

How much do you love me? (John 21:15-19)

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon (family service)
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 4th July 2010

Intro-

- Split up into 3 groups, each with children in the groups
- Discuss- what is love? What do people do to show others that they love them?
- Love dash relay- children hop to get the 4 Greek words for love and adults have to pair the words with the right definition. First to finish correctly wins. Philia- friendship love. Eros- romantic love. Storge- affectionate love. Agape- sacrificial love.
- We are going to read a bit from the Bible which mentions 2 of these types of love- the friendship love and the sacrificial love. We are going to look at when Jesus has been raised from the dead and speaks to Peter. Peter is feeling sheepish because he knows that when Jesus was arrested to be crucified Peter had denied that he knew Him 3 times.

Read John 21:15-19 (preferably J.B. Phillips version or Living Bible)

Peter came to realise how much Jesus really loved Him

- Sometimes it is not until we really let someone down and yet they forgive us and still love us that we really realise how much they truly love us. This was the case with Peter. Peter claimed that even if the other disciples deserted Jesus he would not (Mk 14:29). Hence he was claiming to love Jesus more than they did. So Jesus reminds him of this 'do you love me more than these?'. Jesus uses the word agape meaning sacrificial love.
- Peter knew that he had messed up and uses a lesser word 'philia' meaning friendship love in response each time.
- Again Jesus asks 'do you love me?' this time missing out the 'more than these'. Again Peter answers, conscious of his failure, that he loves him as a friend (philia).
- Lastly Jesus lowers the question further and asks 'do you philia me?'- 'do you even love me as a friend?'. Peter is so hurt this time and answers in the affirmative.
- Through all of this Peter came to realise that despite letting Jesus down Jesus was willing to forgive him, in fact Jesus knew he would do it and prayed for him beforehand (Lk 22:31-32) and asked that when he turned back he strengthened his brothers.
- This showed Peter that he was secure in God's grace and that he didn't need to serve Jesus to be accepted but he was to serve in the knowledge that he already was accepted. His love for us is not performance-dependant; what an amazing love!
- When we realise just how much He loves us it causes us to want to love Him back ('we love because He first loved us' 1Jn 4:19). Have you realised how much He loves you? Game I play with Simeon (and did with all the kids) -I love you (some huge number growing constantly). He loves you more than the universe. Someone read Rom 8:35-39 & Eph 3:14-19.
- Have you messed up like Peter? Why not receive His forgiveness today and revel once again in His love?

A little boy's mother was invited to his first parent's evening in primary school. To his dismay, she said she would go. This would be the first time that his classmates and teacher met his mother and he was embarrassed by her appearance. Although she was a beautiful woman, there was a severe scar that covered nearly the entire right side of her face. The boy never wanted to talk about why or how she got the scar. At the parent's evening, the people were impressed by the kindness and natural beauty of his mother despite the scar, but the little boy was still embarrassed and hid himself from everyone. He did, however, get within earshot of a conversation between his mother and his teacher, and heard them speaking. "How did you get the scar on your face?" the teacher asked. The mother replied, "When my son was a baby, he was in a room that caught on fire.

Everyone was too afraid to go in because the fire was out of control, so I went in. As I was running towards his cot, I saw a beam coming down and I placed myself over him trying to shield him. I was knocked unconscious but fortunately, a fireman came in and saved both of us." She touched the burned side of her face. "This scar will be permanent, but to this day, I have never regretted doing what I did." At this point, the little boy came out running towards his mother with tears in his eyes. He hugged her and felt an overwhelming sense of the sacrifice that his mother had made for him. He held her hand tightly for the rest of the day. Jesus still has the scars on His hands showing the extent of His love for us.

