

Do You Love Me?

John 21:15-17

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I had planned and even prepared to teach to you this morning the last verse from Romans 3. This past week I was at a conference in Louisville, the Together for the Gospel Conference, and there was one message that I heard there that challenged me and encouraged me to do not only some introspection but to do some introspection in regards to our church. And so this morning I want to come to a text that is just intended to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table. It's John 21:15-17.

As you know, the Lord's Table is a time of the confession of our sin. It's a time of reaffirming our love for Jesus Christ. And so, this text is completely appropriate because Jesus here challenges Peter. He deals with Peter's sin. He restores Peter to Himself. In this conversation, Jesus reminded Peter, and through that conversation reminds us that we, too, must take our sin very seriously. We must deal with it, because He knows, He sees.

In fact, there are several interesting parallels between Peter's sin and ours. Think about this, Jesus knew Peter would sin before it happened. He predicted it. Two times on that night at the Last Supper He said, "You will deny me." He knew it was going to happen. That hasn't changed. Jesus still knows when you and I have sinned and even when we will sin.

Jesus also worked through this temptation and sin in Peter's life to restrain it so that it would not permanently damage Peter's faith. You remember in Luke 22:31 Jesus said,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;
but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail."

Jesus still does exactly the same thing for all of His true followers. We just sang together about His intercession in heaven. He pleads with the Father for us, and one of the ways He pleads for us is just like He pled for Peter, "Father, don't let that sin destroy his faith." Jesus will never allow your sin, if you're a true believer, to destroy your faith in Him.

Jesus also intended to use Peter's sin for good, obviously, in Peter's life. How did He use it in Peter's life? To humble him. Remember, on the night before the crucifixion Peter was boasting in his pride, "Though all others forsake you, I will remain loyal, I will remain true." When you get to 1 Peter 5, Peter has learned his lesson, and he's talking to us about the value of humility and the danger of pride.

But Jesus also intended to use Peter's sin for the good of others. In Luke 22:32, He says to Peter, "you, when once you have turned again," when you have repented, "strengthen your brothers." Jesus even intended to use Peter's sin for good in the lives of others. And, of course, part of that is fulfilled for us in the two letters that bear Peter's name.

Jesus had already confronted Peter's sin of denying Him. He had already brought conviction into Peter's heart and Peter had already repented. Remember, that happened right after the third denial at the home of Caiaphas. Luke records it for us in Luke 22:61. Jesus was being tried in the upper room and there was, apparently, visual access from the upper room of Caiaphas down to the courtyard where Peter announced his last denial, and we hear this, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." The look was all it took, their eyes met, "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.'" And it says, "Peter went out and wept bitterly."

He'd already been rebuked, confronted for his sin. It's also important to remember that before this encounter on the beach that day, Peter had already seen Jesus three times after the resurrection, once alone on the day of the resurrection and then twice with the other apostles. This is number four. And yet still, on the beach that morning Jesus reminded Peter of his sin, and He demanded that Peter renew his commitment to love and to follow Him. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him.

Now, since the days of Bishop Lightfoot, a couple of hundred years ago, many Christians have taught that the meaning of these verses, verses 15 to 17, rests on the interplay between two Greek words for love that Jesus and Peter use here in these verses, the words *agape* and *phileo*. I understand that interpretation. It's an interpretation I used to hold myself. There are good men who hold it. But I think there are good reasons to believe that this text doesn't rest on the distinction between the Greek words *agape* and *phileo*.

Let me just briefly give you those three reasons. Number one, John does not emphasize the differences between three other sets of synonyms in this same paragraph. The word lambs and the word sheep, those are basically synonyms, and yet there's no great difference between them in this paragraph. Also, in this same paragraph, John uses two different Greek words for know, no emphasis on the difference between them. And then He also uses the words feed my sheep or lambs and shepherd; tend or feed and shepherd, there's a nuance of difference between them, but not a significant difference.

Secondly, John regularly uses the Greek words *agape* and *phileo* as synonyms. You can see this throughout his gospel, but you can see it right here in the context. In John 20:2 John refers to himself as "the other disciple whom Jesus loved," and he uses the Greek word *phileo*, the verb form of *phileo*. And in chapter 21 verse 7, in the text we read together this morning, he refers to himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved," *agape*. There is no intended difference between those two words right here in the context.

