

“Our Priorities as Ministers”

A message delivered to
MAYER COMMUNITY CHURCH

April 18th, 1999

TITLE: “Our Priorities as Ministers”

TEXT: John 21:15-23

THEME: Priorities in Discipleship

THRUST: True discipleship requires a plan.

INTRODUCTION:

Last week was a terrific time around the Word of God.

A *Word* that Jesus ministered to Peter.

A *Word* that Jesus desires to minister to us.

That Word is that we must be weaned away
from that which is familiar to us
to that which is familiar to Him.

When that paradigm shift becomes reality,
we will be in the place that those original disciples aspired to.
The place of intimacy with Jesus
where we will have truly left all and followed Him.

Remember that first encounter by the lake
where Jesus performed a similar miracle?
Scripture tells us that

“They forsook all and followed Him.” (Luke 5:11).

We have also seen, that when the crises was upon them,
they went back to the *place of the familiar* – fishing!

It is in that *place of the familiar*
that we are invited to listen in and learn
from the conversation between Jesus and Peter.

There was a lot happening in that conversation.

A lot that is missed upon casual reading of those sayings.

This morning I want us to explore, in greater detail,
that conversation between Peter and Jesus;
and, in so doing, come to understand
some of the “deep things of God.”

The Bible promises us that the Holy Spirit will reveal
the deep things of God — 1 Corinthians 2:10.

John 21:15-23

1. *Our Priority as Ministers is Fellowship with Jesus*
2. *Our Priority as Ministers is Faithfulness to Jesus*

I. Our Priority as Ministers: Fellowship with Jesus Vs.15-22

- *Fellowship with Jesus*

is more important than *that which is familiar*. **Vs.15-18**

Three times Jesus points out the importance
of our love for Him.

Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him.

Three times Peter responds with the words:

“You know that I love you.”

The first two times Jesus asked if Peter loved Him,

He used the word *agape`*.

Agape` is love that is rooted in the will
and best describes the attribute of love
that is part of the character of God.

The third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him,

He used the word *philio*.

Philio is love that is reciprocal and best describes
the kind of love shared by good friends.

What Jesus was after was an acknowledgment by Peter
that *his love* for Jesus
was not dictated by circumstances.

Our second *priority in ministry* closely follows the first,

and was the reason why Peter

could not fully answer the question.

II. Our Priority as Ministers is: Faithfulness to Jesus

• *Faithfulness to Jesus*

must transcend the *place of the familiar*. ~Vs.19 &22

Regardless of our personal failures

This is why Peter could not answer.

He did not trust himself!

3 ½ years before, the disciples, Peter included,
forsook all and followed Jesus.

For over three years they followed Him
consistently ... faithfully!

Then came Jesus' arrest and trial,
and *they all* forsook *Him*!

Now, they are back in a familiar environment,
and Peter is knee-deep in fish!

Jesus says: “Follow Me!”

After Jesus had asked for the third time

if Peter loved Him, this passages tells us

that Peter was *grieved*

that Jesus had asked him the third time.

Peter was *grieved* because

he did not feel that he could give Jesus
the *agape`* that He wanted.
See, each time Jesus asked if Peter loved Him,
Peter would answer,
“Lord you know that I *philio* You.”

Peter was grieved too,
because his failure is still looming large,
grieved because he is uncertain
of the depths of his own love for Jesus.
He thought he loved Him to death,
but when that prospect was confronting him,
Peter denied that He even *knew* Him ...
much less loved Him with *agape`* love.

He was grieved now,
because it appears
that Jesus had lowered His standard – not so,
Jesus is saying,
“Peter, we’ll start where you are, the command and the procedure are the same as the
beginning, ‘follow Me.’”

Jesus is not preying on Peter’s guilt.
Jesus is not playing with Peter’s grief.
Jesus is preparing Peter for Grace!

The *grace* that would lead Peter
into a martyr’s death!

In order for that to become true,
Peter’s priority as a minister
is to follow Jesus, *regardless of his past failures!*

Look at **v.18-19**

We often wonder how we will act or react
during times of persecution.
We may wonder how we will respond
when we are in the *Valley of the shadow of death.*
The questions are irrelevant!
Our priority as ministers
is to make sure that *we*
are following Jesus, in the present.

Not only must there be faithfulness to Jesus
regardless of our own past failures,
regardless of our present or future fears,
but also regardless of how others follow,
or who else is following.

Jesus said to *PETER* “Follow Me.”

Peter looked over his shoulder, see's John,
and says, "What about him?"

Jesus in effect said, "He is My responsibility."

Our *discipleship*, our *ministry* cannot be dependent
on what someone else is doing,
on what someone else isn't doing,
or on what someone else may be thinking of doing.

The Hymn writer wrote:

"I have decided to follow Jesus ... no turning back
Tho none go with me, still I will follow

Our *first* responsibility in ministry is to make sure
that we are following Jesus.

v.22 "You follow~! Me!"

"Peter, make a commitment to a long-term, make this *following* part of your lifestyle, make
it a habit of your life, regardless of what I ask John to do!"

"Peter, you follow~! Me!"

And, Peter did.

We have no record that Peter ever went fishing again.

We have abundant records that Peter was made
a fisherman of men!

42 days later, he preached his first sermon.

30+ years later, he preached his last sermon.

"The tradition is that when Peter was about 75 years old, he died a martyr, by
crucifixion under Nero, at Rome around 67 AD. It is said that at his own desire he was
crucified head downward, feeling himself unworthy to resemble his Master in his death."
(from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright (C) 1996
by Biblesoft)

"By which death he should glorify God."

We are all going to die.

Not all will die a martyr's death,
but all *can* die a death that will glorify God.

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that *in nothing I shall be
ashamed*, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in
my body, whether it be by life, or by death. (KJV —Emphasis added)

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis because of his
testimony, made this statement: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." To
follow Jesus no matter what the cost – that's the way of the cross.

Can you hear, wherever you are, can you hear Jesus say,
"Disciple, you follow~! Me!"

We must make sure about ourselves *first!*
We are first and foremost responsible for ourselves,
but, that does not mean that our responsibility
is fulfilled at the expense of others.
It simply means that we must make sure
that we are right in our relationship with Jesus,
then, we will be able to fulfill our responsibility
in ministering to others.

A Roman coin was once found with the picture of an ox on it; the ox was facing two things – an altar and a plough; and the inscription read: "Ready for either". The ox had to be ready either for the supreme moment of sacrifice on the altar or the long labor of the plough on the farm.

There is not one cup for the Christian's daily living and another for Worship – it's all worship! To drink the cup simply means to follow Christ wherever he may lead, and to be like him in any situation life may bring.

Our *Priorities as ministers*
are *Fellowship with Jesus* and *Faithfulness to Jesus*
regardless!
Will you make the commitment to Follow Jesus ... regardless?

CONCLUSION: Hymn

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus by S. Sundar Singh

1. I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.
2. The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.
3. Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

4. My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

5. Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.