easter I

1. From Jn. 21:2 we know that there were seven of Jesus' disciples at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus appeared to them. This is the third appearance of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection. The first is at Jn. 20:19 and the second at 20:26. The seven had gone to Galilee to fish.
2. Peter said to Jesus at Jn. 13:37: "I will lay down my life for you." At Mt. 26:33 he says to Jesus: "If all will be offended in you, I will never be offended." Mk. 14:31 informs us: "And he (Peter) said vehemently: 'If I must suffer with you, I will never deny You'." When he realized his sin after denying Jesus three times he went out and wept bitterly. Evidently the Lord forgave him then. Jesus made a special appearance to Peter after resurrection. I Cor. 15:5. Evidently at that time He restored Peter to his Apostleship.
3. In vs. 15 of our text Jesus asks: "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" Peter had claimed at Mt. 26:33 that Jesus meant more to him than the other disciples did. No wonder Jesus asked: "Do you love Me more than these?" Peter had wrongly trusted in his own strength. Now he is about to confess his weakness. Peter did not answer the question of "more than these". He was embarrassed and ashamed of himself.
4. Three times Jesus asks: "Do you love Me?" Peter never answers Jesus directly. Three times Peter says: "Lord, You know that I love you." Three times Peter calls Him "Lord". He now regards Jesus as his Savior and Master. Furthermore, the third time Peter says: "You know all things" He appeals to Jesus' omniscience. It's as if he says: "Why do you ask me? You already know it." The third time Jesus asked the question Peter was grieved. True repentance can be very painful. Very often when children are corrected they weep. It is painful for them. Confession of guilt is a painful thing. It hurts me to confess my sins but it is so very necessary. Heb. 12:11 says: "No chastening, at the moment, seems to be joyful but painful, but later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness for those who are exercised by chastening."
5. Three times Jesus calls him by his original name "Simon, son of Jonah." Jesus reminds him of what he was originally before He gave him the name "Peter" which means "Rock". Before Simon could again become the Rock he had to see and confess his sinful nature and sins. What makes a Christian and especially a Christian teacher like a Rock? Not he himself because he is a lost and condemned sinner. Absolution, forgiveness of sins, makes us strong, rocklike. Jesus once said: "Without Me you can do nothing." Jn. 15:5. Natural man thinks he can do everything. He thinks that he does not need Jesus. But we must learn that we are lost creatures and can do nothing. But when we confess our sins and believe the promises of Jesus we can begin doing the Lord's will.
6. Three times Jesus tells Simon to feed and tend His lambs and sheep. He entrusts His little ones and His adults to the Apostles and teachers. But first we must be sure that we love Him. We must be fully devoted to Him, not to our own interests.
7. Jesus says "My lambs, my sheep, my sheep." They belong to Him. He said at Jn. 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me and I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them from My hand." At Acts 20:28 St. Paul told the elders of Ephesus: "Guard yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with His own blood." Peter said at I Pet. 5:2-4: "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."
8. Twice Jesus says: "You follow Me", vs. 19 and 22. Peter is not to be concerned about John's future. Just follow Jesus. When Peter was young he did his own will. But as an Apostle he was to do only the Lord's will. Eusebius says that Peter was crucified head downward.

Additional Notes on Jn. 21:15-23, Easter I

1. Twice in this text Jesus says to Peter: "You follow Me." This thought occurs at least seventeen times more in the Gospels.
2. In the Gospel of John it occurs also at 1:37 and 43 and at 10:27; 12:26; and 13:36. At 1:37 the two disciples followed because of what Jesus said. At 1:43 Jesus tells Philip to become His disciple. At 10:27 Jesus says that His sheep follow Him because of what He says. At 12:26 Jesus says people follow Him by serving Him. And at 13:36 Jesus promises Simon Peter that, though Peter could not follow now, he would follow later.
3. At Mt. 4:19 Jesus promises Peter and Andrew that if they follow Jesus He would make them fishers of men. That idea is repeated at Mk. 1:17 and Lk. 5:10 and 11.
4. At Mt. 9:9 Jesus says to Matthew, the tax-collector: "Follow Me" and he followed him. This is repeated at Mk. 2:14 and Lk. 5:27.
5. At Mt. 8:22 Jesus tells a man: "Follow Me and let the dead bury the dead." This does not mean that burial is sinful. It means that burial is a necessity. Corpses must be buried or they will contaminate the living. But burial is not a means of grace. It is not commanded by God. It is simply a necessity. Jesus means: "More important than burial is the preaching of the Gospel." A similar thought occurs at Lk. 9:59 and 60.
6. At Mt. 16:24 Jesus says: "If anyone wishes to come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." The same occurs at Mk. 8:34 and Lk. 9:23. To deny one's self means to deny our own righteousness, repent and believe only in the righteousness of Christ. When a person does this he will take up his own cross, whatever that may be, and follow Jesus daily. Each person must bear his own cross for Jesus just as Jesus bore the cross to pay for the sins of the world.
7. At Mt. 19:21 Jesus told the rich young man: "If you wish to be perfect go and sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow Me." This is repeated at Mk. 10:21 and Lk. 18:22. Jesus is not saying that poverty is a virtue. Nor is He condemning ownership of property. When the rich young man heard what Jesus said he was grieved and left Jesus because his money and property meant more to him than to believe in the righteousness of Jesus. The person who believes in Jesus considers his relationship to Jesus to be the most precious thing he has.
8. Vss. 20-23 need special comment. Peter and John were walking with Jesus. Jesus had just told Peter what would happen to Peter. Vss. 18-19. Now Peter becomes curious. Jesus had said nothing about John. And so Peter asks Jesus: "What about this one (John)?" Jesus then teaches Peter and us too an important lesson. He says: "If I want him (John) to remain until I come, what is that to you? You just follow Me." Eusebius III, i, 1, tells us that, according to tradition, John lived until the reign of the Emperor Trajan, 98-117 A.D. John outlived all the other disciples. John lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem when the Jewish nation was overthrown. That can be considered the beginning of Christ's return. But if that is not the correct interpretation of this passage the text is clearly telling us that Peter was meddling in affairs which were of no concern to him. Jesus would take care of John without Peter's help. It was none of Peter's business.
9. By the way, even though Peter had confessed his sin and had been forgiven, Peter still asked the foolish question in vs. 21, a matter which was none of his business. We are like Peter. Even though we have been forgiven we still sin foolishly and we are in constant need for confession of sin and absolution.

