

Text: John 21:15-19 Ref: 1 Pet 5:1-3; Math 9:35-38; Acts 6:1-7; 13:2; Exo 3, 4; Math 4:19; Luke 5:27

Theme: Reaffirming our commitment to serve the Lord

Topic: Stirring your heart to serve the Lord

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Introduction: Thomas Edison and the light bulb

Thomas Edison, a famous inventor, was making a “light bulb”. It took a whole team of men 24 hours straight to put just one together. When Edison was finished with one light bulb, he gave it to a young boy helper, who nervously carried it up the stairs. Step by step he cautiously watched his hands, obviously frightened of dropping such a priceless piece of work. Guess what? The poor young fellow dropped the bulb when he reached the top of the stairs. It took the entire team of men twenty-four more hours to make another bulb. Finally, tired and ready for a break, Edison was ready to have his bulb carried up the stairs. And who do you suppose he trusted with the task of carrying the bulb upstairs this time? He gave it to the same young boy who dropped it the first time.

Jesus did something similar to his disciple Peter as Thomas Edison did to the boy. Jesus gave Peter a second chance by stirring his heart to reaffirm his commitment to serve him. Peter said he would be loyal to his Master Jesus. Then, Jesus was arrested and tried in court and he was soon to be crucified on the cross. When Peter actually faced the danger of being arrested and killed, he disowned Jesus and denied that he was one of the followers of Jesus. He did this three times before the rooster crowed just as Jesus had predicted. Jesus, after he was crucified and killed on the cross, rose from the dead and appeared before Peter and his disciples. After they ate together, Jesus reinstated Peter who had stumbled and failed. The Lord Jesus entrusted the precious work of feeding the believers to the hands of Peter. Amazingly, Jesus trusted the miserable failure. God is merciful and gracious. He gives a second chance to those who turn their back against Him. He restores our positions before the others; he restores our favor; he restores our dignity before the world; he restores our respect; he restores our passion to serve; he restores our zeal to give; he restores our excitement in worship! Jesus stirs our hearts no matter how much we have failed before him!

It is important to note that verse 17, is the turning point in the restoration process of Peter. Peter is distressed/hurt/ because Jesus asked for the third time, ‘Do you love? It is at this point when Peter realized the seriousness of the issue at hand. His heart was moved. He was brought to appoint where he needed to reassess, reevaluate and reaffirm his commitment to serve the Lord. Peter was one of the most outstanding, vocal and visible person among the twelve disciples. He was the defacto leader of the team. His three year ministry with Jesus was full of excitement, experiences and discoveries. It was also dotted with failures, rash decisions and unpredictable behavior. During the trial of Jesus, he had denied Jesus three times in public before foes and followers (John 18:15-27). After the denial he seemed to have fallen from his position of leadership and influence; he seemed to have lost the zeal and passion to serve the Lord. This is evident by the fact that he influenced six other disciples to go back to fishing. This was their career before they were called

to become fishers of men (Mathew 4:19). Peter and his colleagues had lost the excitement and passion and enthusiasm of following and serving the Lord. The events of the crucifixion had disappointed them. It was too much a trauma to continue in the service of the Lord, in any case the one they had committed their lives to serve and left their career to follow was no more.

This is a common experience to many people. Usually after experiencing failure to stand for the Lord in the face of temptations and trials, we lose our passion and excitement to serve the Lord. We contemplate going back to do what we think we were doing better. We begin to occupy the back seat. If this is your experience, do not loose heart, the Lord will restore you to the position of service, a position full of zeal. Every single one of us must face this question as regularly as possible. It could be at the beginning of the year, it could be in the middle of the year. It could be at the end of the year. It could be after a traumatic experience. It could be after a successful event. We need to ask ourselves- who or what stirs our heart to serve the Lord?

