

Jesus Recommissions His Disciples Part 2: Feed My Sheep

Gospel of John
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Bible Text: John 21:15-17
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 21, the 21st chapter of John's Gospel. Our text this morning is verses 15 to 17, a fairly familiar passage for many. The title of the message is "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples." It was the title of last week's message too, "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples" and we looked at the first 14 verses and we said that last week it was "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples" and he basically tells them to "Go fish." This time it's "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples" and the subtitle is "Feed My Sheep." He is in this section of John's Gospel, John has included this epilogue basically to let us see Jesus, in a sense, doing what we have at the end of the other Gospels. For instance, Matthew 28 doesn't end with the resurrection and resurrection appearances, initial resurrection appearances, you have the great commission in which the Gospel ends; there is a sense in which John is doing the same thing in this epilogue. He's doing something very similar. He's giving us the commission that Jesus gave to his disciples after his resurrection appearances. I say that because, remember last time we talked about how as we've been working through John's Gospel and we came to the end of chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, we noted that many people, many commentators even believed that the Gospel originally ended there and later it was added to either by John or by someone else and, of course, that's kind of a liberal mindset that comes up with that idea in the first place and so we reject that. But they look at it that way because they think chapter 20:30 and 31 is such a great place to end with kind of the closing argument of his Gospel pressing for faith. And what I shared last time and I want to remind you of today is that what we have really is what you often have is an epilogue. You know, I mentioned that even in one of those whodunit TV shows or movies, there's always something after the final clinching moment. You know, when Perry Mason gets the guy, that's not the end of it. You go back and you see Della Street and Perry Mason and Paul, or whatever the guy's name was, talking about some stuff. You don't just end there.

So with this Gospel, we don't just end with that closing argument, he gives an epilogue and the epilogue is powerful in itself and what it does is it continues the description of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances with one last resurrection appearance. That's what chapter 21 is, it's epilogue, but in this last resurrection appearance, the commission of the disciples is reemphasized and clarified what they're supposed to do. They're supposed to be about fishing for men. They're supposed to be about feeding sheep. That's what we're

going to look at today. So the title "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples: Feed My Sheep."

John 21:15-17. Let's begin reading at verse 12 just to get some context here and we'll read through verse 19 but we're going to focus on verses 15 to 17.

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. 15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

Let's pray together.

Father, we come now asking again for grace. We need to have your Spirit work in our hearts. We confess with you is the fountain of life and in your light we see light and we pray that you would grant us to see light in your light today. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Here we have Jesus' dialogue with Peter, specifically in which he is recommissioning Peter individually but through that is, in a sense, commissioning all of the disciples, and in another sense, is commissioning, the direct application of this passage really is telling elders and pastors how they should shepherd. That's what he's going to do through this recommissioning of Peter, but it also has application for all Christians because we are all called to shepherd. We're all called to help one another follow Jesus. That's what the Christian life is, following Jesus, and we are to help one another follow Jesus. We've said that it mostly applies to the elders and it does, it applies to pastors, elders directly, but it also applies to all of us because, as I said, we all need help following Christ and we're all supposed to look after one another and to minister the word to one another; to speak the truth to one another in love; to exhort one another; to reprove one another; to encourage one another.

So the application is going to be for all of us and we're going to see that what we see as Jesus has this dialogue with Peter, we're going to organize our thoughts around two points and I'm going to go and give you both of the two major points first upfront. The first point is we're going to see the Good Shepherd at work. The Good Shepherd at work, and then we're going to see the work of a good shepherd so that what we're told really is in the end is what the work of a good shepherd is. A, and I say a little "g" good, little "s" shepherd, that's the second point, the work of a good shepherd, but the first point is the work of the capital "G," capital "S," the work of the Good Shepherd. We see Jesus basically modeling good shepherding before us in his shepherding ministry to Peter. He is reclaiming and restoring a sheep to the fold and in doing that, he exhibits for us the heart and the essence of ministry. So it's the Good Shepherd at work and then the work of a good shepherd.

