

# Lord of My Love

*Gospel of John*

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**Bible Text:** John 21

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This morning I invite you to join me in the gospel of John chapter number 21.

It has been 15 months since we first began our journey though the gospel of John and my Sunday morning preaching series from John has spanned two summers, the summer of 2011 and here now the summer of 2012. In both summers we also met together as small groups on Wednesday evenings in various homes in our community to complement our studies here on Sunday morning. I trust they have been helpful for us. But at long last now, we come to John 21. John 21 is an epilogue that along with the prologue in chapter one verse one through 18, form bookends that hold this book together.

You see, the main section of the gospel of John concludes in chapter 20 where John summarized his purpose for writing this gospel:

“...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”<sup>1</sup>

John 20 verse 31.

And I hope that each and every one of you believes. I hope that each and every one of you has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by faith in him. For over the last year we have shared the gospel many, many times from this pulpit. But if you are one of those who has not yet believed, please do so today. I would be happy to talk with you and share with you more about Jesus. But this morning from John 21 I prepared a message titled, “Lord of my Love.” I have prepared an outline and it is placed there in your church bulletin. You will notice that it is largely blank. But if you care to follow along you can fill in those blanks as we progress through John chapter 21. Let’s pray.

*Father God, we pause now before we approach your Word and we do so with humility but we do so with anticipation. Lord, we are eager to study the holy Scriptures. And, Lord God, I pray that your Spirit will be our teacher this morning. May I get out of the way. May I hide behind the cross. Lord, may I be an unchoked channel to clearly explain the meaning of this text and its context. Lord, I also pray for this hearer. I pray, God, that*

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:31.

*you would arrest their attention and focus their attention upon our study just now. Lord, when all is said and done this morning we want to love you more. May you be the Lord of our love. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Remind yourself of all that has taken place in the lives of the disciples over the previous three years as they walked with Jesus and they talked with Jesus and they lived with Jesus. They saw the miracles that he performed. They heard the words that he taught. It has just been a few weeks now since Jesus made his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and then a few days later the disciples enjoyed the last Passover supper with Jesus there in the upper room before he led them to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed. He was arrested. He was tried and then he was crucified. And three days later his tomb was empty and his body was gone. The resurrected Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on that Sunday morning and then to the 10 of his disciples that Sunday evening. Eight days later he appeared again to his disciples, on this occasion with Thomas as well. The last three years of the disciples' life had been consumed with Jesus. The last three weeks of the disciples lives had been consumed with Jesus. Every circumstance and every conversation was about Jesus. Jesus was their life. Jesus was their love. Jesus was their Lord.

But now, John 21 verse number one, after all of these things the disciples made their way back north from Jerusalem to Galilee, an 80 mile walk in the course of a couple of days. And that was their home. They had nowhere else to go. And I would imagine there were moments of silence on the road as they walked.

And then someone, perhaps, interrupted the silence by speaking of Jesus again. So they talked of the past with Jesus. They talked of their future without Jesus or could it be that they would see him again for a third time?

John 21 verse one says:

“After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.”<sup>2</sup>

For the third time now the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ appears to his disciples.

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.<sup>3</sup>

I would title these verses, number one, the distracted life. In Matthew 28 we read that Jesus had specifically commanded the disciples to wait for him on the mountain. But

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<sup>2</sup> John 21:1.

<sup>3</sup> John 21:1-3.

there on the mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee, hearing the lapping of the water on the shore, Peter became distracted by the prospect of fishing. It was too much for him. And in that Peter was an impatient man of action who had once been a successful fisherman. He blurted out in verse number three, "I am going to fishing." Always the impulsive one, Peter couldn't sit still. The others agreed to join him. I would call this letter A the presumptuous move.

You see, sometimes the demands on our attention are so great for so long that the moment comes when we can no longer function. We push back from our work and we declare, "I am out. I can't take it any longer. I am done. I am going fishing." Have you been there? And I suppose it is a common occurrence in our lives. We call it entertainment. We call it recreation. We call it R and R. We call it P T O or vacation, but for Peter and the disciples it was a presumptuous move because it was more than a temporary escape. Peter was not taking a time out. Peter was returning to his former life, his life before Jesus. And because Jesus was no longer the focus of Peter's attention, he became distracted by the opportunities around him and he made a presumptuous move.

Now I will make the case for this for three reasons. Number one, back in John 16 verse 32 Jesus predicted that the disciples would abandon him. Jesus said:

"...the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own."<sup>4</sup>

Some Bible translations add the word home, each to his own home. But Christ's prediction implies more than returning to one's house or to one's place of residence. It includes one's property and possessions and activities and affairs. In fact, in 1 Thessalonians 4:11, the very same phrase is translated one's own business.