I. The motive of service is love (Agapeo; Phileo)

- In verse 15 we find that breakfast was now finished, but the Lord still had some business to finish with Peter. Peter's need was more than satisfying his hunger and providing a great catch of fish. There is still the matter of his boasting and then denial on the night Jesus was arrested. Was Peter still qualified to be one of the leaders among Jesus' followers? For what reason was Peter serving him before? When your material needs have been met by the Lord, he is not finished with you yet. When you have had your fill and your needs have been met and you have been satisfied, the Lord desires to unravel and unwrap the real needs of your heart, listen to him.
- Jesus asks Peter a series of three probing, confrontational and personal questions to pull out what was in Peter's heart, and then Jesus makes three statements about the responsibility that Jesus was entrusting to Peter.
- Jesus' first question does question Peter's loyalty to the master and his motive in serving the Lord. Back on the night of the last Supper, Peter had boasted how he was more committed to Jesus than all the others, for he would not fall away even if all the rest did (Mt. 26:33). Jesus' question would expose what was in his heart. "*Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?*" The word "love" here is agapaw/agapao. The Greek word used in this passage for love is both agape and phileo. Agape is the pure unconditional matchless and incomparable love of God.
- The Greek usage of the verb form, agapaw /agapao, carried the idea of "a free and decisive act determined by its subject." But in Greek thought this was with little emotion and seen more as "prefer." Christian usage of the terms brought rich, positive meaning to them. Perhaps one of the best ways to describe the meaning of agaph/agape word group in Christian usage is to contrast it with eros. Whereas eros is a love by one person based on what he finds beautiful and desirable in another to gain for himself, agape is a love given irrespective to, and often in spite of, the merit of the one loved. Whereas eros is a love that desires to posses and gain for itself, agape is a love that seeks to give of itself.
- This is a love of commitment and sacrifice. It is the love that would cause a man to lay down his life for a friend (Jn. 15:13). It is the love that God has for us that caused Him to send Jesus into the world to be our substitute sacrifice on the cross for our sins (Rom. 5:8).

It is the love that we are to have for God and for others (Lk 10:27). It is the love that husbands are commanded to have for their wives so that they give of themselves for her benefit as a picture of Jesus love for the church rather than seeking what they can get from her (Eph. 5:25f). It is the love by which all men will know if we are Jesus' disciples or not (John 13:35). This is the love Jesus spoke of when He said, "*if anyone loves me, he will keep My word*" (Jn. 14:23). Jesus is asking Peter what his level of love for Him is now.

- The question we must ask at this point is, why are we serving the Lord? What is it that motivates us into serving the Lord? When Jesus asks Peter three times, do you love me? He underscores the fact that serving the Lord should flow out of love for the Lord! Loving the Lord Jesus is the motive that should stir our hearts to service. It is only service flowing out of love which can stand the test of time, the challenges of life and the routines of life. All of these are the enemies of enthusiasm, zeal, passion and excitement in serving the Lord!
- Christian service is littered with examples of people who suffered the crisis of service—those who were unwilling to serve like Jonah; those who felt inadequate like Moses and those who were quitters. These challenges can take the best from us if we do not regularly reflect on the motive of our service. On the other hand, we can sustain our passion of serving the Lord in the midst of these challenges when our service flows out of love. Let us worship out of love for the Lord not out of duty; let us give our tithes and offerings out of our love for Christ not out of a desire to be seen; let us give our time to the Lord not to manipulate him to bless us but because we love him!

II. The task of service is responsibility

- Jesus' answer to Peter is one of restoration into service. Jesus told him three times "*Tend My lambs.*" Jesus often used the metaphor of sheep to describe those who belong to Him and He does so again in these verses. The lambs are the young sheep which are the most vulnerable and need to be tenderly cared for. The word "tend" here means to "feed." Jesus is commanding Peter to take care of the most vulnerable sheep of His sheep. Peter is to teach new believers about how to be a follower of Jesus.
- After the second question, Jesus responds by commanding Peter to fulfill additional responsibilities. "*Shepherd My sheep.*" Shepherding takes into account the total care of the flock, not just the feeding. The sheep are the mature than the lambs. Jesus is entrusting to Peter the spiritual teaching and care of His followers including the mature ones. Peter could not do this unless he was at least as mature. Jesus is affirming Peter that he is still useful to Jesus despite past failures.
- Jesus' responds with a third command that affirms Peter's responsibilities for Jesus' flock. "*Tend My Sheep.*" Peter had failed, but Jesus has restored him and will use him to teach and lead His people. All of this would have taken place within the hearing of the other disciples. This not only gave them an increased confidence in Peter, but could they would also understand that Jesus would use them too despite their past failures.
- Like Peter, all of us have failed the Lord in our lives. There are those things which we should not have done that we have done – sins of commission, and those things we should have done that we did not – sins of omission. But all of us have sin problems. Jesus was able to restore Peter and use him and our Lord can do the same for us.

- When Jesus confronted Peter, he had a task he wanted him to accomplish. The task at hand was, ‘feed’, ‘take care’. This task is a call to a sense of responsibility. It is a call to feeding, guarding, guiding and caring.
- Whereas shepherding is the specific call of bishops and pastors, it is the general call of every believer. We are called to look out to our brothers and sisters who are vulnerable, hopeless and insecure in life. We are called to guide those who are straying from the path of the Lord; we are called to care for and nurture those who are weak; we are called to guard those who are swayed easily by every kind of doctrine! Does it bother you that someone no longer comes for prayers! Does it bother you that someone no longer comes to church? Does it bother you that someone no longer gives their tithe and offerings? Does it bother you that someone no longer reads their bibles? It should!