So let's first begin looking at the first point: the Good Shepherd at work. Jesus had said in John 10, "I am the Good Shepherd," and here we see the Good Shepherd. Peter later would speak of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd when he, in fact, let me just say that about this: this passage is sometimes mistakenly used by Roman Catholics to point out that Peter somehow has primacy; that Jesus is calling him to a unique ministry and that he is the Vicar of Christ, he is the Chief Shepherd. They use that language that Peter is the Chief Shepherd and then that the papacy follows in apostolic succession from him. Well, they totally miss the point of the passage. Peter is not the Great Shepherd, Jesus is, and Peter understood that. In fact, it's so clear when you read things in context in the first place, you see this because Peter, in fact, since I mentioned this, let's turn over to 1 Peter 5 for just a moment and we see that Peter doesn't see himself as the Supreme Shepherd. He doesn't see himself as the pope. 1 Peter 5:1, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." There is only one Chief Shepherd and his name is Jesus and so Peter understood that and he actually lowers himself down. He says, "I'm not only," he doesn't even say, "As an apostle I'm telling you this," he says, "As your fellow elder, I'm exhorting the elders." That should be enough. I mean, they should never have come up with this idea in the first place but if that weren't enough, look at Galatians 2 and watch Paul put Peter in his place. Peter was not the pope, never was, and the pope is not biblical in any sense of the imagination. It is an unbiblical apostasy; terrible doctrine. Anyway, sorry about that.

That was an aside I wanted to get to somewhere along the way and it came up earlier than I expected but the Good Shepherd at work. The Good Shepherd at work. What we want to do is kind of look at the picture of what's happening and then work out the implications in the second point. In the first point, just looking at the drama as it unfolds, what Jesus does in these moments with Peter, it's something that is extraordinary. And to look at the Good Shepherd at work, I want to consider it under three sub points. So the first point, the Good Shepherd at work, has three sub points. The first sub point to observe, and what

we're really doing, you could think about it, we're looking at a picture, a portrait of a good shepherd in this part, this point. We're looking at the beauty of a shepherd doing his work in the most wonderful and glorious way because Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, the Glorious Shepherd, and then he's going to tell us what he wants us to do in the second point.

So the Good Shepherd at work. Three sub points. The first sub point is the setting. Remember, we talked about this last time when we read the first 14 verses last week and looked at that passage, that the disciples had gone fishing, they had had a night of fishing in which they caught nothing. They had a night of fishing in which they caught nothing in which Jesus showed up and told them to recast their nets and then they had a huge catch, 153 fish. This was a major *déjà vu* moment for the apostles. This was a major *déjà vu* moment for Peter, James and John particularly because that was what happened to them when they were called to be disciples. In Luke 5, they had been fishing all night, Jesus is teaching early in the morning and he asked to use one of their boats as they are basically coming home, you know, empty handed. He gets in Simon Peter's boat and he asks him to push him out a little bit from shore so he can continue teaching. He's using, you know, the sound system. Peter was now a sound guy in Jesus' ministry. "Get me out into the water a little bit. I want to continue teaching." So Peter listens to him teach and then when he gets through teaching, Jesus says, "I want you to throw your nets back into the water right over there. Go out a little further and cast your nets." Peter says, "I don't know why we should, we've been out all night, but if you say so," and he does and he catches so many fish that then James and John in their boat have to go out and help him to bring the fish in. So that happened.

Now this particular time, the Lord chooses to make one of his resurrection appearances happen at the moment they had just come in, or they're on the way in, they are about 100 yards out from shore. They are about to give up. It's one of those nights where they haven't caught anything and they see Jesus on the shore. They don't recognize it's him from the distance, 100 yards away, beginning at dawn. He says, "Why don't you cast your nets on the other side of the boat?" They do. They catch a load of fish. John says, "It is the Lord," to Peter. He looks at Peter and says, "It's the Lord." Peter, true to his character, impetuously girds himself up, jumps out of the boat, swims to the shore ahead of the other apostles, leaves them to handle the fish and he is going to see Jesus. John doesn't tell us about their greeting but the next thing we know, Jesus comments on the fact that when they get in, they see a charcoal fire laid, fish already on it though they haven't supplied any, bread already on the fire, on the charcoal fire, and then have breakfast. Now, think about this setting. So the whole setting is like a re-created enactment of their first meeting. So tremendous *déjà vu*. Then it's instructive that when John, I noted this last week in verse 9, "So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid." You know, John's careful in the way he chooses his terms. They saw a charcoal fire. Keep that in mind, a charcoal fire. That's the setting.

