

## **More Than These**

John 21:1-15

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These days we are concerned with many things. We are worried about our health as the coronavirus spreads, we are worried about our investments as the stock market dives, and we are worried about the future as the election is approaching. In these chaotic times, we need something concrete to hold on to. We need to be centered on Jesus.

In today's passage, we see that after Jesus' resurrection He visits the disciples, who have gone back to fishing, their old way of life. The disciples caught no fish. But Jesus tells them to cast their net on the other side of the boat, they catch more fish than they thought their net could handle. Then Jesus has this well-known conversation with Peter. He begins by asking Peter if he loves Him more than these. The text is ambiguous as to what "these" refers to. Jesus could be asking if Peter loves Him more than he loves the other disciples, or if he loves Him more than the other disciples love Him. But both seem out of character for Jesus to be asking. It doesn't seem like Jesus would compare Himself with the other disciples or encourage competition among the disciples as to who loves Him more. Jesus could have been referring to the fishing boats and equipment. But more directly, and perhaps most obviously, Jesus was probably referring to the huge catch of fish they just brought in, which seems important enough to actually mention the count in v. 11. Fish were the disciples' livelihood, and they would have been excited about the unprecedented size of their recent catch. Fish for fishermen are like sales for a sales representative. When he makes a record number of sales, he is excited and feels that he can better provide for his family. When Jesus asks Peter whether he loves Him more than these fish, He is asking whether Peter loves Him more than the things he relies on for his very survival.

The 40 days leading to Easter is called Lent, during which many give up something they usually indulge in as a sign of devotion to Jesus and to commemorate the 40 days Jesus fasted in the wilderness. Lent is observed in high liturgical churches, for example it is observed by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and some Lutherans and Presbyterians. Usually people give up trivial things like chocolate or video games. Some fast during Lent, which perhaps better aligns with what Jesus did. We don't observe Lent because it is not instituted in Scripture, but the idea of putting Jesus before other things still applies. But it's not merely some indulgence we give up. We must put Jesus before the things we depend on for our livelihood, just like the fish

that the disciples depended on. Would you trade the things you hold onto the most for a closer relationship with Jesus? Do you love Jesus more than money, success, or health?

Peter says that he does love Jesus more than these, but Jesus challenges him three times. The significance of this threefold statement is that it recalls when Peter denied Jesus three times. The number three is further emphasized in v. 14, which points out that this was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection. And in each of these three responses to Peter, Jesus tells him to feed His sheep. If Peter really loved Jesus, he would feed His sheep. This is how we show how much we love Jesus. We must serve those who Jesus loved. We show love to Jesus by showing love to those Jesus loves. It's just like when I interact with other parents, I show love to them by showing love to their children, whom they love. And those who help babysit my sons show love to me by showing love to them. Jesus will soon leave the disciples, but while He's gone He wants them and all of us to love and serve each other in mutual edification. Do you love Jesus more than everything else you value combined? Is He the center of your life? If so, show your love by serving each other in love.