III. The ownership of service is the Lord’s

- Three times as the Lord answers Peter, he uses the personal pronoun “*My sheep*”. The sheep belong to the Lord. He is the gate of the sheep pen; He has found the lost sheep; He lays down his life for the sheep; He knows the sheep each by name and the sheep knows him (John 10:1-21)
- When our hearts are stirred, we will truly appreciate the owner of the church. The church belongs to Jesus Christ; the harvest belongs to Jesus Christ. Everything about the Christian ministry belongs to Jesus. Only Jesus can pull people to himself; only Jesus can save people; only Jesus can heal people; only Jesus can preserve our salvation; only Jesus can call people into the ministry (Math 9:35-38).
- When we understand that the ownership of the service belongs to the Lord, we will take our rightful place in the ministry. Our rightful place is stewardship and servanthood. We are entrusted with the care of God’s people and God’s resources. It is required that stewards must give an account! The welfare of God’s people is in our hands.
- Ken Blachard said, ‘Too many leaders act as if the sheep....their people....are there for the benefit of the shepherd, not that the shepherd has responsibility for the sheep’ that is why there are many fights; that is why there are many corruptions; that is why there are many divisions; that is why there are a lot of competition looking to fill our churches- we should not compete, we should just obey and preach the word! Let us not trampled the sheep, they belong to the Lord! The Lord will hold us to account on how we treat the sheep.

IV. The restoration of service is personal

- This narrative is set out by the sea in the presence of six others disciples a part from Peter mentioned in 21:2. When Jesus confronted Peter, his words, his questions, his answers were directed to Peter personally. God confronts people individually and personally by picking them out of the crowd.
- God’s call is unique to every person but every call shares common characteristics.

- Frederick Buechner, “The place God call you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet’. If you discern what your greatest joy is and what you believe is a pressing in the world around you, then find where the two intersect then you will be personally responding to God’s call in your life.
- One’s call should not be confused with one’s job or vocation. A call is bigger and higher than what we do for a living. It defines God’s intension for our lives.
- Some of us are looking for our calling in our careers but are not listening to Jesus confronting us. Sometimes when we hear his voice redirecting our focus in life, we tend to glance back thinking he is talking to somebody in the crowd! But he persists by saying to us, you! Yes you who is looking back! Yes you in the red, black, checked, blue, yellow cloth! Yes you who are in a tie! It is you I want to send to your neighbor, your colleagues; your friends: it is you I want to be a prayer warrior; it is you I want to be a generous giver; it is you I want to fix that broken window; that broken piano; it is you I want to provide the missing chairs; it is you I want to dress the men of God; I want you to feed the servants of God!
- When we are called, many times we resist, but eventually we will be stirred by the Lord to respond. What is Jesus confronting you personally to undertake for him? Many churches are not progressing well because people wait for the next person to see and do, yet they are being confronted by the Lord personally!

V. The reaffirmation of service is public

- This confrontation took place in the open. It took place in public. It took place in front of the other six disciples. It took place in front of those who could be considered as juniors to Peter. It took place in front of people who have been looking up to Peter.
- We should remember that Peter’s backsliding was in public. He denied Jesus not once, not twice but thrice in front of colleagues as well as enemies. Therefore, the reaffirmation of his service had to be in public. Even Nicodamus who went to Jesus secretly at night had to reaffirm and declare his loyalty and service to Jesus in public (John 7:50; 19:39)
- Public reaffirmation of our faith in Jesus and love for Christ can sometimes seem to be embarrassing, belittling, intimidating, but entrenches our commitment. It gives credibility to our cause and it is obedience to the Lord.
- We cannot affirm in private what we intend to do in public. Let your calling be known! Let what you intend to do be known by others! Let what you intend to give be known by others! Let it be known by juniors; let it be known by seniors; let it be known by neighbors; let be known by friends. Let people witness your commitment; let people learn from you; let others follow your example!

