

# Do you love me?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good, well we turn now to God's Word and David will be preaching to us from John's Gospel a bit later on. So do turn to John chapter 21 and you'll find that on page 907 if you're using one of the blue visitor Bibles.

John chapter 21 and reading from verse 15. By this point in John's Gospel the Lord Jesus has been crucified and he's risen again and he's appeared to his disciples.

And so we read here the last account of those encounters in John's Gospel. So John chapter 21 and from verse 15. When they had finished breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

He said to him, yes Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, yes Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[ 1 : 22 ] Peter was grieved because he had said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, feed my sheep.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you are young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. After saying this, he said to him, follow me. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them.

The one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you? When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man?

Jesus said to him, if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die.

[ 2 : 34 ] Yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things.

And we know that his testimony is true. Now, there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord and may he bless it to us this morning. Well, thank you so much for your welcome.

It's always a joy to come back to Glasgow and especially to the Tron and privileged to be able to share with you in the word of God this morning. Now, if you have a Bible there, please turn back with me to John chapter 21 and to these final sections of this wonderful book.

A book that God has used down the centuries to bring so many people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel of John. Some of the churches down in London have been visiting areas in which they're placed, their localities, to do some door knocking and to ask people, if you could ask God one question, what would that question be?

[ 4 : 01 ] And I guess the answers have been fairly predictable, really. Questions that are very real and deep. Questions about human suffering, about war, oppression, hostility.

Sometimes questions about personal disappointment. Why has life not turned out the way I hoped it would? Sometimes massive questions about the future of the planet and so on.

And it's easy for us to think that those are the questions that matter most in the world. It's easy for us to think, for example, that our job as Christians in the world is to see if we can seek to persuade people to accept God and Christ and the Gospel.

But that's not the question that the New Testament asks, is it? The New Testament says the bigger question is not is there any way that we might accept God, but is there any way in which God might accept us?

And therefore the important questions are not so much the questions that we might ask God, but the questions that God would ask of us. And that, I think, is what is at the heart of this last section of John's Gospel, and which still echoes down the centuries to us.

[ 5 : 15 ] The question that Jesus asked Peter three times, do you love me? Do you love me? Now, that is obviously a relational question.

It's a deeply personal question. We need to realize that it's not a request on the part of Jesus for information. He knows the heart of Peter. Peter himself says in verse 17 of our passage, Lord, you know everything.

You know that I love you. Jesus is not trying to find out something he doesn't know. So, why does he ask the question? Well, because it's a question, I think, for personal reflection.

It's a question to focus the whole direction of Peter's life, both in the now of chapter 21, and in the future of 30 years that lay ahead of him of Christian ministry, to focus the whole direction of his life on this big issue.

Do you love me, Peter? Now, what lies behind that? Well, you remember that the Old Testament says, and Jesus himself said this, that the law and the prophets hang on two great commandments.

[ 6 : 25 ] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So, loving the Lord your God is acknowledging him as God, your mind given to him for his thoughts, your soul open to him, to his grace and his mercy, your strength employed by him through his spirit to enable you to serve him.

And when Peter is being asked by Jesus, Do you love me? It's significant to me that every time he replies, Lord, Lord, Lord, you know that I love you.

Because what he is saying is, I recognize that you are the Lord my God, whom I should love with all my soul and heart and mind and strength. So, this is a question that takes him, and by implication us, to the very heart of our Christian discipleship.

It's the most pertinent question that any of us could be called upon by God to answer. Do you love me means, do you acknowledge me as Lord? Are you prepared to dedicate your life, in all its different aspects, fundamentally to me, as your Lord, your God, your Saviour?

That is the issue of Christian life and discipleship every day we live. At the end of the service, we're going to sing a great hymn by the 18th century poet William Cooper, in which he asks the question, Do you love me?

[ 8 : 00 ] It begins, Hark, my soul, it is the Lord. It's your Saviour. Hear his word. Jesus speaks and speaks to thee, Say, poor sinner, loves thou me?

Do you love me? Now, after the cross and the resurrection, everything has changed. The gospel has been leading up to that great event, and now the Lord Jesus has accomplished the work he came to do.

He says that in his great statement on the night in which he was betrayed, I've finished the work the Father has given me to do. And you know how in John's gospel, the sending of the Son into the world by the Father, to fulfill the Father's will, to bring about our salvation, is followed by the removal of the Son from the world, back to the Father.