Secondly, the questions. The second sub point under the Good Shepherd at work: the questions. Jesus asks three questions which are essentially one question with two minor variations, two very slight variations. Essentially the question that he asks three times is

the one question, "Do you love Me?" The first time he adds, "more than these," and the third time he asks it with a different Greek word there underlying that in the text. You don't see it in the English but it's there in the Greek. So he says, "Do you love Me?" three times. "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Those three questions asked by a charcoal fire, asked three times. I mean, basically they finished breakfast and the picture is and he says that in verse 15, so when they had finished breakfast, they sat around the fire and he served them from the fire the food that they're eating. They finished eating and Jesus says, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

It's interesting, when he says, "Do you love Me more than these?" what does that mean? There are three ways that you can interpret that "more than these." You can understand it to mean at first, "Do you love Me more than you love the other guys here? Do you love Me more than these?" That way. Some commentators think he means "Do you love Me more than you love these, the fishing things, the nets, the boats, your lifestyle of fishing?" But the third possibility is that he's saying, "Do you love Me more than these love Me? Do you love Me more than these? Do you love Me more than these your companions love Me?"

I think context tells us that's his meaning because, turn back over to John 13:37 and 38, actually, verse 36, Jesus has said, "Where I am going you cannot come." Simon Peter said to Him, verse 36, "'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.' Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.'" Peter doesn't say, "Why can we not follow You right now. We will lay down our lives for You." He says, "Why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." In fact, when you look at Mark's account of that same story, it's interesting to note that Mark, we believe Mark was basically writing Peter's Gospel; that he worked with Peter to write this Gospel so his source is Peter himself and in Mark 14:27, he's harder on himself in Mark's Gospel than he is in the others. It shows that. Peter is a little more explicit about how bad he messed up in this Gospel. Verse 27, "Jesus said," this is Mark 14:27, during the Lord's supper, Jesus said, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Which is where they are now in John 21. "But Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.' And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.' But Peter kept saying insistently, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all were saying the same thing also."

So he says, "Do you love Me more than these?" Peter has great confidence that he loves, before the crucifixion he had great confidence that he loved Jesus more than anybody else, and so this appears to be, I think what's happening when Jesus asks the question, "Do you love Me more than these?" he's reminding Peter of his own pride. He's beginning to ask a question that is very important which is, "Do you love Me?" but he starts off by even reminding Peter in that Peter must have felt a twinge of pain with that "more than these." "You claimed that the night before I was crucified and it was you who

denied Me three times." But Peter still answers, "'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He says to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He asked him the second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'"

I don't think Peter is getting this as it is happening. I mean, I think he's getting part of it. The Lord is working on his heart and I don't think John is getting all of it either right when it's happening. I think it's one of those things that Jesus did that had impact at the moment and then after the Spirit came, just like he said many times, he would tell them things like, you know, "What I'm saying to you now, you don't understand but you will understand hereafter." There's an element of this going on, that they are understanding at some level but they're not really fully understanding what's happening because what is happening is that Jesus has arranged the circumstances so that Peter is in the moment just like when he was called into ministry by Jesus. A night of all night fishing. Failure. Jesus shows up. They get fish. Jesus says, "I'll make you fishers of men. Come, follow Me." And he also orchestrates it so that there is a charcoal fire.

Now, I want you to look back at John 18. I want to look back at the threefold denial of Peter. Verse 15 of chapter 18. This is after Jesus has been arrested. Judas has betrayed him. Jesus is arrested. It says, verse 15, "Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest," and we know this is John talking about himself; he's that other disciple. So John was a witness to all that happens here with Peter. John knew the high priest's family, was able to get them in the door and so it says he entered with Jesus in the court of the high priest, "but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.'" First denial. Now do you see what's happening? Well, let's read on a little farther to verse 18, "Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself." Now, he goes back to the high priest and Jesus for a moment and then jumps back to verse 25 to Peter again. Get the scene: Peter is standing by the fire warming himself in the early morning, I mean, late at night, overnight, early morning hours. Verse 25, "Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, 'You are not also one of His disciples, are you?' He denied it, and said, 'I am not.' One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, 'Did I not see you in the garden with Him?' Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed." Standing by the charcoal fire, Peter was asked about his relationship with Jesus three times. Standing by a charcoal fire, sitting by a charcoal fire on this morning, Jesus asks Peter about his relationship with Jesus three times.