Peter came to love the sheep/God's people/The Church

- 5 people to come out and serve someone they choose with a packet of love hearts.
- Each time, in response to Peter's confession of friendship love for Jesus, He asks him to put that love into practise by loving God's people.
- Here Jesus' tender love for the Church (us!) is seen by the tender terms He uses 'my lambs, my sheep'- we are the tender, beautiful, precious sheep belonging to Him, our shepherd.
- It is also seen by Jesus charging Peter to promise to look after God's precious people. Imagine you know you are going to be with the Lord. Who would you entrust your loved ones to? Jesus had entrusted his mother's care to John whilst dying on the cross (Peter had denied Him). Now Peter was entrusting the care of His precious people to Peter. He was imparting His shepherd heart into him. Peter was wrecked by seeing just how much Jesus loved the Church- enough to die for them. And so Peter calls the elders, like him a fellow elder to shepherd the flock of God (elders are to shepherd-they are pastors and overseers/bishops) willingly and eagerly, serving as examples to them and not lording over them (1Pet 5:1-4).
- This is our model of service- willingly serving the Church because of the privilege entrusted to us by Jesus. We may not be pastors but we are all to be pastoral. The promise in the 1Pet 5:1-4 is that we will then receive a crown from the chief shepherd-Jesus. How are we doing shepherding those entrusted by Jesus to our care?
- Has the call of God on your life or God's people become burdensome? Look again to the passion Jesus had for people, and start to see the beauty in the people you are serving. Remember your reward is coming. Ask God to help you to see everyone through His eyes 'this is a precious jewel I have died for'. Paul could see that the very people he was serving were in fact his crown- 'For what is our hope or joy or crown of glory? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus, at his coming?' (1Thess 2:19)
- Someone has said 'If you can't stand the smell of sheep, you shouldn't be a shepherd.'
- Bob Jones, one of the Kansas City prophets had a vision of Jesus asking people one question when they get to glory- 'did you learn to love?'

Peter came to love Jesus enough to lay down His life for Him

- When it came down to it, Peter initially bragged about something he didn't have the bottle to do- die for Jesus- he loved his own life too much. It was only when he saw just how much Jesus loved him, enough to die for him, and enough to forgive him, and enough to use him again in ministry- that he was ready to hear the prophetic word that in the future he would lay down his life for Jesus. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified, and asked to be crucified upside down so that people would not confuse his humble cross with Christ's true cross.
- Peter had to come to the place where Christ was his first love, not his second after himself- he had to die to self. This is true agape love- self-sacrificing love on behalf of another. The Christian life is one of daily making Jesus our first love.
- The Church in Ephesus was rebuked by Jesus in Rev 2:1-4 for forsaking their first love. The way back was through repentance and recalling how low they had fallen when God freely poured out His grace on them. When we recall our sin and the fact that God had freely forgiven us then the feelings of love return- although Paul knew he was a saint he never lost the wonder of God forgiving him, the 'worst of sinners'

(1Tim 1:15-16). We should never forget our testimony. He who is forgiven much loves much (Lk 7:47).

- Do you love Jesus? When was the last time you told Him so, from the heart? My dream recently of weeping with passion and longing, yearning for Christ and loving Him- woke and wept in bed. I believe there is an outpouring of passion and yearning and weeping with gratitude that the Spirit is wanting to pour out on the Church. Evan Roberts would weep out of love when he thought of the cross of Christ. When was the last time you wept when you realised the extent of Christ's love for you? Passion for Jesus is the bottom line- it is where it is at. The sons of Korah had that spirit of yearning as they wrote about their soul longing for God as the deer pants for water (Ps 42:1).
- As we get truly messed up by His love we will start to serve not out of dull routine but out of love. It is the difference between the apathetic ungrateful young student and the grateful mature student in University. It is the difference between the hired-hand and the shepherd of the sheep- one serves with care. God wants us to spend time with Him, not because we have to, but because we want to.
- Have things become routine for you? Have you lost spiritual zeal for Jesus? Ask Him to rekindle the fire in you again as you surrender to Him.
- Get someone to read aloud 'Guess how much I love you' (by Sam McBratney).

Summary

- Peter came to realise how much Jesus really loved Him
- Peter came to love the sheep/God's people/The Church
- Peter came to love Jesus enough to lay down His life for Him

Song- *He is jealous for me (How He loves-Dave Crowder Band)*