He's going to the place from which he came. But he's going to send his servants into the world, to be his ambassadors. And that work that he has accomplished is the ground on which we are made his servants, and by which we can serve him.

So, obviously, the whole narrative of the cross and the resurrection reminds us that the work Jesus came to do was to bear the weight of our human guilt and punishment, to carry away our sins as he atoned for them on the cross.

[ 9 : 25 ] And not only did he do that, but he overcame all the hostile powers that were ranged against us. Sin and death and the devil. And the resurrection is the great celebration of that victory, that triumph over them.

But isn't it interesting that in John's gospel, when we have the account of Easter Day, just a chapter earlier in chapter 20, you find Jesus saying to the disciples in verse 21, As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

That's the apostolic commission in John. In Matthew, it's go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the nations, and I am with you always to the end of the age. The future, as far as Jesus is concerned, is the message of his atoning work and his resurrection life being conveyed throughout the world by the people of God, calling others to faith in Jesus as God's King and God's Son. But now everything's on a different footing. He's going to go. They are going to be the witnesses. Everything rests, humanly speaking, with them. So the unfinished business that he has with Peter is particularly important.

Because Peter is going to become the leader of this group. He's going to be the spokesman of the new community of believers in Jerusalem. He's going to be, in a sense, the one to whom the infant church looked to, especially for leadership.

[10:57] Of course, the apostles all had that role, but Peter perhaps especially so. And as the gospel ends, the emphasis now is very much on the future and on the transition which Jesus has for the disciples to becoming the messengers in taking the good news throughout the world.

Now let me say, first of all, that Peter was, of course, unique in his calling. It was highly specific to Peter. But in another sense, he provides us with a representation of what Jesus is looking for from every disciple.

What is the future? As the Lord Jesus goes back to heaven, what does he leave on earth? He leaves a small group of believers, larger, of course, than the ten who were gathered in the upper room when he first appeared, the eleven with Thomas, larger than that group.

But the passage makes clear that Jesus has different agendas for the disciples that he's left. One of those disciples is John. The last few verses talk about him, the beloved disciple, the author of this gospel.

But although the details of what God wants Peter to do are different from the details of what he calls John to do, yet there is this common thread of discipleship to which they are all called and which we too embrace as Christians in our 21st century.

[12:26] If we are among those for whom this gospel has done its work, the end of verse of chapter 20 says it's that so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That's what the gospel's for. So that you believe Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed King, the Son of God, and as you put your faith in him, you receive life, which is eternal life, in his name.

Then if we are called to that sort of lifestyle, what will it look like? Let me suggest three simple things from this passage. Firstly, it's a life of love for Christ.

A life of love for Christ. Not a life of love for service, not a life of love for fulfillment, or for ourselves, or even for one another, but supremely for the Lord Jesus himself.

So here at verse 15, they finish breakfast on the beach, and the charcoal fire is still burning. If we've been reading John's gospel, we will have observed that the last time we saw a charcoal fire in the gospel was on the night of the Lord Jesus' rest, and the charcoal fire was burning in the courtyard of the house of the high priest, where Peter was warming himself at the fire while Jesus was going through the initial stages of his trial.

[13:55] And you may remember that it was by that charcoal fire that Peter denied three times that he had anything to do with this prisoner, Jesus of Nazareth, that he was no loyal follower of him.

He dissociated himself from Jesus completely. And that threefold denial is the unfinished business which Jesus now picks up, the risen Lord Jesus picks up, in order to commission Peter to the task he has for him.

The denial has to be dealt with. So Jesus then turns to Simon Peter, but in verse 15 he doesn't call him Simon Peter.

Peter of course means the rock, because the rock has crumbled under the pressure. He goes back to his original name, Simon, son of John. Do you love me more than these?

Now, notice that the question is not about his courage. It's not about his resourcefulness. It's not even about his readiness to lead.

[15:03] It's much deeper than that. It is all and only about his love, because that is what matters most to Jesus. Do you love me?

And do you love me more than these? Which I think means more than these other disciples around. It could mean, do you love me more than these things that they've gone back to their fishing?

Might mean that. But I think when you take the whole gospel into consideration, Jesus is saying, now Peter, are you really the top disciple? Are you really the one who loves me most? You see, before the cross, Peter had been full of self-confidence and boasting. Here in John's gospel, chapter 13, he says, I will lay down my life for you. And Jesus says, no, you will deny me three times before the cock crows at the dawn of tomorrow.