Thirdly, what is clear here in the context is that the stress is put on the fact that Jesus does this three times. Notice the first time in verse 15, "when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter. 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me,'" and he adds, "'more than these?'" Now we can't be sure what Jesus means by "'more than these.'" There are a couple of options. Jesus may have meant, do you love me more than these nets and this boat and your fishing? In other words, do you love Me more than the things of this life? Or He may have meant, do you love Me more than you love these other men, these other disciples? Or Jesus may have meant, Peter, do you really love Me more than the other disciples love Me, like you claimed on the night before My crucifixion? But regardless, He asks him, "'do you love Me?'" Verse 16, "He said to him again a second time, 'Do you love Me?'" Verse 17, "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?'" Now I want you to notice Peter's response, "Peter was grieved." Why? Because Jesus said you only love Me with a different kind of love? No, he says he "was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?'"

So why did Jesus ask Peter the same question three times? Jesus asked Peter three times to reaffirm his love for Him corresponding to the three times that Peter had denied Him. And in so doing, Jesus was reminding Peter and reminding us that we must take our sin very seriously,

that when we sin we are essentially choosing a different love over a love of Jesus. We must reaffirm our love for Him. You see, Jesus was asking Peter the key question, the question that each of us must ask ourselves.

Listen carefully, the Christian faith is not merely a matter of knowing and understanding certain truth about Jesus. It's not a matter of agreeing that that truth is, in fact, true. It's not being emotionally stirred by the faith that we profess. It is not merely confessing or professing Christ. At the heart of the Christian faith is a real love for a real person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For a few minutes this morning, as we prepare for the Lord's table, I want us to think about that reality. I'll refer back here a couple of times, you can keep your finger here, but we're going to look in several other places throughout the Scripture. And I want us to evaluate our love for Jesus Christ. You see, it comes down to this, the Scripture clearly teaches that every true Christian loves Jesus Christ. Every true Christian loves Christ. This is throughout the Scripture.

Let me give you just a sampling, John 8:42, "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me.'" "If God were your Father, you would love Me." Do you claim God as your Father? If that's true, then you love Jesus. It's the defining characteristic of a Christian. John 16:27, "the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father." Do you see the interplay between loving Jesus and believing in Jesus? They go together. They're a package. You cannot love Jesus without believing in Him and you cannot believe in Jesus without loving Him.

In 1 Corinthians 16:22 Paul puts it negatively, he says, "If anyone does not love the Lord," and in context he's talking about Jesus, "If anyone does not love Jesus, he is to be accursed," let him be damned. What Paul was saying is, the person who doesn't love Jesus isn't a Christian, he is damned and on his way to eternal hell. At the end of Ephesians Paul puts it positively, in Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love." He's talking about all believers. If you love Christ, you're a believer. And may God continue to extend His grace to you. First Peter 1:8 "though you have not seen Him," Peter says, "you love Him." This is the defining characteristic of a Christian.

This morning, as we gather here, you need to understand that Jesus is still asking the same question, “Do you love Me?” “Do you love Me?” I want you to ask yourself that one simple question, do I love Jesus Christ? You see, nothing is more important than the answer to that question, because your answer to that question will tell you the true condition of your soul. Your answer will tell you whether you truly are a genuine follower of Jesus Christ or whether you simply have an empty, damning, non-saving profession of Jesus.

But how can we know? How can we know if we truly love Jesus Christ? Well, there are a couple of paths you can take here, a couple of possible ways to try to determine if we love Him. The first path is a very dangerous path, and that is to establish our own criteria for deciding whether or not we love Jesus and then grading ourselves against our own criteria. Tragically, there are many, many people who do this. They measure themselves against their own standard and then conclude: well of course I love Jesus; after all, I claim to be a Christian; I enjoy coming to church; I like hearing the Bible taught; sometimes when we sing about Jesus like we just did, I get kind of an emotional response, I’m carried out of myself with emotion. Or maybe you give yourself a test like this: well of course I love Jesus because I can remember when I was a kid, I heard the gospel, I prayed a prayer, I asked Jesus to come into my heart; and since that day I’ve never doubted I was a Christian.

