



“WILL YOU REALLY LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR ME?”

~ JOHN 13:31-38 ~

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When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.” Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

I can remember back before Kristin and I were married, it was when I was in college, and one of my professors was talking about love, specifically in its relationship to marriage. Perhaps before a couple gets married, or in the marriage vows themselves, the husband or wife say they love their spouse so much that they would give up their life for them. Nothing out of the ordinary here. The part that my professor commented on was one, two, five, ten years into marriage to see where that love is. The wife asks the husband to take out the garbage, or the husband asks the wife to wash his clothes. It’s easy to promise to lay down your life for someone, but more often than not, it’s harder for a couple to show love in the little things that make up everyday life.

This was something that was repeated to me as Kristin and I were getting ready to be married. We had pre-marriage counseling which reaffirmed the love we were to show as husband and wife. It was a reflection of Christ’s love, in both the big things and little things in life. A marriage is only one instance where we are asked to take a vow. But another instance is when you are a confirmed member of a church. It is a vow you take when you stand up in front of church and say that you would rather die than to renounce Jesus or what God says in the Bible. But how much do we think about that on a regular basis, how much do we live it?

I would guess many of us are like the apostle Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples. Peter thought himself a very strong supporter of Jesus, he even said that he was willing to lay down his life for him. Now there is nothing wrong necessarily with saying that, but why do you say that and how do you back it up? We know from the Bible, Peter could talk the talk, but he couldn’t walk the walk. How often has that happened to us? It all comes down to the question WHO DO YOU LOVE MORE?

Today, we conclude our Summer Sermon series with a very important question. It is a question we should take seriously. Jesus asked Peter and asks us, **“Will you really lay down your life for me?”** The end of our series takes us to the end of Jesus’ life. He was gathered in the upper room of a house on Maundy Thursday, the day he instituted the Lord’s Supper, the very night he would be tried unjustly. Judas the traitor had just left, and Jesus is preparing the remaining disciples for what lay ahead. He said now was the time for him to be glorified, but it was something that he had to do alone, the disciples would not be able to follow.

Imagine what this must have been like for the disciples. They had followed him everywhere for the last three years, learning from him, enjoying his company. And now, all of a sudden, he was going to a place they could not go. You can see why Peter, the headstrong disciple, wants to come with Jesus. He may have thought this was just a simple test that he needed to pass. “Yea, it might be something difficult coming up, but I can handle it, I can take it.” All of this in spite of Jesus’ clear words, **“you cannot follow me.”** Peter continued to say boldly, **“Why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”** “Will you really Peter? Will you really?”

Jesus, the all-knowing Son of God knew exactly what was going to happen, he knew how Peter would respond when his feet went to the flame, and he told him. **“I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”** It’s not just that Peter wouldn’t be able to follow through on his boast, but how quickly he wasn’t able to follow through. Jesus told Peter, “You’re not even going to make it through the night before you have to eat your words. WHO DO YOU LOVE MORE? For Peter on this night, it was himself.

But don’t feel sorry for just Peter, because all the other disciples chimed in with the same bold words of staying with Jesus. Oh how Jesus’ heart must have broken. The disciples thought they were doing something bold, heroic, even godly by defending the Son of God. One of them even would try to defend Jesus against the mob that was coming to capture him by wielding his sword and cutting off an ear. But all of this was not furthering God’s glory, even though they thought it was. God’s glory is not shown in our own boldness, it’s not shown in us, it is shown in God’s Son Jesus.

Now, one of the reasons why we come to church is not only to hear God’s Word, but also to hear how it applies to our lives. I have to admit, at first when I read this story from the Bible, I probably had the same thought that most of you had. Wow! Peter was pretty cocky! Didn’t he know Jesus had to die, didn’t he listen to Jesus’ words right then and there saying he couldn’t follow? The answer to all of those questions is “No!” Peter was not listening. This story makes you feel good that you don’t make vain boasts. We’re here in church on Sunday, listening to God’s Word, we love Jesus, we would never do anything to disappoint him, or at least we wouldn’t flat out contradict him to his face. We love Jesus. Perhaps we would even say that we would die for him, or at least die, rather than fall away.