Or put with it, Matthew's gospel, chapter 26, where Peter says, even if all shall fall away on account of you, I never will. Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

[16:14] And Jesus says, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And that weak flesh says in just a few hours from those affirmations, I don't know him.

I'm not one of his followers. I'm nothing to do with him. So, clearly now, Jesus puts those three denials up front as he three times asks Peter the question, do you love me?

Do you love me more than these other disciples do? You, Peter, who put yourself in a class apart, you who started to believe your own press releases that you were really very special, you who were so proud in your own confidence, do you really love me?

Well, that sort of confidence seems now to have disappeared after his failure. And let me say, that's a very good thing. If God has been working on your self-confidence, the wrong sort of self-confidence, that thinks, I can do it for God, then we need to be brought to the point where we know it's not our ability, it's his ability.

Jesus says in this gospel, without me, you can do nothing. And it's when we are aware of that, that we really begin to understand how much we should love the Lord Jesus, how much he's done for us, and what a privilege it is to seek to demonstrate that love.

[17:43] What he's looking for is a love, a life of love for Christ. Now, it's sometimes said that there are two different words used here for love in the original.

And a point has been made about this. In the first two times that Jesus asks the question, he uses the verb *agapeo*, which is the familiar Christian word about love, *agape*. But Peter replies with a lesser form, *phileo*, which means friendship love.

And then question three from Jesus picks up Peter's verb, yes Lord, you know that I have a friendship love for you, and he says, are you even my friend, Peter?

Which is why Peter is grieved, I think, particularly, when he asks him the third time. But Peter doesn't move from it, he says, Lord, you know everything. You know that I have this *phileo* love. Now that's quite an attractive idea spiritually, but actually, linguistically, it may not be very justified, because it's interesting that both of the verbs are used in John's Gospel to describe the Father's love for his son.

[18:49] Both verbs are used. Similarly, John is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, that is sometimes the *agape* verb and sometimes the *phileo* verb.

And when John tells us that Jesus loved Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead in chapter 11, both the verbs are used. So we've got to be a bit careful before we draw too much from this.

It's, in one of Paul's letters, he says that Demas has forsaken me because he loved the present world and he uses the *agape* verb there. But whichever verb is used, what Jesus is doing is he's, as it were, bringing the whole context together and he's saying it is this personal commitment to me. It includes loyalty and friendship, but it includes also the sort of love that is defined in John 3, 16, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

So what he is asking from Peter is that sort of love. It's loyalty love because of his denial. It's also the love that puts Peter, sorry, that puts Jesus first.

[19:58] It's the sort of love that was demonstrated at Calvary, marked by his sacrifice, motivated by a deep affection for those whom he loved and a deep commitment to serve them through his death on the cross.

For us, I think it's saying love for Jesus is the real qualification for serving Jesus. If our service doesn't come out of love, it will not be to the glory of the Lord Jesus.

And so three times Peter affirms his pledge of loyalty to be Christ's servant. And with that given, Jesus, who knows the heart, then commissions him to the task to feed and care for God's flock. The Christian who truly does, sorry, the Christ who truly does know all these things, knows that this is the real experience, the real expression of Peter's heart.

He accepts it and through that action he restores his disciple. And then he begins to say, there's a job for you to do. But first comes the love.

[ 21 : 08 ] Now let me just say this morning that it may be that you feel this is all a little bit remote from you because, well, sometimes as disciples we're more wandering and more defeated and more discouraged than we would want to be.

And I want us to see here that if the Lord Jesus could restore Peter, who three times denied him quite vehemently, if he comes to Peter graciously and lovingly following his triumphant death and resurrection, and he restores Peter to a right relationship with him, then even though like Peter our love is often wavering, the Lord knows our hearts.

He unfailingly sees whether it is real or not. And he will fan that love into a flame if we are prepared to confess him, to return to him, to ask for his forgiveness and his grace and to experience his mercy.

So I want to say to you this morning that you are never so far gone that there is no way back. You might be feeling like that this morning. You may feel that you've let the Lord Jesus down so badly that he couldn't really be interested in you anymore, that there's no hope of restoration.

That is not the case. You may be thinking there's some secret denial, some compromise or sin in my life. Maybe some public failure to stand up for your faith because you were afraid of ridicule, because you were ashamed of Christ, because somebody at school or at work or at college said to you, you're not one of those Christians, are you?