Now, to show you again how Peter's a little harder on himself in Mark, look back at Mark 14:69. This is the denials. Verse 68 is the first denial, "But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.' And he went out onto the porch. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, 'This is one of them!' But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, 'Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.' But he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this man you are talking about!' Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, 'Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And he began to weep bitterly." He cursed and swore and said, "I do not know this man." That's what John saw. John's a little softer in his recounting of the event than Peter was. Peter remembers what he said. It was on his heart. He was broken by it.

One thing we learn in Luke's Gospel, in Luke 22:60, all four Gospels report the threefold denial of Peter and here's Luke's account. Verse 60, "Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed." Look at verse 61. Now we know from Mark's Gospel that he cursed emphatically and said, "I do not know what you're talking about." He swore. Look at verse 61, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." In that moment of the lowest of lows, he denies the Lord so emphatically and Jesus looks when the rooster crows and they make eye contact and Peter knows what he's done and he sees Jesus and he weeps bitterly. Three times he had been asked by a charcoal fire about his relationship to Jesus and he had failed miserably.

Now, we're also told, to put this in context, we're told in one of the Gospels, I think it's actually Mark, that...no, it's Luke, but anyway, that Jesus met with Peter on the day of his resurrection and we're told also in 1 Corinthians 15:5, that Jesus appeared to Mary and then later that day appeared to Simon, or Peter himself, and later that evening as we have in John's Gospel, the next one we're told about is when he appears to the 10 of the 11, the 11 minus Thomas. That all happened on Sunday so he appears to Mary later after Peter and John run away from the tomb, sometime Jesus appears directly to Simon Peter. Now, what happened then? I think they dealt with the issue of the denial then, don't you? Can you imagine Jesus coming in and talking with him and Peter not dealing with the elephant in the room? No. They, in a sense, dealt with it then. Peter's brokenness and joy now in seeing the resurrected Lord and restoration, in a sense, happened. Why then does Jesus do it this way in chapter 21? You see, Peter's sin had been a public sin. He had publicly disowned the Lord three times and so his restoration has to be public as well. This was actually, this was Jesus loving and blessing Peter. This is all that Jesus ever does to his own is love and bless. This is him loving and blessing him.

Now, those questions are all about that, getting him to look at the real issue. "Do you love Me?" That's the setting, the questions, we're still looking at the Good Shepherd at work. The setting, the questions, the third point: the effect. The setting, the questions and now the effect. First, the immediate effect on Peter. The third question, we see it described. I mean, I'm sure he was being stressed by the whole thing. The first one, "Simon, son of John," this formal tone of Jesus, "do you love Me more than these?" Reminding me of the fact that I have been such a buffoon. "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." Then he

asked him again. Why are you asking me again? It's like, we just covered that. But, of course, he knows he's talking to the Lord so I'm sure he's submitting but he's wondering, what's going on? Then thirdly, he says, verse 17, "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?'" Why was he grieved? The most obvious part of it is he was grieved because he was being asked over and over and over as if Jesus didn't believe him. I think that was part of what was going on and I think there was probably some sense in which maybe the déjà vu was beginning to connect for him. He has just asked me a third time about my relationship, and I don't know that he had it fully then. It may have been that John and Peter later talk about this and John says to Peter, "Do you realize what happened today? Do you realize what Jesus did? He asked you three times just like you were asked three times on the night you denied Him." My sense is it probably happened like that over time and I think even the fact that John is writing about this in 85 or 90 A.D., the last Gospel writer, the last one still alive, Peter has been dead for at least 20 years when this is written or at least about 20 years, crucified upside down, and maybe even some of the wonder of it has become more and more lovely to John. He was there. He was there when he denied him. Peter was his dearest friend. Remember, they are the two that are together when Mary comes because they're always together. They run to the tomb together. John waits for Peter to go in first.

So John had seen Peter deny the Lord after Peter had been the leader of the disciples. I mean, Peter was the leader throughout Jesus' ministry. You look at the Gospels, the name Peter or Simon referring to Peter, occurs 120 times in the four Gospels. The second-place name is 30 and that's Judas. Peter is the, in a sense, out front and the star, in a sense. He is the leader of those, not in the way that Catholics misunderstand, but he was the first among equals and then Paul comes along and is another first among equals, I think. But John had seen him as that leader and John saw him fall so hard and so fast and then John gets to see this restoration and gets to see a shepherd go after a sheep in such a perfect and loving way. I mean, he confronts his sin, that's what a loving shepherd does, "Do you love Me more than these love Me? Do you still have that high exalted position regarding your superiority? Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me? You denied Me." But even the opportunity by asking those three questions, he is reinstating him. He is actually lifting him up, in a sense, before the other men again. "Don't hold that against him anymore. It's done."