VI. The frequency of service is persistence

- Jesus questioned Peter three times; Peter answered three times; Jesus commissioned Peter three times. The frequency of three times could be taken to correspond to the number of times Peter denied Jesus-three times however it also indicates that when God has a task for you and me to do, it does not matter how many times he will pursue us, God will persist to the point we may be hurt but eventually agree to do his service.
- This is consistent with what God did with Moses, he persistent, he countered every excuse given by Moses until Moses eventually gave in. God called Jonah, he ran away to a far country, God pursued him in the boat; God pursued him in the sea; God pursued him in the belly of the fish; God pursued him all the way to the place of his calling-Nineveh.
- How frequently has God been laying that burden in your heart? What excuses have you been giving God? God I don't have time? God I am still you? God I don't earn much? God I am not trained? God somebody else can do it? It is time to give in to God! It is time to say God I am send me! It is time to say even this money is yours, I will give it! It is time to pray to God even in the depth of the sea and the darkness in your life! It is time to surrender to God! Don't take it for granted that job! Don't take it for granted that you have that promotion! Don't take it for granted that you made that profit! Don't take it for granted for that sickness, failure, fear and misfortunes in your life! That could be the storm that opened the eyes of the travelers to Tarshis! It could be the belly of the fish designed to take your to Nineveh! Surrender!

VII. The satisfaction of service is obedience

- Towards the end of the narrative, Jesus tells Peter twice (vs 19, 22), "Follow me". When we have been confronted by the Lord in the area of service; when we have heard the voice of the Lord; when we have been given the burden, the only this that remains is obedience. This command finally restores Peter as the spiritual leader of the group.
- 'The song trust and obey' summarizes the joy that comes with obedience. There is no other way than to trust and obey. We are not happy because we gave a lot of money more than other, we are happy because we obeyed to command to give; we are not happy because we prayed longest than everybody, we are happy because we obeyed the command to pray; we are not happy because we drove out demons, we are happy because we obeyed the command to preach the word. To obey is better than sacrifices! You cannot exchange obedience with anything!
- This command was familiar to Peter, it was the very first command that Jesus gave Peter in the very same place (Luke 5:27; Math 4:19). In Revelation 2:4, 'you have forsaken your first love'. Today I urge you to go back to your first love; I call upon you to go back to your first worship; I call upon you to go back to your first giving; I call upon you to go back to your first witness; I call upon you to go back to your first morals; I call upon you to abandon idols and follow Jesus; I call upon you to abandon baal and follow Jesus; I call upon you to abandon your illuminati and follow Jesus; remember how you were happy! Remember how you had peace! Remember how your conscience was clean! Follow Jesus- Nimekubali kumfwata Yesu!

VIII. The abandonment of service is vanity

- The setting of this narrative is by the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) where they had gone fishing and did not catch anything the whole night until Jesus intervened. When Jesus intervened two things happened-they had a great catch it was almost impossible to haul to shore and they found a hot sumptuous breakfast awaiting them by the shore prepared by none other than Jesus Christ! Wow! Jesus does not only save, he also feeds! These disciples have been trying to catch fish all night instead of waiting for Jesus. If they needed something to do, they should have been trying to catch men with the gospel – Jesus is alive!
- Life without Jesus is vanity! Life without Jesus is miserable! Money without Jesus is meaningless! Career without Jesus is vanity of vanity! Family without Jesus is hopeless! Many people are committing suicide because of vanity! Many people are deep in drugs because of vanity! Many people have walked out of marriages because of vanity! People have turned to greed and corruption because of vanity! People have killed their friends and sacrificed their family because of vanity!
- Go back to serving Jesus, you will regain your lost joy! Go back to obeying Jesus, you will know the peace you have missed for so long! Go back to giving towards the Lord's ministry, you will restore the successes you used to experience in your career and business! Go back to the altar of your house, you will experience unity and love you have longed for! Go back to witnessing, you will see your friendship with neighbors and colleagues improving!
- Application: Song Daddy Owen vanity
- Prayer of rededication and reaffirmation to serve the Lord Jesus Christ!
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- Dear Lord, I confess my sin of backsliding; father I confess my sin of idolatry; father I confess my sin of neglecting your altar in my life and family; father I confess my lukewarmness and lack of passion and zeal for your service; father I confess that I have robbed you by not tithing and giving my offerings; father I now rebuke the devourer from my business and career. I claim your word which promises that if we confess our sins you are faithful and just to forgive all our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Father I desire a closer walk with Jesus. I claim your promise that says that if I draw closer to you, you will draw closer to me. Father I rededicate my life, my spirit, my mind and my body to you. I pray for a fresh anointing upon my whole life. I claim back what the evil one has stolen from me, I claim my family, I claim my spouse, I claim my children, I claim my health, I claim my joy, I claim my career, I claim my peace by the blood of Jesus Christ! Thank you Lord Jesus for allowing to rededicate my life to you and reaffirming my desire to serve you! In Jesus name! Amen!