

Do You Love Me?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 0 0] Well for a wee while this morning I'd like us to turn back to John chapter 21. Let me read again verses 15 to 17 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. He 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 the third time Simon son of John. Do you love me? Peter was grieved because he 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 Now this is quite a famous and a very beautiful passage the risen Jesus appears to his disciples Just as they're coming ashore Having been fishing and he gives them breakfast and then in particular he takes Peter aside And you see this beautiful description of Peter's restoration You may remember that a few chapters earlier in chapter 18 Peter had failed Tragically and desperately as a disciple because he had denied three times that he knew Jesus and it had left him crushed and Broken and here I'm not sure Peter realized at the time, but Jesus is restoring him

So just as Peter denied Jesus three times here three times He's asked by Jesus if he loves him and here we have a wonderful example of The grace that Jesus shows towards us when we badly mess up in our lives So it's a very famous passage and it's amazing really what we learned from Peter today I want us to think a little bit more broadly about this passage and I want to focus especially on the question that Jesus asks three times Jesus asked Peter do you love me and that's The question I want us to think about that's the title for our sermon today And the reason I want to look at that is because it's the most important question that you can ever be asked This is what being a Christian really comes down to Do we love the Lord Jesus? Do we trust him? Do we worship him? Are we following him and?

Nothing matters more than the answer to that question if we answer that question, yes, then we are falling into the arms of the Savior that we desperately need and If we say no, then we are pushing away the only person who has the words of eternal life And even as Christians for those of us who are following Jesus This question remains the most important question that we can ask ourselves as we go into a new week because As we go into a new week, there's so many things that are competing for our attention and affection There's so many temptations that are seducing us down a path that is not going to do us any good And there's so many idols that we can go wondering after and then that can kind of try and push Jesus out of our hearts And it's so important for us even as Christians to keep asking this question Do we love him and is our love for him going to shape the way that we live this week?

Is he the one that we rest on and lean on for all eternity? So nothing matters more than this question But it's also not a very easy question to answer Because I would imagine that All of us in answering this question. We are afraid to say yes And we're afraid to say no We're afraid to say yes because even if you've been a Christian for a long long time If you've asked this question, if Jesus asked you this question, do you love me?

[3 : 42] I think part of you is very likely to think I think so I hope so I try to I want to It can be hard to actually just say yes And at the same time I hope that I hope that everybody is scared to say no to this question Jesus says, do you love me? You say no That answer should terrify us because it's the answer that puts us on a path to our lost eternity So Jesus is asking you, do you love me?

And we need to say yes And we want to say yes But how can we be sure that we can say yes? How can we be sure that we can say yes? Well, that's what I want us to think about today and we're going to do so under two headings Loving Jesus is easy Loving Jesus is hard And most of our time will be on the first one The second one will be shorter And we'll finish up about five past twelve all being well So first of all, loving Jesus is easy There are millions of people across the world today who are meeting together Because they love Jesus We are part of that Church of Scotland beside us are part of that And to the ends of the earth There are people all over the world Loving Jesus, praising Jesus and worshiping Him But there are many, many people who don't love Him Sometimes that's people who are openly hostile to the Christian faith Maybe more common in our country is people who just aren't that interested in Jesus And either way

Whether it's hostility or whether it's just a kind of lack of interest I think it's the same problem that lies at the root of that It arises because people don't know what Jesus is actually like And often that's because people will have a distorted or a caricatured view of Jesus So they kind of, sometimes Jesus has this sort of strict fanatic that stifles joy Or other times people might think of Him as this kind of slightly weird religious figure Who lacks any kind of intellectual credibility Other times it's because people just don't really know that much about Him Sometimes people don't know anything about Him And that's becoming more and more common in the UK today And it's tragic Because Jesus is the most important figure in human history He's the most influential figure in human history In human history We need to know about Him And most importantly of all what I want you to see is that He's utterly amazing