When Peter said, "I am going fishing," I believe he was saying, "I am going back to where I left off before Jesus," a presumptuous move.

I would also make this case because of the definite article, the the in front of the boat there in verse three. You see it as the boat. It is the boat which suggests a specific boat, not any old boat. It was probably a boat that belonged to one of the disciples, perhaps even belonged to Peter himself, a boat that had been waiting for them there, waiting of their return. And then also I would make the case that this was a presumptuous move. Peter was returning to his former life before Jesus because later in verse number 15 Jesus questioned Peter:

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"<sup>5</sup>

And that could be understood as referring to the boats, to the nets, to the fish. And I think it becomes very clear later in this passage that Jesus is calling Peter away from his former life as a fisherman, the life and the livelihood that he had as a fisherman and Jesus is calling Peter to make him Lord of his love.

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<sup>4</sup> John 16:32.

<sup>5</sup> John 21:15.

But at this point Peter is distracted. He is distracted by life and living and he makes a presumptuous move.

Verse number four.

But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than taking off his cloak, he put on his cloak, fully clothed, jumps into the water.

But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" — knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

I would title verses four to 14, "The Patient Master."

You see, Jesus knew where the disciples were. Jesus knew what the disciples were doing. They were distracted by fishing so Jesus waited for them patiently, all night, there on the shore. And he prepared a meal for them to eat. This was his third appearance to them.

I found it stunning to consider how much this incident parallels what took place in Luke chapter five. In Luke chapter five, really in both occasions the disciples spent a frustrating night on the water catching nothing. Both times Jesus compelled them to cast their nets one more time. Both times there was instant success with an abundance of fish, but there is one important distinction between this occasion and the circumstances in Luke chapter five. And that is in Luke chapter five Peter was so impressed and so intimidated by the miracle Jesus performed that Peter said, "Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man." Luke five verse eight.

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<sup>6</sup> John 21:4-14.

But in this case Peter responded differently. Peter jumped out of the boat fully clothed and he swam 100 yards to Jesus. Why the difference in Peter's reaction? I think it is that Peter learned that Jesus wasn't just a miracle worker. Jesus was a mercy shower. When Peter had fallen and failed he found Jesus to be forgiving and kind and patient.

Aren't you glad for that? If you had come to know Jesus, you find him not only to be a miracle worker, but a mercy shower and you know that he is patient with us. He is always standing by ready to restore us and that is the case again here in this passage in John 21. You see, it was just hours ago, the night before, when Peter had become impatient in waiting for the Lord and he had become distracted by the prospect of fishing and returning to his fishing career. But now Jesus was with them again.

And I titled these verses, "The Distracted Life," because at times I find myself so much to be like the disciples. And there are allurements and there are attractions of so many things that pull me into activity, not the wrong activity, but business or busy-ness that is other than what God wants me to do. Jesus wanted his disciples to wait for him on the mountain, yet they are tooling around on the lake in the dark, accomplishing nothing. They are distracted from the focus on Jesus Christ. And Jesus had previously called them to be fishers of men. But they are wasting their life, fishing for fish. And, oh, that our lives would not depart from other distractions, but, oh, that we would be wholly fixed on Jesus and the entertainment and the recreations and the hobbies and the careers of our lives will only put us out on the lake in the dark wasting our lives.

And the tragedy is that while we are wasting our lives, Jesus is waiting to meet. But Jesus is patient. He waits for his disciples to come ashore from their toiling. He feeds them. It brings us to verse 15 and following. I would title these verses, "The Determined Love."

Now love for God has always been a mark of the people of God. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy six verse five says:

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."<sup>7</sup>

In the New Testament, of course, Matthew 22 Jesus said:

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."<sup>8</sup>

And there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee Jesus pressed Peter now regarding his love. Look at verse 15.

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?'"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 22:37.

I am going to suggest more than these fish, these fishing boats, these fishing nets.