Now, I want to talk about one other thing related to the long-term effect on Peter's heart because I think the essential effect is: what a Savior. This is what John is trying to say to us, "What a Savior. The lovingkindness of the Lord indeed never ceases. Great is your faithfulness. His lovingkindness extends to the heavens. His mercies are over all his works. Look at this great Savior." But when you talk about one of the more controversial elements in this passage and that is the use of the word for "love," it's hard to explain this without, I mean, because in the English you can't see it but let me just try to lay it out for you that there are two verbs that are used in the passage that mean, "I love You." We translate them, you know, "Yes, I love You. Do you love Me. Yes, I love You." The word is "love," okay? There are two different Greek words, the first Greek word is the verb *agapao*, which from the noun *agape*, and the second Greek verb is the Greek verb *phileo*

from the noun *philos*, and so what happens is in verse 15, Jesus says to Peter, "Do you love Me?" with *agape*, *agapao* basically is the word here. "Do you love Me with *agape* more than these?" Peter says to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I *phileo* you." Do you see that with a different word?

Now, to make it a little more confusing but hang in there with me for a second. One of the interesting dynamics that is often forgotten in this discussion is that Jesus and his disciples did not speak in Greek to one another. They spoke in Aramaic so that Jesus didn't really say *agapao* and Peter didn't really say *phileo*, what happened was when the Holy Spirit inspired John to write this down, the best Greek word to describe the nuance of Jesus saying "love" was *agape*, and the best nuance to describe the tone, sort of the tone and tenor of Peter's response was *phileo*. So we have an inerrant account of what happened but it's just instructive to understand that. It's more like us. We have to use the word "love" for both of these the words.

The Greek is more specific and so I think what happened was John is telling us, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the tone of what Jesus said was different than the tone of what Peter said. And the second time, the tone of what Jesus said was different than the tone of what Peter said. And the third time, now the third time, the first two times Jesus says, "Do you love Me," with *agape*. Peter says, "Yes, Lord." He doesn't say no. It's not like somebody, a young woman and young man are contemplating marriage or maybe the girl is and she says, "Do you love me?" And he says, "You know, I really like you." It's not like that. That's a no, right? No, it's a yes. He says yes. He says, "Yes, you know that I love You." So the first two times, it's *agape* from Jesus, *philos* from Peter. The first one, second one, *agape* from Jesus, *philos* from Peter. The third time, *philos* from Jesus and *philos* from Peter.

Now, there are three possible ways of interpreting this. The first is that they are just using the words synonymously and don't make any big deal out of it. A lot of commentators take that approach. I think it's the easiest approach. I don't think it's the right approach, though, because I don't understand why Jesus, why John in recounting what Jesus said, changes Jesus' third question from *agape* to *philos*. So the first is it's synonymous. I don't think that's right.

The second approach was the one I used to think was correct and that is maybe one that is most commonly held, and there are people in all three areas so you can search this out on your own, and ultimately the whole teaching of the passage doesn't hang on this but I think it does help to understand it rightly. The second possible interpretation which I used to adhere to was that when Jesus says *agape*, he's asking a higher and nobler kind of love and Peter says yes and responds back in a human love. Jesus asks a second time for *agape* in a higher, nobler love and Peter responds yes in a human love. The third time Jesus comes down to Peter's level and says, "Do you love Me?" in a human love, and Peter says yes. And the idea is that while Peter is so humbled, that he knows he can't ascribe, he can't aspire to that kind of love from Jesus and so though he says yes, he doesn't really answer, it's more like, "Yes, I like You."