And that's the key point that if we have an accurate view of Jesus We discover that there is so much about Him that we love In other words, when we see what Jesus is really like Loving Him is easy In order to do that I'm going to pick seven key events in John's Gospel John's Gospel is often divided up and summarised in different ways One of the ways in which it's summarised is according to seven miracles that happen That are known as seven signs So if you read through the whole of John's Gospel Especially the first half you have these seven miracles And they're functioning as signs all of which teach us about the identity and mission of Jesus He turns water into wine, he cleanses the temple, he heals the official son He heals a lame man, he feeds the multitude, he heals a blind man And he raises Lazarus These are the seven signs that we have in the Gospel of John And we are going to race through them

So we're going quickly So everybody needs to roll up their sleeves And we're going to blast through them to see what they teach us about Jesus The first sign that Jesus did was to turn water into wine Very famous miracle Jesus had a wedding, they'd run out of wine And Jesus turns water into wine And not just wine, the best wine that they had ever tasted And that miracle reveals two very important things First of all, in the culture, in the social settings In first century Palestine To run out of wine is hugely humiliating It would be a bit like us If you imagine inviting everybody to your wedding And you go over to the cabaret for the reception And you discover that you gave them the wrong date And you had all these people and they're not ready And so it would be a huge social disaster to run out of wine So Jesus saves the bryght from social humiliation That's an important aspect of what he does But even more importantly, here you're at a wedding Jesus is providing wine so that the feast and the celebration can continue

[8 : 30] And it's all teaching us that Jesus has come to bring abundant joy and celebration And that's maybe what's been forgotten most of all about Jesus We think that faith in Jesus is serious but stifling Important but a bit miserable, but that has never been true In fact, the very first thing that John wants us to know about Jesus' miracles Is that he's come to bring amazing joy The first sign that he records, Jesus provides outstanding wine So that the celebrations can continue so that we can see that the joy of the gospel is here And it's all pointing us to the fact that Jesus has come to heal and restore And to forgive and to undo everything that makes life rubbish And he's come to pour out blessings that leave us bursting with joy And it's no coincidence that this is at a wedding that this happens Because Jesus has come to claim the church, to claim you as his bride

He's come so that you can be his In Jesus, the creator of all joy has come to fill us with joy If you think Jesus is following Jesus is about being boring and miserable and serious And stifled in life, you know nothing about him He has come to bring amazing joy into this world Sign number two is the cleansing of the temple Jesus comes to the temple, he finds loads of people selling animals, exchanging money There's a whole pile of commotion and Jesus clears them out And he creates quite a scene, overturning, makes a whip, driving them out, overturning tables And he says, take these things away, do not make my father's house a house for trade And so it's a hugely controversial thing for Jesus to do Again, two very important things to note One, here Jesus exposes exploitation Everybody hates corruption

We see it in the world around us, we see it in politics, in business and everything People hate it And if you hate corruption then you are a little bit more like Jesus than you thought you were Because here, that's exactly what you see Jesus exposes exploitation, drives out those who are seeking to make money And it's reminding us of one of the most magnificent truths about Jesus That he has an impeccable and unrelenting sense of justice and a commitment to justice So he defends the poor, he cares for the weak, he exposes the corrupt He always stands up for what is right So you have this amazing demonstration of Jesus' justice And his refusal to tolerate corruption and exploitation At the same time, as Jesus clears the temple, he's teaching us something else that's incredibly important He's teaching us, and this is something that Jesus' whole ministry teaches us

That the old covenant era, the Old Testament religious patterns are coming to an end So you'll know the Bible is divided into two halves, the Old Testament and the New Testament And in the Old Testament there were some very strict, very intricate, very complex, highly regulated aspects Of the religious life of the people who are wanting to have a relationship with God Now that functioned, we always say it functions as a shadow So it's pointing us forward to something better and bigger that's going to come Just like my shadow looks like me, but it's not me And in the same way the Old Testament is a shadow pointing towards the New And that shadow was full of restrictions And Jesus here and in many other places is reminding us that he has come to tear down those restrictions He's come to bring an amazing freedom in our relationship with God We have full and free forgiveness, full and free access to God Liberty of the burden of the law, freedom from the guilt of our sin