But don’t you think this is what Peter thought too? Sure, this shows our love for Jesus – by coming to church, by reading your Bible, by facing ridicule and persecution for his name (even death), but what does that accomplish? One thing we cannot accuse the disciples of is not wanting what was best for Jesus, that’s something that we want too. But what we think is best or right is not always the case. One thing the disciples were guilty of was not listening to Jesus when he was talking to them. Jesus told them the

truth when he said they could not follow him and the disciples didn't pay attention. How many of God's truths have we not listened to because we were thinking of God's best interest?

What are some of the "truths" Jesus has given to us? Where else can we go and find these truths than in God's Word, which is truth. Jesus says to his disciples, **"If anyone would follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."** WHO DO YOU LOVE MORE, yourself or God? When God says, **"don't give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing,"** how often have we thought we were the exception to the rule. Or that **"faith comes from hearing the message,"** that may be how God normally works, but I'm the exception. **"The wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God,"** **"we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** We have been guilty of not listening to Jesus in his word as well. Every time we place our thoughts, our wants, our desires before God, every time we do not deny ourselves, we show that we love ourselves more than we do God.

Peter himself refused to believe that we would so soon deny his Lord, just as we can say in church we would never sin against God so soon. But how true are the inspired writer Paul's words when he wrote, **"The good I want to do I do not do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I do."** This is no excuse, but merely the reality of living in sin. The depth that sin reaches down within us we cannot even fathom. We cannot choose not to sin any more than a slave can choose to be free. And all of this leads us to look at our Savior once more.

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Jesus told his disciples they couldn't follow where he was going. That was because Jesus was going to the cross to die. And while the disciples could theoretically have followed him to his death, they still would not have accomplished all that he would accomplish. While he asked Peter **"Will you really lay down your life for me,"** he was all the while thinking of his mission. Jesus said, **"I am the good shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep."** You see, the question we should ask ourselves is not, WHO DO YOU LOVE MORE? Because this changes from day to day, but WHO LOVES YOU MORE?

Jesus had just given the disciples a visible example of his love for them. He had washed their stinky, smelly feet. He loved them even though they didn't deserve his love. He loves us, even though we don't deserve his love – this is grace. To paraphrase a video I recently saw, Jesus' death on the cross made the unforgiveable, forgiveable. We have no excuses for not following God's Law, it gives clear and straightforward directions to heaven. But we cannot follow it perfectly, as much as we try. But where we could not, God did. And he did it because he loved you!

God loved us even before we were born, even before the creation of the world. This is a mind blowing assertion, but it is true. Read in Romans 8, **"For those God foreknew he also predestined...and those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."** God knows everything there is to know about you. And just like a best-selling author sets up his plot for the hero to succeed, God sets up the plot in our lives to believe. This is how much he loves us.

Not only did God set us up to believe, he set us up to live for him. He gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell inside of us to enable us to do things we couldn't otherwise do. Look at Jesus' disciples for a great example. The disciples Jesus gathered around him were a motley crew. They were a stumbling,

bumbling, bunch of fishermen and tax collectors. They certainly couldn't carry out anything of significance on their own. And these were the ones Jesus was leaving in charge of his Church. But the Holy Spirit came upon them and emboldened them to carry God's Word to the far reaches of the world.

We were not called because we were anything special, but we are called to be something special. We are called to love one another like God loved us, in this way we glorify the God we serve. And where can we learn about all of this, where can we learn to grow in our love for God? In no other place but God's Word. I had an awesome experience this last week. One person I was talking to said coming to a Bible study has made him want to read more of God's Word. How awesome is that? God's Word is like Lays Potato Chips, you can't just eat one. Once you hear about God's Word, you can't stop, you want to get more. May God give you the strength and the desire to search his Word to find out more about the one WHO LOVES YOU MORE. Amen.