[ 22 : 50 ] If Jesus can restore Peter, he can restore you. That's why he died and rose again. What he asks of you is, do you love me?

Are you so grateful for my mercy and my grace? Are you so drawn to me as your only hope and saviour that you turn to me in repentance and in faith and demonstrate your love for me?

When we sing that hymn at the end of the service, the last verse will say, Lord, it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint. Yet I love thee and adore.

Oh, for grace to love thee more. See, that's the Christian position. I do love you, Lord, but oh, for grace to love you more. And that love has very little to do with warm feelings or emotional excitement and much, much more to do with fulfilling God's will in our lives.

So there's the first thing he's looking for, a life of love for Christ, a personal relationship with Jesus that isn't expressed in terms of emotion.

[ 24 : 08 ] Some of us may want to do that more than others. We're all very different. But the real expression of it, the mark of reality, because emotions come and go, the mark of reality is secondly that it's a life of obedience to Jesus.

Love for him and obedience to him. Look at how it goes on. Jesus says very well, he accepts this confession of love and he says first of all in verse 15, feed my lambs and then he says in the next verse, feed my sheep.

And then at the end of verse 17, again, feed my sheep, tend my sheep, feed my sheep. Now for Peter, this then means a life of service to the people of God.

They are the sheep and he's going to follow that for the next 30 years as we now know from history. Now again, this was a special calling to Peter, but it's true, isn't it, that if we love Christ, we shall love his other children and we shall want to do all that we can to feed and nurture and care for one another because the good shepherd has so loved us.

So love for Christ is expressed in my willingness to be and to do whatever the Lord sets before me. but not just the willingness but the daily discipleship following in his footsteps.

[ 25 : 36 ] You see the call at the end of verse 19. He said to him, follow me. And again, after the discussion about John and what's going to happen, Jesus says, that isn't the important thing.

The end of verse 22, you follow me. So it's about personal love expressed in personal obedience. And Peter gives us some examples of what that looks like. If you'd just like to turn with me to the first letter of Peter, in which he often reflects in this letter on his own experience. A bit later on in the New Testament, the first letter of Peter, chapter 2.

Just see what he says in verse 21. 1 Peter, chapter 2, 21. It's good to compare scripture with scripture. Here's a light shining back now from what Peter had learned.

He says in verse 21, for to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow. That's the verb.

[ 26 : 45 ] Jesus said, follow me that you might follow in his steps. What does that mean? He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn't revile in return.

When he suffered, he didn't threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. So for Peter, following Jesus was a path of suffering, and we know that that would eventually lead to his martyrdom.

Because Jesus himself says, in your old age, you won't be able to go where you want to go. Someone else will take you and stretch out your hands. Now, stretching out the hands was a euphemism for crucifixion.

So when, back in John chapter 21 now, Jesus says in verse 18, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you're old, you will stretch out your hands. He's talking about his crucifixion. John makes that clear in verse 19. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God, and from the earliest traditions of the church, it is known that Peter was eventually crucified.

[ 27 : 58 ] But the point of the passage is that the shape of obedience is following in the footsteps of Jesus. For Peter, it meant suffering and martyrdom, but not necessarily the same thing for John.

So if you come back with me to John chapter 21, let's look at verse 20. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who'd been reclining at the table, that's the author of this book, and he said to Jesus, verse 21, Lord, what about this man?

Jesus said to him, if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. So as John, the beloved disciple, the writer of the gospel is introduced, he's probably walking along the beach too, perhaps listening to the conversation, and Peter spots him, and there's still something of the old competitive, comparative Peter in him.

Now he's probably reeling from what Jesus has told him about the death that he's going to die, stretching out his hands. And we mustn't criticise Peter for this, but it's as though Peter says, well, am I the only one who's going to have to suffer this?

What about this man? And Jesus says, no, you follow me, Peter. That's what matters most. It's that you should be the one who is obedient to the call of God on your life.

[ 29 : 25 ] Now for Peter, that would mean many years of shepherding the flock of God. So the obedience, the following Jesus, is feeding the lambs and tending the sheep.

Feeding is all about provision, nourishment, so that they grow strong. Tending is all about protection, so that the wolf doesn't get them, the false teachers in the early church and in our churches today.