All of it replaced with the hope and peace and joy that the Gospel gives Jesus has come to free us and to restore us to everything he made us to be Sign number three, healing of the official son You have an official who comes to Jesus says, my son is ill And Jesus sends him away, go and your son will live You can see that in the middle layer I'll get my pen to work there, go and your son will live So this is one of many healing miracles that you have in the Gospels They're all telling us the same thing, Jesus healed lots of people miraculously It all tells us the same thing, it's telling us that Jesus has come to reverse the damage of sin Now I want you to think about that Think about how much sin ruins people's lives and ruins your life Now when the Bible talks about sin, it's talking about everything that is contrary to how God wanted the world to be

[13 : 48] And that has a massive effect on all of our daily lives You think of every illness, every injury, every marriage torn apart by death Every grieving family who desperately miss someone they love Every person living in chronic pain, every terrible diagnosis, all poverty, suffering, hunger and thirst All of these are the consequence of sin Every healing miracle that Jesus performed is a sign that he's come to fix that And the promise of the Gospel is that Jesus will make a new creation where all of these things will be gone forever That's what the Book of Revelation points towards, that's what the very end of the Bible points towards Where Jesus will wipe away every tear, death shall be no more Nor shall there be mourning, not crying, not paying any more for the former things have passed away Anything and everything that sin has done to harm his people, Jesus is going to heal Sign number four is the healing of the lame man

Again, that's pointing to the restorative mission of the Gospel But in particular, the emphasis here is that this happened on the Sabbath Jesus healed somebody on the Sabbath And the big thing that's been revealed here is that Jesus is confronting the legalistic religion of the Jewish leaders So in that time, you had very powerful, elite religious leaders And they had added dozens of restrictions to the Old Testament law, particularly in relation to the command to rest on the Sabbath And part of the reason they did that was to keep control over the people and to heap burdens onto their shoulders So if you were just a normal person wanting to be committed to God in the first century, you had this massive burden on your shoulders Because all these requirements were being added, you had to do this, this, this, this and this And make sure you did not do this, that or the next thing Huge burden, huge pressure, huge guilt, all legalism and Jesus comes to say that is nonsense

And that legalistic mindset where you have to keep this, that and the next thing has nothing to do with the free and full forgiveness of the Gospel It's telling us that Jesus has come to help people, not to hassle them He's come to release people, not to imprison them He's come to save people, not to condemn them He's come to fill us with joy, not to crush us with guilt And if we are trying to save ourselves by our own efforts, like the religious leaders of that time where then we're like this lame man Who is sitting beside a pool and is thinking that if I can just get into that pool first, I'll be healed And yet he can't do it because he's lame And trying to save ourselves by our own efforts is exactly the same as what this lame man was trying to do We'll never find healing if we're trying to save ourselves But when we look to Jesus, he meets us, he reaches us, he lifts us and heals us And the amazing thing about Jesus is that he goes and he heals this lame man on the Sabbath

And all the religious leaders are looking at him, they are judging him, they are criticizing him, they are tutting at him And Jesus doesn't care He doesn't care what they think Because he's come to heal this man We're doing very well, we're past halfway Sign number five, feeding the multitude, feeding the other 5,000, one of Jesus' most famous miracles Massive crowd, five loaves and two fish in Jesus Makes it multiply and shares it to them all Now again, some very important things have been revealed here One of the things again, this is so much of what you read in John's Gospel is connecting back to the Old Testament This is a very clear example of it, back in the Old Testament, one of the most important events in the Old Testament Was that when the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were in the wilderness And God provided manna, bread from heaven for them And that's seen as like a big highlight in the history of Israel Jesus is coming to say, actually, I can do more than that

And actually, I am the God who did that He's the one who provides for us and who nourishes us and who meets our need And all of this is pointing towards something that we experience every week of our lives We are so spiritually hungry Now, you probably never used that phrase, you probably never looked back at this past week and thought I felt really spiritually hungry last week, you probably never used that phrase But you did experience spiritual hunger because every time you hunger for friendship Every time you long for purpose Every time you look for security, every time you crave peace All of these are the pangs of spiritual hunger And Jesus has come to satisfy them all But the second big thing that's been emphasized here is that when Jesus does provide for our hunger He does it to the point of abundance, there's tons of leftovers It's reminding us that Jesus has come to be extraordinarily generous

