




# A PERSONAL PREDICAMENT

JOHN 21:15

A SERMON BY  
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**Date:** April 23, 2023  
**Preacher:** Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque  
**Sermon Title:** A Personal Predicament  
**Scripture:** John 21:15a (NIV)

*When they had finished eating,  
Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"*

### ***SERMON SUMMARY***

This weekend's sermon invites us into the intimate exchange between Jesus and Peter on a beach by the side of the Sea of Galilee. Here, in John 21:15, after a miraculous catch and a breakfast of fish and bread, Jesus turns to Peter, calls Peter by his full name, and asks if Peter loves Jesus more than "these." Rev. Zina takes this one verse and invites us to see

1. Jesus' willingness to see Peter fully,
2. the reason behind his questioning of Peter's love, and
3. the meaning of the word "these."

The questions for those listening to the sermon are:

1. Will we allow Jesus to come close enough to have a personal conversation with us?
2. Will we open our hearts to the intimate correction that comes from a loving God who knows all about us and offers us the opportunity to love?
3. Will we take the invitation to lay down the implements of our former lives and take up the tasks of living in a new way for Him?

Insert your name here \_\_\_\_\_, and then hear Jesus ask, "Do you love me more than these?"

### ***KEY POINTS***

1. Jesus knows all there is to know about us and loves us fiercely.
2. Jesus desires an intimate relationship with each of us.
3. The "these" in our lives are those familiar things or people we turn to when we do not know what else to do.
4. When we do not know what to do, our first turn should always be to Jesus, not to the "these" in our lives.
5. God is always ready to do something new in our lives if we say yes.

***Village Members and Facilitators,  
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions.  
We ask facilitators to choose the best questions for your Village from each section.***

***GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS***

1. When you were growing up, what did it mean when a family elder called you by **all** your names? What was your first instinct?
  
2. What was the last new thing you learned how to do? Was it hard to learn? As you improved, what shifted within you, or did you give up?

***INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS***

1. Jesus calls Peter's full name in this text. When the Holy One calls people by name in the Bible, amazing things are about to happen (Ex: Exodus 3:1-10; Acts 9: 1-19). Name other moments in the Bible when Jesus calls people by name. What follows these moments?
  
2. The Apostle Peter was, arguably, one of the most significant persons in the New Testament. Similarly, David occupied this space in the Old Testament. However, Biblical accounts of both men record their many sinful acts. List some of the sins of David and Peter. Why do you think God chose people whose sinful actions could fill a book? Who else in the text can you name whom God used, even though their record was complicated?

### ***LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS***

1. Jesus asks Peter the question, “*Do you love me?*” **Do you love Jesus?** Before you answer, think about the last 24 hours of your life. In what ways did you demonstrate your love for Jesus? If you could relive yesterday, what would you change to love Jesus even more?
2. Rev. Zina describes the “these” of Jesus’ question to Peter as old habits that draw us away from seeing new things Jesus calls us to do. What are the “these” in your life? What old habits hinder you from serving God in new ways? How can you break the old habits and learn to serve God?
3. Do you think Peter was afraid to make the changes Jesus called for? What do we do when the Savior calls us to serve in unfamiliar territory? How do we prepare for such an assignment? How do we pray?

### ***CAN I PUSH IT QUESTIONS***

1. In what ways, if any, has the church become comfortable? How can the church move into new ways of ministry that God may be calling us to? What new ministries are needed? What current ministries have the opportunity to venture into new avenues of service?
2. Have you ever had a moment when past sins, for which you have asked and received forgiveness, came rushing back into your thoughts? What tools (Ex. prayer, meditation, song, therapy, etc.) do you use to help you lay those already forgiven sins down?

***ACTIVITY***

According to the Gospel of John, this is Jesus's third appearance over a period of several days (maybe even weeks) after His Resurrection. It is likely these episodic appearances caused concern among the disciples. Modern Christians also periodically share this concern. What strategies have been most helpful to you in deepening your walk with God during these quiet times? Please make a list of these strategies and share that list with your fellow Villagers.