The problem with using those kinds of standards is that they are our own standard. It just doesn’t work. I mean, imagine if the world of commerce allowed you to use your own standard. You leave here this morning, you’re hungry, you decide, you know, we need to stop by the store, get some sandwich stuff for lunch. And so, you stop by the neighborhood grocery store. You go into the deli counter and you tell the person working behind the deli counter, listen, I’d like a pound of turkey, and you watch incredulously as the person who’s working back there sets that large piece of turkey on the carving machine, sets it to paper thin, and then slices off three paper thin slices of turkey. And without putting that on the scale, puts it into the little plastic bag, puts a sticker on, hands it to you and says, have a nice day. And you hold that little bag up to the light and you can see through those three slices. And there’s a label on the bag that says a pound and the price on the bag is for a pound of turkey. How would you respond? Uh, excuse me ma’am, this isn’t a pound. Now how would you respond if the person working behind the counter said, I think it’s a pound. You’d say, you don’t have the authority to decide

whether or not that's a pound; that's not your right. And you'd be right, because there's a bureau of weights and measures that determines how much a pound really is; you don't get to just make that decision.

In the same way, you and I don't have the authority to decide whether or not we love Jesus. Ultimately, our assessment doesn't matter. It's His assessment that matters. Throughout my ministry I've done marriage counseling, and it's not uncommon for a couple that has challenges in their marriage to sit in my office and for one spouse to say to me, I love my spouse, and then the other spouse has something other to say. You see, our hearts are deceitful. We can't trust our own perceptions of whether or not we love Jesus Christ. So how can we know then? Through the objective standards that Jesus Himself has given us in His word.

In the New Testament we find four primary tests of a genuine love for Jesus Christ. These are not exclusive, but they are far and away the most common tests for whether or not we love Jesus Christ. These tests will show us whether or not we love Him, that is, whether or not we're genuine Christians. And at the same time, they will teach us the legitimate ways to express our love to Jesus.

So how do you know if you love Jesus Christ? Test number one, is He more valuable to you than everything else in the world? Is He more valuable to you than everything else in the world? There are many places we could turn, but I want you to go to Matthew 13. Matthew 13 is the chapter of kingdom parables. Jesus is describing, for the most part in this chapter, what it's like to know Him, to belong to His spiritual kingdom, and of course there's the anticipation of the future earthly reign of Christ as well, but much of this is about entering into His spiritual kingdom.

Notice verse 44, there are two parables here together that essentially have the same meaning, verse 44, "The kingdom of heaven," entering into my spiritual kingdom, Jesus says, "it's like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again." Here's a guy who just accidentally happens to be walking through a field, and he trips and stumbles, and he looks down and as he digs a little bit, he's found this massive treasure. There weren't banks in that day so often people hid their wealth in the ground somewhere on their property. Maybe these people had died and left no heirs, and so nobody knew about it. He's walking across this field,

he stumbles across it, and he says, look at this. And so he carefully reburies everything and notice what happens, verse 44, “and from joy over the treasure found he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Jesus says, when you really come across, when you stumble across Me, when you stumble across the opportunity to belong to My kingdom, it's like that. Once you see the value of Me, the value of belonging to My kingdom, nothing else has value. Nothing else in your life matters. You're willing to give it all up to have Me.

There's a second related parable, verse 45, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls.” The contrast here from the first one is that in the first case the guy just stumbles across Christ and the kingdom. In the second case, he's seeking something. Now we know from Romans 3, no one is really seeking, so the fact that this guy is seeking at all means God's at work in his heart. But he's seeking, and specifically it says he's “seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value,” that's Christ and His kingdom, “he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” This guy did the math and he said, you know what? Everything else I have, every other possession that's mine, if all of them together aren't worth close to what this pearl is worth, I'm willing to liquidate everything I own to get this.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? To love Him is to see Him and His kingdom as more valuable than everything else in your life. This is why in Luke 14:33 Jesus makes this shocking statement, He says, “none of you,” a sweeping statement, “none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.” You say, well, wait a minute, does that mean that I ought to go liquidate everything I have and sell it and give to the poor and follow Christ like He commanded the rich young ruler? Is that what Jesus is saying? No, the rest of the New Testament makes it clear, that's not what Jesus demands of everyone. The point is this, if you're going to be Jesus' disciple, you have got to come to the place where you see the value of Him exceeding the value of everything else you could possibly possess, and you're willing to get rid of anything that's required to have Jesus.