[19:10] He's never tight, never stingy, never reluctant Jesus' desire is to lavish you with blessings He is so kind and so generous Two more He heals a blind man in John chapter 9 The big thing I want to say there is that the healing of the blind man is pointing us to the fact that Jesus has come So that we can see And so the physical healing of this man is pointing us towards the spiritual transformation that Jesus has come to give all of us Jesus has come so that we can see Another way of saying that is to say that Jesus has come to tell us the truth The truth about God, the truth about us, the truth about salvation, the truth about eternity Everybody longs for that Jesus has come to give it And that means that because of Jesus we can see And one of the most important things is that Jesus is coming

And this is what John emphasized at the very start of the Gospel Is that Jesus is coming means that we can see what God is actually like And this is one of the most important things for us to recognize about Jesus If you have an idea of God that's over here and then you look at Jesus and he's over here and they're different If your idea of God does not look like Jesus then your idea of God is inaccurate It is only through Jesus that we fully see what God is really like And that's just amazing because you see that he's so full of compassion and kindness and courage and wisdom He is gentle, he is brave, he is kind, he is strong It's all telling us what God is really like And then last of all, I'm not going to read it all, it's a huge passage there I'm sorry the writing's small, it's the raising of Lazarus A friend of Jesus who had died and Jesus comes and raises him

And this is maybe the most amazing sign of all because you see the extraordinary compassion of Jesus Jesus comes to the grave and he sees all those who are grieving and Jesus himself weeps And then, that's just there, I couldn't find it, it's the smallest version of the Bible and I couldn't find it And then you see Jesus' amazing power, he calls Lazarus out of the grave and he comes And this is again a sign, it's telling us something, it's telling us what Jesus has come to do It's telling us that Jesus has come to overpower death Jesus has come to conquer our biggest enemy He's come to give us all hope that can never ever be taken away And this is what the Gospel is all about, this is what Jesus has come to do He has come to overpower death Christians meet on the first day of every week all across the world to rejoice in this news

The fact that Jesus has come to give the world hope in the face of death This is what we are all about And if you think that's weird or crazy or stupid then, well fine, that's fine We can't offer you anything else?

We can't offer you wealth or success or good reputation or any of that But we can offer you hope in the face of death That's what the Gospel is all about That's what Jesus has come to do He's come to conquer death to give us hope that can never be taken away And for that to be possible He had to die in our place And that's what all these signs are leading up to in John's Gospel And we're at the end of chapter 11 now, you go into chapter 12 and everything moves towards the cross Jesus comes to Jerusalem, he comes to the Garden of Gethsemane and he goes to the cross And as we read about Jesus on the cross, we read about the agony that he suffered So the wine giver is left in desperate thirst The temple cleansers thrown out of the city The murder of children is condemned as a criminal

[23 : 41] The one who restored the lame is beaten and battered The generous provider is stripped naked The one who brings light is covered in darkness The one who raised Lazarus is nailed to a cross Condemned to die forsaken by all Even by his own father And he did all of that For you And when I say that loving Jesus is easy What I mean is that if we can just see more clearly what he's actually like If we think more about everything that he is and everything that he has done Then we will realize that there is so much in Jesus that is beautiful and captivating Everything in Jesus is everything that the purest and wisest parts of our hearts Longs for and loves

And if you can't see that yet then you need to look at Jesus again You need to go home and read John's Gospel You need to think about everything that he's done How he responded to people, how he acted towards people How he stood up against so much that was wrong You need to keep looking at him until you can see it And I guess when we talk about this that when we think about all of this We look at Jesus If you don't find everything that I've tried to describe about Jesus lovable If you don't find it attractive If you don't look at Jesus and think, wow, there is something amazing about him If you don't find Jesus lovable, what on earth do you love?

