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John 21:7-17

Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards[d] from shore. When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

Called to Love

So we are picking up right where we left off last week in the story about Jesus and his disciples on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Last week we looked at the importance of "the table" and how powerful the act of eating a meal together with others can be. Jesus ate a lot of meals with people and in this scripture from the Gospel of John, he had prepared a meal for 7 of his main disciples who were trying to fish but were having no luck.

But today's reading of this scripture extends just a bit more into the next section of the text to the part where Jesus particularly focuses on his disciple named Simon son of John, otherwise renamed by Jesus and known as Peter. And we remember good ol' Peter, right? The one who was always so gung-ho for Jesus. Peter is the disciple who wanted to walk on water with Jesus, and Peter is the one who did not want to have his feet washed by Jesus until Jesus said, "unless I wash you, you won't belong to me" and then Peter wanted Jesus to not only wash his feet but his hands and his head if that were indeed the case. And of course Peter is the disciple who promised to Jesus he would never betray him and then the night Jesus was arrested, tortured and crucified on the cross, Peter denied knowing Jesus not just once, but 3 times, just as Jesus knew Peter would. And here in today's scripture, Peter was so excited to get to Jesus that he jumped in the water, fully clothed, to get to Jesus on the shore of the sea, not able to wait in the boat with the rest of the disciples. Peter liked to be over the top with his gestures of love.

But here in our scripture, over a hot meal, Jesus challenges Peter to something more. And the challenge comes in the form of the question: "Do you love me?"

What does the word “love” mean to you? Anyone willing to share their answer out loud?

Your answer to this question can be very telling about you. Depending on how you answer that question just might be what Dr. Gary Chapman calls, your “love language.” Has anyone ever heard of the **5 love languages**? The idea here is that each person usually has 1 love language that communicates love to them above and beyond the others. Let’s take a quick look at each of them.

Words of Affirmation

This love language expresses love with words that build up another. Verbal compliments don’t have to be complicated; the shortest and simplest praises can be the most effective.

“That outfit looks incredible on you!”

“You always make me laugh.”

“I love your hair today.”

Words mean a lot if your loved one has this love language. Compliments and an “I love you” can go a long way. On the other hand, negative or insulting comments can hurt the other and it could take them longer to forgive than others.

Quality Time

This love language is all about undivided attention. No televisions, no smartphones, or any other distractions. If this is the primary love

language of your loved one, they don't just want to be included during this period of time, they want to be the center of your attention. They want their partners to look at them and them only.

This doesn't mean that you don't curl up on the couch to watch TV together; it just means that you need to make sure to dedicate time together without all of the distractions. That will help them feel comforted in the relationship.

Every time you cancel a date, postpone time together or aren't present during your time together, it can be extremely hurtful to them as it can make them feel like you care more about other things or activities than you care about them.

Receiving Gifts

This love language isn't necessarily materialistic. It just means that a meaningful or thoughtful gift makes your loved one feel loved and appreciated. Something as simple as picking up a pint of their favorite ice cream after a long work week can make a huge impact.

This is different than Acts of Service, where you show affection by performing actions to help your partner.

Acts of Service

Your loved one might have this love language if their motto is "Actions speak louder than words."

This love language expresses itself by doing things that you know your spouse, friend, family member, etc. would like. Cooking a meal, doing the laundry, and picking up a prescription are all acts of service. They require some thought, time, and effort.

All of these things should be done with positivity and with your partner's ultimate happiness in mind to be considered an expression of love. Actions out of obligation or with a negative tone are something else entirely.

Physical Touch

To people with this love language, nothing is more impactful than the physical touch of their partner. They aren't necessarily into over-the-top PDA (Public Displays of Attention), but they do feel more connected and safe in a relationship by holding hands, kissing, hugging, etc.

If Physical Touch is your loved one's primary love language, they will feel unloved without physical contact. All of the words and gifts in the world won't change that. They want to feel you close by, not just emotionally, but physically.

That's the 5 love languages. I highly recommend this book if you want to do a deep dive into the 5 love languages. Or if you're thinking about this later on this week and want a quick look at each of these love languages, I got these short descriptions from a website called, createdbylove.com.

Now as we went through that list together, maybe there were some of the love languages that you absolutely know you don't appreciate. That makes it easier to figure out what your love language is. Or maybe you're a person who doesn't mind to be shown love in all of these ways. That makes it a little harder, but the question to ask yourself if you're one of those folks is "Is there one love language that if I didn't experience I would feel unloved or not cared for?" Whichever one you feel like you couldn't do without in a relationship, that's probably your love language.

The funny thing about love languages is that we usually show love to other people in our lives with our primary love language, and that makes perfect sense, right? If your love language is words of affirmation and so you tell your friend how great they are or how much you mean to them or how much you love their clothes but you don't recognize that their love language is gifts, you could tell them how wonderful they are til you're blue in the face it probably won't be until you pick up something from the store that reminded you of them that they feel really loved by you. So it's really important to become "fluent" in love languages of the most important people in your life.

So going back to think about the people in our scripture reading I have my own theory about which love language was Peter's primary. What do you think? I think Peter would have been one of those folks who believed that actions speak louder than words. Peter was all about the actions: walking on water, wanting to wash Jesus' feet instead of the other way around, and jumping out of the boat to swim to Jesus instead of riding in the boat with everyone else.

One Bible scholar named Joseph Dongell says this about today's scripture: "Jesus wanted to harness the power of Peter's love and steer it toward sacrificial service. In effect, Jesus aimed not at discovering the condition of Peter's heart (Do you love me?) but at converting that passion into pastoral action." I think Jesus was trying to show Peter that to love Jesus didn't just mean to worship him, but loving Jesus meant loving others and leading others to love Jesus too.

Jesus is fluent in all the love languages because Jesus was there at the creation of the world and at the creation of you and me. Jesus knows the kind of love each of us are capable of and just like he wanted to harness Peter's passion for the good of the world, Jesus wants to harness our passion for the world too.

What's your love language? Whichever one is your primary love language, Jesus calls us to use our passion to love the world, too.

Is it acts of service like Peter? What might Jesus be asking you to DO for others today? Is it leading? Cooking? Fixing? Building? Writing? What could you DO for others that shows Jesus you love him?

Maybe your love language is words of affirmation. What are you being called to tell or to say to the people around? So often we think nice things about people but don't share it with them. Maybe you could be an encourager for God – someone who loves others by sharing kind and encouraging words with those around you.

Is your love language gifts? Maybe there's some material service or gift that you can provide for people. We still have some cards out in the welcome area that could be a small gift to a person who needs to be reminded that someone is thinking of them.

Perhaps your love language is physical touch. I wonder if there are ways your touch could be healing to people who need a hug or a hand to hold. In a post covid world, this one might be harder to accomplish with general people, but maybe it's time to focus on your family and making sure those who need to *feel* loved actually do.

Maybe quality time is your love language. Are there lonely or marginalized people that you know of who really need someone to spend some time with them? People who come to mind are our shut in's or people in nursing homes. Even in a post covid world, an intentional phone call can mean so much to some.

We each love to love in particular ways and just like Peter, Jesus wants to harness our passion, our way of showing love, and steer it toward the world so that we can each love God and love others in our own unique way. How is Jesus calling you to love him?

Let's pray --