

Introduction

"I love you"

- Three simple, words - yet profound and wonderful and disturbing!!
- They echo throughout our lives:
 - the safety and security of all that a home should be, summed up in the deep love parents give their children;
 - the joy and excitement and hope and vitality of romantic love, the thrill it sends down your spine;
 - the acceptance and companionship, the freedom of the deep love friends can share
- Just need to look at the themes that drive so much of the film world, the television world, the world of books and, of course, poetry
- We yearn to be loved; we yearn, too, to love, to give our energies and personalities to another:
 - that's the way we're made, the way we're wired up!
 - may have very different expression in different peoples lives and situations - singles, marrieds, young, old, with or without children - but it is there in all of us
- Following his betrayal of Jesus, Peter was left wondering whether Jesus could ever love him again - and whether he had ever really loved Jesus
 - lets spend some time learning how Jesus dealt with Peter in his bewilderment, and what Peter learned about Jesus as he did so:

Three Questions

Scene:

- lakeside, Galilee, fishing, caught nothing, Jesus appears on shore, tells them to put out their nets;
- **day time!!** (scene from Miracle Maker - captures Peter's disgust at Jesus' suggestion of fishing during day on an earlier occasion of a miraculous catch!!);
- did it; caught lots; realised it was the Lord; Peter plunges over the side impetuously!
- Breakfast; profoundly simple scene - Jesus with his disciples, his friends
- *"Peter, can I have a word...?"*
- Takes him aside; I've always pictured a walk up the beach...
- Three questions:
 - *"Do you love me?"*
- Scholars have debated purpose of the three, slightly different questions over the years:
 - highlighting small differences in the words used, etc
 - but distinctions don't really come to much!

Repetition

- Most likely that the repetition is the key to understanding what is happening!
- Three questions for three denials
- Repetition hammering something home that a simple statement wouldn't manage!
- Value in repetition:
 - times tables at school....
 - learning Scripture - I've known value of having learned a chunk of Philipians 2 off by heart many times, not merely in ministry but in life
 - use it in songs - chorus of hymns!
 - use it as we repeat Lord's Prayer week by week;
- Has value - not to be despised, but appreciated!
 - use it - eg daily prayer and Bible Study - habits, repetitions, whose value comes often as we repeat them time after time!

Second Chance

- Jesus' point in using the **threefold** repetition was to give Peter a **second** chance
- Three questions to give Peter a second chance
 - he needed to wipe away Peter's **feeling of guilt**;
 - he needed to emphasise that no sin was too big or bad to be wiped away!
 - (notice: denying Jesus isn't like murder or whatever, and can be something we do from time to time almost without noticing; Peter has been made acutely aware of how profoundly awful denying Jesus really is!)
- At one level we are all beneficiaries of a second chance from God:
 - that is what the offer of forgiveness is!
- *There is nothing that we can do that will make God love us more; there is nothing that we can do that will make God love us less.*
- Who do we tend to write off?
 - what sins or conditions of life do we tend to not expect God to be able to deal with?
 - drug abuse? Sexual infidelity? Certain diseases? People who've been dealt a particularly difficult hand in life - family, or poverty, or whatever?
- Guess many of us will have heard various stories of people to whom God was able to give a second chance:
 - Cross & Switchblade, Nicky Cruz, and ministry of David Wilkerson, who died in the last couple of weeks
 - as a member of the CU in Edinburgh in the 1980s accompanying an ex-Loyalist terrorist (murderer) between two meetings he was speaking at, giving his testimony of God's forgiveness
 - minister friend who came and did his training in St Caths, Cammy Mackenzie
 - and more the no less miraculous examples of lives turned round nearer to home...
- **God's second chances apply to us!**

Single Purpose

- Jesus' principle purpose in giving Peter his second chance was to restore relationship; to sort out their friendship
- But something flowed from that
- Through the three questions came a second chance, and from the second chance comes a single purpose:
 - not just for Peter to feel better, but for him to work hard to serve his Lord
- **Peter is not simply restored to relationship but commissioned for service!**
- You can't be a Christian without that call to serve!
 - *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." (Mat 4:19)*
- Putting it broadly, the responsibility of each and every single one of us is to see people come to know Jesus better:
 - come to know him in the first place; bearing witness; some evangelists;
 - welcomed into and disciplined in the congregation - teaching, encouraging to grow in faith and understanding, praying for;
 - serving others that they may see Christ's love - and helping others serve too!
- Are we observers or participants?
- Jesus is asking us: "Do you love me?"
 - how do we respond? how is that response shown in our lives?
- Finish with a poem; hope helps you reflect on that question: "Do you love me?"

Conclusion: Poem ("I love you?")