What on earth is good enough for you? The more clearly we'll see Jesus, the more we'll see that loving him is easy But at the very same time and just very briefly loving Jesus is hard And that's not because of him, it's because of us If you're anything like me then you're very good at loving the wrong things well And we see that all around us, we love our money, our possessions, our reputation Our social media profile, our attraction to books or movies or TV That always just goes over the boundaries of what's appropriate We all struggle with idols of power or comfort or approval It's so easy to love things that don't really deserve our love at all And at the same time we love the right things badly So the things that we really cherish and value we neglect Whether that's our family or our friends and our community or even ourselves Nobody, we were never made to hate ourselves And yet sometimes we find it hard not to

And we get so frustrated with ourselves, with the way we behave With the things we've done, with the regrets that we have And maybe most of all we find it hard to love Jesus Now when I say that, please know that every single person in here And every single Christian on earth knows how that feels There's no one, not even the most committed Christian here who would say I am fully satisfied with the way that I love Jesus None of us feel like that, none of us can say that Even those of us who've been following Jesus for decades We still wish that we loved sin far less and loved him so much more And this can leave us in a really challenging situation Because there are many people who are like If I asked you where do you stand before Jesus?

There are many people, many people in this room And many people around us more widely who would say Well, I'm not an unbeliever, I'm not against the gospel at all But I don't quite know where I am And so I'm kind of in this in-between phase I'm not in any way opposed to this, but I'm not sure And I'm not ready to kind of make any public profession of faith I'm not ready to be a member of the church And if I ask you the question, do you love Jesus?

[28 : 06] Maybe your answer is, I don't know I think I do, but I struggle to Sometimes I feel I really do, but sometimes I forget about him I want to, but I'm just not sure And so many people are stuck at this point Where you want to love Jesus, you're hoping you love Jesus You're scared to say that you love Jesus And for that reason, a lot of people are kind of waiting for a kind of lightning bolt moment That will take all uncertainty away and think that will solve it all Well, you don't need a lightning bolt, but what do you need? What should you do?

What needs to happen to you? I'm asking the question, do you love me? And especially to those who are just maybe not quite ready to say that phase What do you need to be able to say?

Well, it's easy to get this wrong because it's easy to think that you need to prove your love and your actions So you think, well, I need to change myself, improve myself and sort myself out Then maybe I could say that I love Jesus if I get my life in order Sometimes people think like that Other times people think, well, I need to be able to sound persuasive So I need to be able to eloquently describe my conversion And I need to be able to articulate the key truths of the gospel And I need to know a whole lot more than I know already I need to be able to explain the big complicated concepts in the Bible So often we feel like we need to prove our love with our actions Or persuade others with our words But every time we try that, it doesn't work And actually we sit here thinking, I don't have the words And I'm never going to be able to sort myself out in the way that I feel I need to So what do you do?

Well, this is where Peter's words are so, so helpful And I love this, the fact that in Peter, although he has messed up so badly He actually gives us words that are so incredibly helpful Jesus asks him, do you love me?

Peter doesn't reply by saying, yes, and I've been doing this, that and the next thing to prove it In order to say, yes, let me tell you about my conversion and how much I've learned about theology Peter doesn't say any of that Jesus says to him, do you love me?

[30 : 34] And Peter replies, Lord, you know that I love you And that's so beautiful and so simple and so incredibly helpful And in Peter, like, I don't really know how to describe this But if you imagine that this is Peter and his heart is there Now over his heart, there's a whole ton of mistakes He's been too brash, too excited, too overconfident He's denied Jesus three times He's made a complete fool of himself He has let everybody down He's a bit of a walking disaster in terms of a disciple Everything has gone wrong And he feels that there's all this muck in his life And yet he knows that behind all that, he loves Jesus And the amazing thing about Jesus is that he can see past all of that He can see right past all the mistakes in Peter's life

All the doubts, all the confusion, all the insecurity And he can see that Peter loves him And Jesus can see into your heart as well And maybe if you think especially about becoming a member of the church And professing faith, there's so much fear about what do you say What I don't have anything to say I don't have any way of articulating this It's so easy to think that you won't know what to say Or the right things to say You just need to say what Peter said Jesus knows that I love him And yes, that love is not what I wanted to be A long way from where I wish I was But Jesus, you know that I love you And there are so many of you who are in this place

So many of you And Peter has just given you the very words that you need So I want you to think about that And just to remember that this is all that Jesus is looking for It's all that we're looking for to be able to say this This is the most important question that you can ever ask The last thing I want to say is this You need to think about this question Your answer to this question, do you love me?

It is the most important question that you can ever ask yourself The most amazing thing of all Is that you never ever, ever have to ask Jesus that question Because he already does He always has And he always will Amen