***SPIRIT WORK***

List the things, habits, relationships, people, etc., that represent the "these" in your life. Underneath each one, note how they can get in the way of your love for Jesus. At the end of this exercise, finish this sentence, "Lord, I love these (insert your list), but if I place you before these in my life..." Use the completed sentence as a prayer this week.

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

***Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups.***

***Each week the team creates questions specifically for these individual groups.***

***However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.***

### ***For Married Couples***

1. Rev. Zina noted that Peter's own guilt warps his ability to hear Jesus' question. In your marriage, has guilt ever made it difficult to accept forgiveness from your spouse? Has guilt made it difficult to forgive your spouse? If so, how did you and your spouse move past the guilt to a space of grace and forgiveness? How did this experience shape your marriage?
2. On the beach, Jesus and Peter have an intimate moment. How has spiritual intimacy manifested in your marriage? How do you foster it? How does spiritual intimacy differ from other types of intimacy in your marriage?

### ***For Young Adults***

1. It appears that Peter often acted impulsively in particular scenarios. How can we process our impulses so we can respond thoughtfully instead of reacting? What advice do you have for managing your reactions to challenging situations?
2. Jesus sees Peter in the fullness of his identity and still welcomes him as a central part of the community. How might we practice seeing one another in a way that allows us to include (and not exclude) others in our various communities?

### ***For Parents***

1. While knowing that Peter has much for which to repent, Jesus speaks to Peter. But, in John 21, Rev. Zina posits that Jesus speaks to Peter in a loving voice. When your children fall out of your good graces, how do you talk to them? When is a loving voice the right choice? When is it not? What dictates the sound of your voice as you correct your children?
  
2. Rev. Zina quotes Lamentations 3:22-23 (included in the “Additional Resources” section). Please read this text as you prepare for Village. It reminds us that God’s compassion never fails, and God’s mercies are new each morning. How can this text guide you when you are engaged in an ongoing or recurring challenge with your child?

### ***For Seniors***

1. What does it mean to be fully known by Jesus? What does it mean for Him to know all our thoughts, hopes, faults, dreams, sins, desires, missteps, and foibles? Does it comfort you to be fully known by him, or does it disquiet you? Why or why not?
  
2. As we age, we become more “stuck in our ways” and can develop habits that do not please God. As you examine your life, share **one** habit you gave up to have a closer relationship with God.

### ***For Women***

1. Rev. Zina suggested that quoting scripture could be a “these.” Instead of just quoting scripture, she invited us to embody God’s word every day of our lives. How can you be living scripture? What would be difficult about that type of life? What would be gratifying about it?

2. How does it feel to know that you are fully known and loved by Jesus? What parts of you does Jesus encourage you to love more? What characteristics does Jesus lovingly challenge you to change?

***For Men***

1. Imagine God showing up to your Village, sitting next to you, and asking, “What are three things in your life that you would struggle to give up for me?” What would those three things be? What steps can you take today to let them go?
2. Imagine God also asking, “Are there three relationships that strengthen how you serve me?” What are they? How do they deepen your relationship with God?

***For Returning Citizens***

1. One of the critical points in this sermon is that Jesus knows all there is to know about us and loves us fiercely. Do you find it hard to believe that Jesus loves you fiercely? Why or why not?
2. Is it sometimes easier for us to run to worldly things instead of God? If so, why?



***For Differently-Abled Persons/People***

1. The disciples turned back to fishing when they did not know what else to do after Jesus was crucified. Where do you turn in times of difficulty or when you do not know the next move to make? Are you pleased with your answer? What, if anything, would you have done differently?
  
2. Jesus challenged Peter to change his profession from fishing for fish to fishing for people—making disciples. What has your faith called you to change in your life? Have you been able to do so? What were the costs and benefits of obeying the Savior’s call to change things in your life?

***ADDITIONAL RESOURCES***

***Lamentations 3:22-23***

1. *English Standard Version*: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.”
2. *New International Version*: “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”