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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, "Feed My sheep."<sup>10</sup>

I want you to notice in verses 15 through 17 Jesus calls Peter Simon son of Jonah. That is, letter A, the old name. Simon son of Jonah was Peter's name before he knew Jesus. Simon was his name before his great confession of faith in Matthew 16. The only time Jesus called Peter Simon was when Jesus was rebuking Peter in Matthew 17, Mark 14 and Luke 22. So what we have here in John 21 is that Jesus is calling Peter by his former name because Peter is acting like his former self. And Jesus is rebuking Peter. Jesus' question in verse 15 was a question of love. "Do you love me more than these?" The antecedent for these, what the these things that Jesus is referring to? Some have suggested that Jesus is referring to his friends, the other disciples that are seated there around the camp fire eating breakfast. I suggest that Jesus was referencing the fish, the fishing nets, the fishing boats, the fishing paraphernalia, all of the fishing that was around him. And you will remember I suggested a moment ago that because of Peter's impatience in waiting for Jesus, thinking that Jesus was gone for good, Peter returned to his old life and his old life style. He had become distracted in his life. That is number one, the distracted life. He had become distracted in his life by the prospect of fishing, his first love. Did you catch that? His first love, his fishing career, that caused him to make the presumptuous move. But Jesus had taught you can't serve two masters. Either you love the one and hate the other or you will hate the one and you will love the other. So Peter, do you love me more than your fishing career? Do you love me more than these? And Jesus addressed Peter by the old name, Simon, son of Jonah.

But it wasn't only the old name. Letter B, it is the old claim. The old claim. Yes, Lord, you know that I love you, verse 15. It is as if Peter is complaining, Lord we have been through this before. How many times have I told you before? I love you. But there is an interesting word play occurring here in this dialog between Jesus and Peter. Look at the Scripture text with me. In verse 15 the Greek word for love that Jesus used in verse 15 is the word *αγαπω* (apao ag-ap-ah'-o) or *αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay). *αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay) is the highest love of the will, the love of total commitment.

But Peter answers with a different word in verse 15. It is the word *φιλεω* (fil-eh'-o). *φιλεω* (fil-eh'-o) is the love of a brother or a friend, brotherly love. Peter acknowledged that his love for Jesus was less than he previously claimed. I will die for you Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup> John 21:15.

<sup>10</sup> John 21:15-17.

Peter's love was less than he had previously claimed and Peter's love for Jesus was less than Jesus deserved. Jesus died for Peter. So Peter conceded that he didn't αγαπη (ag-ah'-pay) Jesus, he only φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) Jesus.

In verse 16 again Jesus asked Peter a second time. Do you love me? Jesus used the word αγαπαω (ag-ap-ah'-o) again or αγαπη (ag-ah'-pay) love. Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And, again, Peter used the word φιλεω (fil-eh'-o). And so in verse 17, for the third time, Jesus asked Peter about his love. But this time in verse 17, the third time Jesus used Peter's word. So Jesus says, "Peter do you, φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) me. Simon, I am sorry. Simon, son of Jonah, do you φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) me?" And Jesus is now calling into question Peter's φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) love.

You see, Jesus is calling into question less than total commitment love. Jesus is asking Peter. "Peter, do you even φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) me?"

And that devastated Peter in verse 17. He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) you. Or you know that at least I φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) you." He is frustrated.

And, folks, there is a beautiful thing in this dialog in verses 15 through 17. In spite of the failure of Peter's life. And in spite of the frailty of Peter's love, Jesus determined to love Peter and restore Peter and to use Peter, calling Peter to care for his flock, to feed his lambs and his sheep. Three times Jesus called Peter to serve Jesus' flock in spite of Peter's faint love. And, you see, I suggest that the determined love of Roman numeral number two, number two is the determined love. It is not so much about Peter's love for Jesus. That is Jesus' love for Peter. And Jesus calls us to love him supremely. Jesus calls us to love him with that αγαπη (ag-ah'-pa) love, that determined love above everything else, above our friends and our work and our hobbies and our ambitions and our children. He is to be the Lord of love, but when our love for him is pathetic, when at best we have φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) love for him, he still loves us anyway. He has determined love for us. He has αγαπη (ag-ah'-pay) love for us.

So this morning I ask you. Do you love Jesus? Do you love him above all else? Do you αγαπαω (ag-ap-ah'-o) him? Do you αγαπη (ag-ah'-pay) him? Do you love him with that total commitment love?

Is he the Lord of your love? There was a distracted life. That is Peter, the disciples, that caused them to move presumptuously back to their former careers of fishing. But the master was patient. There is a determined love. Jesus called Peter by the old name Simon. Peter made the old claim. I love you, Lord. But Jesus was determined in his love for Peter and that brings us to the final words of this epilogue in the gospel of John, the conclusion of this gospel. I have titled it, number three, "The Direct Lessons."

Jesus spoke in verse 18 and 19:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."<sup>11</sup>

I would call this a prophet revelation, letter A. You see, Jesus is prophesying Peter's martyrdom. In Peter's youth he had the liberty to do what he wanted to do and go where he wanted to go. However, Jesus revealed at the end of his life Peter would be seized, bound and executed. The phrase stretch out your hands describes the death by which Peter would die. Stretching out his hands he would be crucified.