Plenty of wolves around wanting to gobble up the sheep. So the mark of the pastoral ministry for Peter is that he feeds and tends the flock. But the significant thing you see is that Jesus is focused on the future.

Jesus is saying, there are going to be people who will believe in me through your testimony as I send you into the world. In chapter 10 of this gospel, he said, I've got other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd. But how are they going to hear his voice? He's going back to heaven. Only as Peter and the other under-shepherds feed the flock.

[ 30 : 30 ] Now this is the primary task of ministry. And we won't all be called to that sort of detailed work of ministry. We won't all be set aside to full-time ministry of course.

But there is a sense in which we're all in ministry. We're all wanting to encourage and build up one another within the flock. So we ought to have a dual vision here. Both of a strong ministry that is raised up by God to feed the flock of God.

But also of our own involvement in that ministry seeking to share the word of God wherever we can and as often as we can. John Stott comments on this that sheep need good nourishing pasture.

Goats he says will eat anything. But sheep need good grass. And that's what Christian ministry is about. It's providing the nourishing grass of the ministry of the word of God.

That's where the spiritual nourishment is to be found in the word of God. That's how the flock is going to be encouraged and protected from the wolf by the word of God. And that's why when he addresses the elders at the end of his letter, the one that we just looked at in chapter 2, in chapter 5 he says, you've got to be shepherds of the flock you elders.

[ 31 : 49 ] You've got to do it willingly, eagerly, by good example, your words and your lifestyle. So let's see ourselves as having a part in this great ministry.

All of us together must pray for a new generation of godly young men to be raised up as pastor teachers for the church. That is one of the most urgent needs of the church, not only in this country but across the world.

Men who will teach the word of God, who will tend the flock. That's why the Cornhill training course is here, that's why the pastor's training course, is initiated because it's so much needed.

We need more and more workmen who do not need to be ashamed, who rightly handle the word of truth and it may be that for some of you here this morning that's God's call on your life. But whether or not all of us can share the word of God with somebody.

If you've been a Christian for some time now, how about finding someone else who's perhaps a new Christian or not so well established as God has enabled you to be and meeting for half an hour a week over a couple of coffee to just read the Bible together, to feed one another from the word of God.

[ 33 : 00 ] The younger Christian will learn a lot and you older Christian will learn from the younger one as well. Sharing together in the word of God, nurturing the flock, building it up. And when you see those within the flock who need God's care, exercise it.

Don't wait for the paid ministry to do it. We're one body of Christ. We are those who are together to build up the people of God through the word of God, feeding the sheep, protecting the flock.

That's what Peter was given to do by Jesus. Now John's call was really a little bit different from that, wasn't it? John didn't have that particular responsibility in the way that Peter did and it's interesting that it's very different.

So when Peter asked that question, Lord, what about this man? The reply is really quite sharp. It's not quite mind your own business but Jesus says to him, if it's my will that he remains until I come, what's that to you?

You follow me. And I think that's a real corrective to us, you know. We sometimes don't follow the law because we're always comparing ourselves with other people.

[ 34 : 09 ] Look, we're not in a competition with other Christians. Just like our churches, not in a competition with other churches. Don't compare your lot with others. don't say, oh well, they can do that but I can't.

Well, if you can't, God's got something that he wants you to do and it's not necessarily that one is more valuable than the other at all. The plan and the purpose is known to Christ. His will is sovereign.

What he says is, make sure you're following me. The gifts that God has given you are being used because if we don't get ourselves sorted out, we won't be any use in helping others.

See the progress? Love for Christ leads to obedience to Christ. And the big call of Jesus, and it will be different for us all, is follow me.

Our responsibility is to be like him, to grow into his likeness in every situation at work, at home, in the family, in the wider life of the community, to be people who are being shaped into the likeness of Jesus.

[ 35 : 12 ] And that is your first priority because if you don't love him, you won't obey him. And if you don't obey him, you won't be any use to him. When we were coming up on the plane earlier in the week, we had that demonstration by the hostess, the air hostesses of the emergency procedures.

And you remember, if you've gone through it a number of times, I'm sure, how there may be a failure of the air pressure in the cabin, at which point the oxygen masks will drop down in front of you and you are to put them over your head in this way and what we're always told is fix your own mask first before you try to help somebody else.

Well, that's very good advice, isn't it? Whether in the circumstances one would ever remember it is another matter, but it's very good advice. Get yourself sorted out before you try to help somebody else.

