

# Loving Jesus Christ

by John A. Broadus

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus Christ and living to glorify God, even if it means suffering or outward shame.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:37, John 14:15, John 21:15, John 21:17-18, Romans 5:8, Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:3, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:19

**Topics:** "Loving Christ", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

John A. Broadus preaches on the encounter of Jesus with Simon Peter by the Sea of Galilee, emphasizing the importance of loving and serving the Lord. The narrative highlights Peter's humility, the significance of rebuking a friend with care, and the deep love and devotion required to follow Jesus. Broadus delves into the reasons why we should love Jesus, focusing on His teachings, perfect goodness, and role as a Savior who died for our sins. He challenges the audience to examine their love for Christ and to show it through obedience, selflessness, and service to others, ultimately glorifying God in all aspects of life.

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## Transcript

Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him: Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him: Feed my lambs. JOHN 21:15

All through the summer night, the seven disciples had toiled in vain, moving their boat from one place to another, casting their net on this side and on that. However, with a fortune not uncommon in their calling, they had taken nothing at all. In the dim light of the early dawn they saw a man standing on the shore and did not know who he was. But presently he spoke to them in a kindly tone, in a familiar way, and said, "Children, have you any food?" They answered, a little grimly I suppose: "No." And he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you shall find." There was something in his tone, it may be--or something commanding in his manner--and although they had toiled so long in vain, they obeyed him. And now they were not able to draw the net into the boat for the multitude of fishes.

The character of two leading men among these disciples is here depicted as it is elsewhere in the sacred history. John, who had great sympathy with the Lord, and great spiritual insight, was the first to recognize who it was. He said, "It is the Lord." Simon Peter, as soon as this fact became known, could not wait for the rest but plunged into the sea--always impulsive and impetuous. When they came to the shore, there were fish broiling on the coals, and some bread, and they ate their humble morning meal together. It is a

very homely story. It does not look as if there were much going on there, and yet the greatest things in this world, you know, have usually sprung from simple surroundings. And the best lessons of life are often to be had in lowly circumstances.

One lesson which our Lord teaches us here by his own example is, that we ought to take great pains in rebuking a friend for his fault. It is a difficult task to tell a man of his fault in such a way as to do him Loving Jesus Christ the most good. Many persons fail when they come roughly and blindly with their rebuke and do harm rather than good. Others see so clearly what a difficult task it is that they shrink from ever attempting it. Most of us go through life knowing that we ought to tell this person or that person about some fault or other, and we are afraid. Now our Lord has shown that he recognized it as a difficult task by the pains he has taken here to adjust all the circumstance, so that they might themselves suggest what he wanted his friend to remember for his good. Some two years before, on the shore of the same lake, there had been a like miracle when he first entered upon the service of the Lord to be a fisher of men. So the little fire around which they stood in the dimness of the early dawn clearly called to mind the incidents of a few weeks before, he had stood with others in the early morning around a little fire and the terrible thing that had happened then. When the Lord asked three times if he loved him, Peter was grieved, not merely, I suppose, because it seemed to indicate that there was room for doubt whether he really did love him, but because the three times recalled those fatal three times that he had denied his Lord. So these circumstances, carefully selected, brought it all back to his mind without the Master's needing to tell him in express words at all. Now I do think there is here a lesson for us of great importance. Let us not imagine we can perform a task with ease about which our Lord took so much pains. Let us not shrink from our duty when we see how careful he was to make all the circumstances conform to his task, with such loving consideration, with such delicate skill.

Simon Peter also gives us a lesson here, a lesson in humility to this effect. When a man is in a right mood about spiritual things he will shrink from all comparison between himself and others. Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" You know there is an ambiguity in this expression, and it exists in the Greek exactly as in the English. It may mean, more than these love, more than thou lovest these men, or more than thou lovest these pursuits. But the circumstances of the story leave no doubt as to what is meant. Peter had professed a few weeks before that he did love the Lord more than the other disciples. He had distinctly declared it, and no doubt he was sincere. When Jesus predicted that they would forsake him, Peter said, "Though all men forsake thee yet will I never forsake thee." And so he singled himself out above the other disciples, as loving the Lord more than any of them. And of that he is here reminded. But when Peter comes to answer, he leaves the comparison out this time. He says, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He is in no mood for comparisons now. A truly humble man never is. He will be the last person to be thinking of such a thing, and if forced to make comparisons he will tell you that he is less than the least of all disciples, but that he does love the Lord, and the Lord does love him and he means to be a better servant.