Paul got this. Turn to Philippians 3. We looked recently at Paul's spiritual assets here, what he saw as assets before his conversion, you remember, his circumcision, his belonging to Israel, his spiritual legacy of being of the tribe of Benjamin, his traditional lifestyle, his religious

association with the Pharisees, his zeal, his own personal righteousness. He saw those as all massive assets, great value. Verse 7,

But whatever things were gain to me, [*whatever things I thought were my assets,*] those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, [*verse 8*] I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered [*for Paul this was a reality,*] for whom I have suffered the loss of all things

Paul lost everything. But he said, when I weigh what I've lost against what I've gained in Christ, it's just excrement. But notice, by the way, that the second half of verse 8 was unique to Paul. He really did lose everything. But the first half of verse 8 is what happens to all of us. We come to a point where we see the surpassing value of knowing Christ and everything else in life has no value in comparison.

Let me ask you, is there anything in your life that matters more to you than Jesus? I want you to be honest with yourself. Is there anything in your life that matters more to you than Jesus? Whether it's prosperity, maybe your money, your bank account, your possessions, your home, your status, your reputation, your success in business, your retirement, personal peace, you just enjoy being left alone, doing what you want and not being bothered by other people and other things. Maybe it's pleasure and fulfillment you really crave and enjoy health or happiness or sex or marriage or whatever. Ask yourself this question, as I've had to ask myself, can you honestly say, if I could be sure I got Jesus there is nothing in my life I wouldn't give up to get Him. If there is anything more valuable to you than Jesus, understand that thing, whatever it is, has become an idol, and you love that idol more than you love Jesus.

It's interesting, in John 21, in the verses we started at this morning, Jesus adds a different twist to this first test. Because what He, in essence, says to Peter is, do you love Me more than you love your sin? Are you willing to turn from your sin and affirm your love for Christ over your love for your sin? Is He more valuable to you than anything else in the world?

Secondly, second test, is your affection for Jesus greater than for any other person, including yourself? Is your affection for Jesus greater than for any other person, including yourself?

Again, there are a number of places we could go, but I want you to turn to Luke, Luke's gospel chapter 14 and look at verse 25, "Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me,'" remember, that's Jesus' way of saying, if you want to come to Me, to belong to Me, to belong to My kingdom, to be saved, to have eternal life, those are all different ways to say the same thing, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot," he is not able to, "become My disciple."

Now what is Jesus saying here? Is He really telling us that we have to hate some people in our lives? Well, obviously not, because we're commanded by the rest of Scripture to love the people around us. It's a point of comparison. Jesus makes this very clear in a related passage in Matthew 10:37, because He says it differently. Listen to how He says it there, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." That's the point. Our love for Christ ought to be so profoundly supreme that it makes our love for the people in our lives look like hate by comparison. We have to love Him more. That's the point.

Let me ask you again, ask your soul, is there anyone that you love more than Jesus Christ? A spouse? A friend? A family member? A parent? A son or daughter? A boyfriend? A girlfriend? Let me put it differently. If you were forced to choose between Jesus Christ and that person, would you still choose Christ?

And what about loving Christ more than we love ourselves? How do you measure that? Well, let's ask ourselves some probing questions. Are you willing to set aside your own desires to serve His? Are you willing to give up your agenda in life to pursue His agenda? Are you willing to use your time for His priorities rather than exclusively or primarily your own? What do you choose first, the right job or the right church? What do you choose first, a great education for your children or their spiritual prosperity? What do you choose first, time for your hobbies and your fun or time for Christ and His church? Are you willing to do what Jesus wants when it's contrary to what you want?