Sermon Outline on Jn. 21:15-23, Easter I

Theme: FOLLOW ME

Introduction: Twice in our text (vss. 19 & 22) Jesus says to Peter: "Follow Me". He gave this command many times in the Gospels, and under various circumstances. Peter did follow Jesus. He loved Him. He obeyed Him. He died for Him. But not until Jesus had really taught Peter did Peter really follow Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead for us. He saved us. Now He asks all of you: "Are you really following Me?"

I-PETER FOLLOWED JESUS BY LOVING HIM

A-Peter's self-love and arrogance defeated him. At Jn. 13:37 Peter had said: "I will lay down my life for you (Jesus)." At Mt. 26:33 Peter claimed that Jesus meant more to him than the other disciples did. In spite of the fact that Jesus told him that Peter would desert Jesus, Peter ran in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mt. 26:56. And shortly thereafter Peter denied Jesus three times. Why? Because Peter thought He was strong enough without Jesus to keep his promises. He failed miserably.

B-Peter's repentance and faith restored him. When Peter realized his awful sin he went out and wept bitterly. Mt. 26:75. Jesus forgave Peter then. ~~Finally~~ Jesus made a special appearance to Peter after His resurrection (I Cor. 15:5) to assure him of forgiveness. When Jesus asked Peter for the third time: "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved and said: "Lord You know all things. You know that I love You." What does that mean? It means Peter loved Jesus because Jesus first loved Peter. He forgave Peter. I Jn. 4:19. At I Pet. 1:18 Peter wrote: "You know that you were redeemed not with corruptible silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ." Peter loved Jesus because Jesus saved him and forgave him.

II-PETER FOLLOWED JESUS BY OBEYING HIM

A-Three times in our text Jesus says to Peter: "Shepherd My sheep. . . Feed My lambs. . . Feed My sheep." Three times Jesus asked Peter: "Do you really love ME?" This brought out Peter's confession of sin and faith in Jesus. Then three times Jesus told Peter what he should now do. Obedience follows confession and absolution. It always does. Read Ps. 51. It is David's confession of sin and confession of faith after he had committed fornication with Bathsheba. He learned to obey. After John the Baptist forgave and baptized the crowds they asked him what they should do. Lk. 3:10-14.

B-Did Peter do what Jesus said? Read I Pet. 5:2-4: "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." Jesus had loved and served Peter. He gave His life as a ransom for Peter. Mk. 10:45. When Peter confessed his sin, Jesus gently restored Peter. In this way Peter learned how to become a gentle shepherd who fed the lambs and sheep, not for earthly gain but as a selfless servant. Peter should be our example.

III-PETER FOLLOWED JESUS BY DYING FOR HIM

A-In vss. 18-19 of our text Jesus foretells the death of Peter. When Peter was young he did as he pleased and willed. But, says Jesus: "When you grow old you will stretch forth your hands and someone else will bind you and take you where you do not want to go." Jesus was predicting the manner of Peter's death. Peter mentions this at II Pet. 1:14. Eusebius II, xxv, 5 and III, i, 1, tells us that Peter was crucified head downward during the reign of Emperor Nero. Peter had learned from Jesus.

B-What about me? Have I learned my lesson. Have I confessed my many sins? Have I believed in the Gospel of forgiveness? Do I now follow Jesus by obeying Him and dying for Him?