There are many other such lessons in this narrative, but let us look immediately at the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" My friends, it has been a long time I know, long according to the centuries of human history since this question was asked. Few of us have ever stood, or ever will stand, beside the little lake of Galilee where this question was asked. Yet it is a question which lives through the ages, a question which by God's providence has come down recorded in the sacred story, a question which our loving Redeemer ever asks. It is a question which I stand humbly in his name today and desire to press home to every man, woman, and child-and I want an answer, and before God I will have an answer, from

your heart of hearts. Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love him?

But how can a man love one whom he never saw? How can he? You love many persons whom you never saw. Think of men whose books you have read and though they live far away or died long ago, still you love them dearly. Consider heroes in history, whom you have never seen, and yet you love them for their noble deeds and noble character. To be sure we can love those whom we have never seen. But another may say, "I do not hold upon this aspect of the gospel. If you talk to me about religious life; about moral living; about good deeds in the service of Jesus Christ, that seems natural for me. I see the propriety of it. If you talk about comprehending and believing the truths of the gospel, I understand that, but loving Jesus Christ, it looks to me like a sort of weak sentiment." Well, of course, religious affections will vary just as natural affections do. Men differ widely in the way in which they manifest their love to those at home. There are some persons to whom it is not natural to say much about it, and quite unnatural to deal in any tender gush of sentiment, and yet it is a thousand pities if they do not love just as truly and just as warmly as those who show it most tenderly. They show it by deeds, by an occasional kind word or look, but the love is there. And so, however differently it may be shown, we all may and we ought to and we must love Jesus Christ the Lord.

Why should we love him? Well, there are many reasons. Jesus Christ is the world's great teacher. We love our teachers, not in childhood always, for sometimes then they seem to represent to us only authority, constraint, coercion, but as we grow older there grows upon us a love of the teachers of our childhood. I went back last summer to the place where my youth was spent and saw many early friends but greatly missed a man who is still living but could not be there, a man whom I always meet with a curious love that grows on me as the years grow, the teacher of my early childhood. It is strange how one's heart does warm toward any man or woman that guided us in the times of our earliest recollection. We love our teachers, and Jesus Christ is the world's great teacher. He has taught us high and mighty motives to morality, such as were never known apart from him, even love to him, and to his Father and our Father. He has taught us our true relations to God, and the way back to God's favor. He brought life and immortality to light. How we ought to love him!

Jesus Christ is the pure example of perfect goodness. We all love goodness. Even men who are not trying to be good love goodness, even men who pretend to be worse than they are, in their hearts love goodness. But all the goodness we see besides his is mingled with imperfection, and we cannot but perceive it at times. Here is perfect goodness. Oh, how the truest sentiments of admiration ought to go out toward one, who, in human form, has been exposed to human temptations, but yielded to no temptations, and remained perfectly good. This is why we should love him!

Even though these things should bring us to love Jesus Christ, I aim' afraid that of themselves alone they never would. For after all they do not represent his great work in this world, his great relation to mankind. Jesus Christ is not simply the world's great teacher and the world's noblest example of purity and goodness, but far above this, Jesus Christ is a Saviour. His name Jesus meant "Jehovah saves." It was given him because he should save his people from their sins. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He died that men might live. "He ever liveth to intercede for them that come to God through him," that for his sake their souls may be saved. He is a Saviour. Alas! are there any here today who care nothing about salvation, who take no interest in the idea? I remember visiting the British Museum and standing one day in the Etruscan room, crowded with specimens of Etruscan and early Greek pottery, which were charming to anyone who has the least love for art or the slightest tincture of classical learning's. Presently two young men of rough appearance came to the door, and looked in, and one of

them said to the other, "Tom, what would you give for all these old dishes in here?" The other replied, "Hum! I wouldn't give two pence for the whole lot." He saw no beauty in them that he should admire. You remember what the prophet said would be true concerning the great one. "We saw no beauty in him that we should admire him," that was to come, and alas! how true it is even today.

If a young man in the fullness of life and strength, and careless of everything but the pleasures of the passing moment, had come along this afternoon, driving out from the park and passed West Twenty-third Street, perhaps the last idea that would have occurred to him would be that the street is rather famous for physicians. What would he care about physicians? But let there be a sudden accident, a sudden overturning of the carriage, a limb broken, and someone coming to lift him up, then his first question would be, "Is there a good doctor close by? Can you get him quick?" So if people begin to see something of their sinfulness, and to care something for their salvation, then Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, becomes an object of interest and love. Ah! my friends, why should we shrink from looking at that fact of our sinfulness? Is it wise for a sick man to go step by step to destruction when there is a remedy that might save him? I know it seems extravagant, but there are those here today who have had moments when they felt their whole being poisoned by sin, and their whole life blasted, who have struggled to lift themselves up above and trample down temptation until they have been despairing and humiliated and disgusted with themselves. If any such despairers will turn their looks away from themselves to Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners and give themselves to the one task of serving him asking that they may know and do his will, leaving it to him by his grace to make them what they ought to be, then they will begin truly to love him. O soul of man, who shall give account of yourself to your God? Oh, that you would see yourself a sinful being: that you would address yourself to the Saviour and learn to love him as your Saviour and your God.