And looking at the whole context, I think the third possibility is actually right and that is that when Jesus says, "Do you love Me," with agape, he's using, now remember he's saying it in Aramaic, but his tone as John is capturing it, is more of a formal tone initially. I argue for this because, first of all, how does he address him each time? "Simon, son of John." The only other time he calls him Simon, son of John in John's Gospel is the first time he met him in John 1:42, he said, "Simon, son of John, your name shall be Peter." That's what he said when he met him. So he says, "Simon, son of John," three times and I think when he says agape, the word agape is borrowed from Greek language and filled with meaning and most of the time it speaks of God's love but it speaks of a love that indicates a direction of the will. One of the nuances between agape and philos is that agape is directed by the will, and philos is more of an emotional passionate response. It speaks more of affection.

So when Jesus asks him, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Remember, they're using the same word just like us in English. It's like this, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." I think that's what's happening. "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." And I think what's happening is on the third time, Jesus is no longer administering sort of this formal, he's transitioning from this formal dealing with Peter's threefold denial. He, in a sense, steps closer to him and he says, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" And Peter now having been asked the third time and again not processing all of this, what's happening at the time, I think John looking back at it is seeing this is what was going on. He was saying, what was happening is he was publicly restoring complete fellowship with Peter.

I mean, the other thing is, do you think Peter would be that timid in the first place? This is what got me because in the passage when Jesus is on the shore and John says, "It is the Lord," there was no timidity then. He jumped out of the boat and started swimming. So is it really in character for him to say, "Yes, Lord, You know that I like You"? No, he's saying, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. You're my nearest and dearest friend." "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You as my nearest and dearest friend." "Simon, son of John, do you love Me as your nearest and dearest friend?" "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." That's what's happening. Peter is being welcomed back into the arms of Christ and it's happening publicly, six other disciples there to see it. That is the Good Shepherd at work. Full restoration of fellowship. He deals with everything necessary to bring about full restoration to fellowship. Willing to deal with the pain he had to deal with. Willing to make it hard when it's necessary. No harder than necessary. This is why David says in Psalm 23, "Your rod and Your staff," what? "They comfort me." What does the shepherd do with his rod and his staff to the sheep? Pow! "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

So that's the Good Shepherd at work, then secondly, the work of a good shepherd. Basically under the second point, there are two sub points. The work of a good shepherd is seen as it's presented here and it's not the whole work, but Jesus is focusing on one fundamental requirement and one fundamental responsibility that the ministry of shepherding like Jesus, to be a good shepherd to one another, there is one fundamental

requirement and there is one fundamental responsibility. I'll tell you what, we're going to stop here. I've been debating because we don't have time to do what we need to do today and let's just pray that the Lord will help us get back into where we are next week and deal with that. I feel like we need to stop where we are with just the glory of the Good Shepherd.

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus, I mean, he's a high priest who understands. He came, he understands what it is to be a man; what it is to deal with the realities of sin; to be tempted; to see the ugliness of sin all around him; to know how awful and evil it is and yet to be so gentle and so kind in reclaiming us. He is a glorious Shepherd. He's the Chief Shepherd and he's the one that this whole event, I mean, he says, "Do you love Me?" three times and I think that last time he's saying, "Do you love Me as your nearest and dearest friend?" And Peter is saying, "Yes, of course I love You as my nearest and dearest friend." He's probably saying it through tears that are beginning to form as he doesn't know what's happening; he doesn't understand. But I think as he thought on that event time after time throughout his life, it made him love Jesus more. "When I said I loved You, I did, but not half as much as I do now. You become sweeter and more lovely every day." Such a wonderful Savior.

Let's go to him in prayer.

Father, we praise you. We give you glory and honor. We thank you for making your amazing character, the beauty of who you are known in the person of your Son. Behold, such love, such tenderness, such forthrightness and directness and sternness when necessary and yet behind the frowning face, there is a heart of love, a passionate heart beating to draw sinners to yourself. We stand in awe of you. And Lord, we who belong to you want to say with Peter when you say, "Do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I love You." And yet we realize there are so many ways that we have denied you. Every time we sin, in a sense, we're denying you, disowning you. We come confessing our great need and we come rejoicing that you're a God who abounds in mercy and lovingkindness. Lord, for those that are here today who do not know Christ, help them to reach out to him right now to take his yoke upon them, to submit to him, to run to him, to place all of their trust in his finished work, his perfect sinless life, and his atoning sacrifice, for the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and help them give themselves to him in adoration. And Lord, thank you that a relationship with Jesus Christ is something that once it's begun, it continues forever and it grows sweeter and deeper and more wonderful, and we ask you to continue to lead us on. Lead us on, our dear Shepherd. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.