According to church tradition Peter was crucified, but he requested to be crucified upside down for he didn't feel worthy to be crucified in the same way that his Lord Jesus.

Verse 20:

Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"<sup>12</sup>

And this is letter B, a pointed rebuke. When Peter asked about the faith of John, Jesus did not answer Peter as much as he rebuked Peter. In short John's life and death were none of Peter's business. And if Peter as to die and John was to live, that was no concern of Peter's. Peter needed to focus on his primary responsibility, to follow Jesus.

And, folks, I would say to us there is a great lesson. You see, God has called us each to run our own race of faith. God has not called me to run my race. God has not called me to run your race. We aren't competing against each other. We are to simply run and finish. But sometimes we look across the way at one another asking, "Lord, what about them? Why haven't they suffered the way I have suffered? Why haven't you blessed me the way you have blessed them?"

And Jesus said, "It is none of your business. Follow me."

There is a pointed rebuke. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He is the author and the finisher of your faith. Consider him and run the race that you have been given.

And then, finally, verses 24 and 25.

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<sup>11</sup> John 21:18-19.

<sup>12</sup> John 21:20-23.



This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.<sup>13</sup>

And I would title this, letter C, “A Promising Reassurance.” All that is recorded in this gospel of John is the testimony of a witness who is credible, because that witness is an eye witness. The apostle John is giving first hand witness and accounts. In fact, in 1 John chapter one—don’t put your things away just yet. In 1 John chapter one this same man wrote:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us — that which we have seen and heard we declare to you...<sup>14</sup>

That is a promising reassurance. For the past 15 months we have studied the gospel of John here on Sunday mornings. For the last two summers in our home Bible fellowships, our small groups we have studied the gospel of John and we can be assured that these things are true. This is the record of Jesus.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on the title of my message. Lord of my love, it is not original. In fact, there is very little that is original with me. I tell my wife, if I ever have an original thought I will write a book. And I have not yet written a book. But the title Lord of my love is actually from Shakespeare. It is his Sonnet number 26.

Now I don’t read a lot of Shakespeare and if and when I do I read the modern translation of it to understand what he wrote, but his Sonnet 26, it is not a sacred piece. It is simply a love poem. But it is titled “Lord of my Love.” And in the modern vernacular he begins with this.

“Lord of my love, whose merit has insured that I will serve you loyally.”

Because of who Jesus is we not only believe him, John 20 verse 31, we must love him.

“Lord of my love, whose merit has insured that I will serve you loyally.”

Because of who Jesus is we love him and serve him. And then the poem concludes with a concession of fear, a fear that the love would be put to the test. In the modern paraphrase it reads like this.

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<sup>13</sup> John 21:24-25.

<sup>14</sup> 1 John 1:1-3.

“If and when I dare to proclaim my love for you, then you will put my love to the test.”

What if the Lord put our love to the test as he did with Peter? Would he prove us to be true? Would he prove us to love him above all else? Would it prove that he is Lord above all?

This morning as we go from this place, I simply ask you. Dear believer, do you love Jesus more? Do you love him more than these? What is these? Do you love him more than your friends? Do you love him more than your family? Do you love him more than your career, your hobby, your things? Do you love Jesus more than these? Is he the Lord of your love? And if he is, you follow him. You serve him. And leave your former life behind.

Let's pray.

*Dear God, forgive us for our faint love. Lord, like Peter you may put our love to the test and ask if we even φιλεω (fil-eh'-o) you. Oh, God, give us that divine love, that love of total commitment, the volitional love of our will where we declare I love you no matter what. Then I pray that you would enlarge our hearts, that you would turn our affections to be wholly upon you. God, thank you for the gospel of John. We know that these were written that we might believe, but, Lord, beyond believing we want to be a people who love you supremely. I pray that you would help us toward that end in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**“Lord of My Love”**

John 21:1-25

- I. The \_\_\_\_\_ (1-14)
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_ (1-3)
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_ (4-14)
  
- II. The \_\_\_\_\_ (15-17)
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_
  
- III. The \_\_\_\_\_ (18-25)
  - A. A \_\_\_\_\_ (18-19)
  - B. A \_\_\_\_\_ (20-23)
  - C. A \_\_\_\_\_ (24-25)

**“Lord of My Love”**

John 21:1-25

- I. The \_\_\_\_\_ (1-14)
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_ (1-3)
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_ (4-14)
  
- II. The \_\_\_\_\_ (15-17)
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_
  
- III. The \_\_\_\_\_ (18-25)
  - A. A \_\_\_\_\_ (18-19)
  - B. A \_\_\_\_\_ (20-23)
  - C. A \_\_\_\_\_ (24-25)