When in beginning thus to love him, we set ourselves to doing his will, every act of obedience reacts upon the love which prompts them. When, because he bids us do it, we come and go down into baptismal waters, and rise meaning for his sake to walk in newness of life, how it helps us to love him. How many here can remember the thrill of delight and the new strength with which they found themselves doing this simple thing in obedience to his command? When they gathered around the simple bread and wine and took it as a simple reminder of his dying love, doing this in remembrance of him, they have loved him more because they were acting out their love in accordance with his commandments. If that is true in ceremonies, it should be true in life, in the actual deeds of real life. Whatever we do and whatever we refrain from doing for his sake and by his help, it shall react to make us love him more.

How should we show our love to him so well as by doing good to his people? Prove your love to the Saviour by doing good to your fellow Christians. Judge them kindly, O ye Christian people, by all your own conscious weaknesses and all your stumblings, judge them kindly, and when they are weak, help them along. Doing this in love for the Lord you shall learn to love him more. That also is illustrated in the experience of ordinary life. Why, I could find you in this great city of yours a thousand examples. I could show you tomorrow evening as the day draws to its close some humble home where if you and I should go and stand and look in through the open window as the dusk came down, we should see a quiet woman approaching middle age busy with household tasks. Her cheeks are shrunk from their youthful beauty, and her complexion is faded a little. She lives in poverty and knows full well what is meant by the hard times of which we are all now speaking. But as we look in through the window she seems not sad, she seems to enjoy what she is doing. She is preparing the evening meal with toil-worn hands for the husband that is coming, and the thought of him, how it sweetens her labor--to be doing this for him, how tender it makes her heart. Presently she begins to sing and breaks off in the middle of a line, and there comes to

her faded cheek a new freshness and there is a new light in her woman's eye. They used to sing that song together, when the world and they were young. Ah! love's service is pleasant service, and what we do out of love makes us love them more. This is one of the sweetest conditions of our earthly life, and it applies with all its fullness and richness to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are doing something out of love for him we love him better. Sacrifice, self-denial, act powerfully upon the love that prompts them. That is true not only of great things but also of little things. If you stir yourself from sloth and go to the Sunday school to teach for love of the Redeemer, it will always make you love him better. If you turn away from the social gathering that is not necessary, or from some place of amusement, to go to the evening prayer meeting, it will make you love him more. If you seek out the poor and try to do them good because they are Jesus Christ's poor, you will love Jesus Christ more. If in these trying days you deny your-self gratification's though they are within your means and you would have a right to indulge in them, that you may have more to give to the thousand Christian enterprises that are struggling for existence, then your sacrifice and your self-denial will intensify your love for Christ. Whatever you do, whatever you deny yourself, out of love, it will strengthen the love that prompts it.

But let me close as the Lord himself closed the conversation. After telling Simon Peter what he must do out of love for him, he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee; When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Dimly, and yet plainly, it meant that he should be crucified. And was that all that the loving Lord had to promise as a reward for a man who professed that he did love him? Thou lovest me, then serve me faithfully, and for so doing, When thou art old thou shalt be crucified. It looks strange. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Ah! that sheds light on it; a man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a man that means to live so as to glorify God. He promised Simon Peter a death of suffering and outward shame, but in that death he should glorify God.

My brethren, we live in a world of failures. How many businessmen in this city fail sometime or other. We live in a time of failures. Everything in this world is in danger of failing except one thing: a man who is really living to glorify God-that man will not fail, that end will be accomplished. It may not be in the way you had fancied or preferred, but in the way which he sees to be more for your good and more for his glory. You wanted to glorify him in a long life crowded with useful deeds; he may appoint that you shall glorify him by an early death. You wanted to glorify him with ample means, which you would scatter far abroad with holy love; he may want you to bear poverty with dignity. You thought you would glorify him in a life of health and strength, doing good in the world; and he may have thought to try you amid the sufferings of a sickbed. It is not for a laborer in the vineyard to choose himself where he will work, but only to work where he is placed. We know not what awaits us, but if in simplicity and godly sincerity, in such calling and circumstances as providence assigns us, we do make it our aim to glorify God, then whatever crashes and falls around us, life will not be failure, but will show our love and glorify our Saviour!

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