Now, that doesn't mean you've got to be a perfect Christian. It doesn't mean you've got to get all your problems solved, but it does mean that you've got to have this priority. If I'm going to serve the Lord, it's out of my love for him. Love leads to service, and service leads lastly, and very briefly, to a life of glorifying God.

A life of love for Jesus, a life of obedience to Jesus, and together they provide a life of glorifying Jesus, glorifying God.

[ 36 : 37 ] Peter and John are often together in this gospel, right from the beginning, chapter 1, where they were called by this very lake of Galilee, which is in chapter 21 at the end. In that place,

God had laid his hand on their lives, and he had a plan that was the way they individually would glorify God.

But they each had a different way of fulfilling that role. They were both central to Christ's mission, Peter as a shepherd, pastor, but also as an evangelist. John, predominantly as an evangelist, called to proclaim the gospel.

And while Peter lived a reasonable length of life and was then martyred, John seems to have been the really aged apostle, right at the end of the century, probably in his late 80s or 90s, carried into the church at Ephesus, so the church history tells us.

And his message as he was carried in, no longer able to walk, was little children, love one another. Love the Lord your God, love one another. Well, they have very different lives, but both of them glorify God.

And that's why in verse 23 he wants to clear up the idea that somehow he was going to be privileged to live until Jesus came. He said, no, he didn't say that. He said, if it is my will, see it's the will of Jesus that is the dominating factor, that's what controls it.

[ 37 : 55 ] If it is my will that he remains, what's that to you? you follow me. Well, verse 24 reminds us that the writer of this passage, this whole gospel, is the one who is this beloved disciple, bearing witness of these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Very different lives, very different endings. Presumably by this time, Peter probably has died, as verse 19 makes clear. John is continuing in his ministry, of evangelizing through his writing, and pastoring of course through the letters that he gave.

But both of them are glorifying God by their love and their obedience. So, as we close this morning, God decides the circumstances. He knows the end from the beginning.

He knows how Peter will glorify him in his crucifixion, and he knows how John will glorify him in his long life of testimony to the truth. They and we are called to love the shepherd king, and to be channels of his love throughout the world, because we're caught up in the greatest purpose of all, which is the creation purpose of God, the redemption purpose of God, the creation of a new community of God's people.

And that's why the very last verse, it's a lovely verse, isn't it, 25. There were also many other things that Jesus did. Don't limit him to what you can read in these few pages. He was there at the creation of the world.

[ 39 : 33 ] He's not only the obedient son and the risen Lord, he's the incarnate word, the one through whom the whole universe was created. So if all his deeds were described, as John Carson says, the world would be a very small and inadequate library indeed.

That is how great he is. And that's really what lies at the heart of the appeal of this passage. Why should we love him? Why should we obey him?

Why should we glorify him? Well, because the Lord Jesus is more wonderful than we can ever imagine, because his glory is so magnificent, because his love is so deep and rich, because his faithfulness encourages us to keep trusting him day by day.

See, in the end, it's not about Peter and John. It's not about you and me. It's all about Christ. And it's all about our lives contributing to that great story that others may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing may have life in his name.

So there's our agenda for this week. A life of love for Jesus, a life of obedience to Jesus, and therefore by God's grace, a life that glorifies God.

[ 40 : 51 ] Let's pray. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

So our gracious God, we thank you that as we remembered at the beginning of our service, Jesus came down from the glory of heaven, laying it aside that he might be obedient to the death on the cross.

Thank you for the love that sent the Son to be the Savior. Thank you for his obedience even to death on the cross so that we might be forgiven, cleansed, ransomed, renewed.

And thank you that having done that great work he has ascended to the throne of God and lives there and reigns there in glory that is unimaginable to us.

Splendor and majesty and glory because he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. So we pray, Lord, as we go out to live and work for your praise and glory this week that that may be true of us.

[ 41 : 54 ] Give us that love that is prepared to lay aside our self-indulgence to put you first. Give us that obedience to whatever your calling is on our lives wherever we are this week, wherever you've

placed us.

Help us to be obedient followers of the Lord Jesus. And Lord, we pray that most of all our lives may be for your greater glory, that they may demonstrate the reality of the glory of the grace of God in the gospel of his Son.

Lord, hear our prayer and grant us that blessing, we pray for your name's sake. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.