

## Feed My Sheep

John 21:15-19

This passage tells us of Jesus' educating his followers after the resurrection. Actually he was not happy with them, because they had abandoned him, and even when he returned they did not recognize him at first. (Evangelist: narrate the events of John 20.)

Jesus wanted to determine who was his closest follower. This is the reason for the question put to Peter, three times: "Do you love me?" Then Jesus told Peter, "Feed my Sheep." An important heavenly principle is hidden in these words. As long as we truly love Him, God asks us to take responsibility for others – Christians, members of other religious groups, as well as non-believers. Many Christians today expect that God automatically grants them mercy and guarantees their eternal life, and that they will surely go to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the general attitude which people have and yet they still think that God does not require any condition from them. But Jesus' words tell us that Christians must take responsibility for others: "Feed my sheep."

Vertical relationship: "Do you love me?"

Horizontal relationship: "Feed my sheep."

(Discuss both types of relationships with God, emphasizing that the vertical on its own is not enough.)

Peter had great vertical faith. He tried to walk on the water when Jesus summoned him. Could we have that kind of faith? Yet Peter later denied Jesus. That is why Jesus asked him if he loved him, three times, just to make sure. Also, it was because Peter had denied Jesus three times. We cannot judge Peter; he probably had no idea of what he was doing at the time he denied Jesus. And later his heart must have been tortured with pangs of guilt.

Peter must have felt even more agonizing pain when Jesus questioned him if he loved him. Then Jesus commissioned him, "Feed my sheep," and warned him of the trials ahead (John 21:18).

Let us examine Peter's situation. He, like all the disciples, probably expected great glory and triumph, following the messiah. And yet he and the other disciples were persecuted and

misunderstood. Finally, their Lord was taken to trial, imprisoned, beaten, and crucified. What a difficult chain of circumstances to follow!

But then Jesus returned in his glorified body, resurrected from the dead. Now, perhaps Peter thought, he will judge the wicked and begin his reign of glory. But instead, Jesus gave Peter a great public mission, a burden: “Feed my sheep.” Peter had to learn to see things from God’s viewpoint, from Jesus’ viewpoint and situation, not from his own.

We should learn from this. We should always think of what motivation God has in bestowing His grace on our lives. We should think of how to repay Him with a thankful heart. We should try to always feel happy when we realize that God and Jesus have left their footprints in history. Because of their hardships, we are able to experience happiness in our lives.

Further, when we have hardships and struggles, we should be grateful to be able to share and dedicate them to God, to more better understand the heart of God and Jesus. In that way trials and suffering can be sublimated into joy. If Peter had realized this when Jesus was undergoing his trial, and told the soldiers, yes, I am the man’s follower, he could have walked with Jesus, carried the cross on his shoulder and died together with him on Golgotha. What a glorious death he would have had!

Peter tried to get someone else to share the burden with him (John 21:21), but Jesus scolded him (John 21:22). We should realize that when God gives ME a mission it is MY mission, my personal responsibility. We should not compare our situation with that of another, as Peter did. We have our own unique situation before God; our own sins and merit, abilities and weaknesses. We should go our own way of faith, not depending upon what others think of us. What is so important about gaining popularity? No matter what people say, you should only be concerned that you are following God’s righteousness. Don’t be controlled by others’ viewpoints; that will only make you zig-zag, a serpent’s path. If Peter had been grateful for Jesus’ direction to him, he wouldn’t have been concerned about John’s situation.

To accomplish his, we must cultivate a strong vertical relationship with God.

Jesus was trying to discover the state of Peter’s vertical relationship with God and himself – whether it was true and deep or not. We must remember that God is asking each one of us even at this moment if we love Him the most. When we feel Him asking us this question we should be ready to answer immediately. When we do, God will want to trust us and give us the horizontal mission to “feed His sheep.” Do you know what God earnestly asks you to do this

now? How many sheep are wandering without the direction or way? We must guide them. They are God's sheep. We should obey God's silent command to "feed His sheep," and accept it as our own responsibility.