The big question is this, are you willing to give your life as a living sacrifice to Jesus? That's what He demands. Romans 12:1, after describing the salvation we enjoy, Paul says, "I urge you therefore brethren, because of the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,

which is your acceptable act of worship.” Is that how you think of your life? I’m a living sacrifice to Jesus.

There’s a third test of our love for Jesus. Not only is He more valuable to you than everything else in the world, is your affection for Him greater than for any other person, including yourself, but do you love His people? Do you love other Christians? Let’s make it more practical. Do you love the people sitting around you in this church? That’s really the question. Nothing in Scripture is plainer than this. If we love Jesus Christ, we will love one another.

Go back to John 21. Jesus makes this point to Peter. Three times He says, “Peter, do you love Me?” Three times Peter says, “Yes Lord, You know that I love You.” And what does Jesus say after each time? Okay, you love Me, I want you to “feed my sheep.” I want you to “shepherd my sheep.” Now obviously, Peter was in a unique role. He was in the role of an apostle, the role of an elder. Not all of us are in that role. But the point is the same, if you love Jesus, you’re going to love His sheep. You’re going to love His people.

You know, occasionally I’ll run into somebody who tells me they are a Christian and I’ll say, Oh, well, great, I mean, what church are you connected to, what church involved in? And they will say, well, I don’t really go to church you know. They don’t love Jesus. You can’t love Jesus without loving His bride. It’s impossible. So let me ask you, do you enjoy being around Christ’s people? Do you enjoy them? Do you enjoy the fellowship that that brings? And do you love them, not in word only, but as John says, do you love them in your actions?

Turn to 1 John. Let me show you several texts. First John 4. Let’s start there, 1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God;” now watch the end of verse 7, “and everyone who loves,” that is, loves other believers in the context here, “is,” or has been, “born of God,” they’ve experienced regeneration if they love other believers, “and they know God.” Verse 8, on the other hand, “The one who does not love,” that is, his brothers in Christ, “does not know God, for God is love.” And then he talks about how God has manifested His love to us. And verse 19, the reason we love is “because He first loved us.”

You know, love is not what earns our salvation. We are, as we’ve been studying in Romans, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Love for Christ is what the Spirit

produces in our hearts when we have been regenerated. It's the evidence, not the cause. "We love, because He first loved us." Verse 20,

If someone says, "[*of course*] I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot, [*it's impossible*] love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Go back to chapter 3 verse 14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love the brethren abides in death." Go down to verse 16, he gets very practical, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." You mean like in death? Well, if necessary, but that's not what he's talking about here. Verse 17,

whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.

Very practically, do you love your fellow Christians in this church by caring for them? Do you visit them when they are sick? Do you make sure that they're cared for? Do you open up your pocketbook and give so that the physical needs of people who are in need are met? Do you enjoy the fellowship of other believers? Those who love Jesus, do you love them? Do you love His people? If you're a true Christian, you do.

There's a fourth and final test and that is, do you obey His commands? Do you obey His command? Stay here in 1 John, go back to chapter 2 verse 3,

By this we know that we have come to know Him, [*here it is,*] if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I've come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

John makes the same point in his gospel. Go back to John 14. He quotes our Lord in the upper room discourse. John 14, look at verse 21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them,"

it's not enough to know them, not enough to enjoy hearing them, "He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." Look down in verse 23,

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

Again, ask yourself some probing questions. When you have a decision to make in life, do you find yourself asking, what would my Lord want me to do? Or more specifically, what does He say in His word about this? What should I do? What decision should I make? When you are confronted with sin in your life? Do you sort of ignore that voice of conscience and you just kind of keep living and just act like it's not there because you enjoy your sin? Or do you pray for forgiveness? Do you fight your corruption? Do you work hard to pursue holiness? Do you obey His commands? If you love Jesus, you don't obey Him in perfection, but you obey Him in direction. It's the passion of your life. It's what you want. It's what you pursue. We're not talking about perfect obedience, but we're talking about true real obedience.

So, how did you do? Did you pass the test? How do you compare yourself with the standard that Jesus uses to measure whether or not you love Him? Is He more valuable to you than anything else? Is your affection greater for Him than for any other person, including yourself? Do you love His people? Do you obey His commands? Do you love Jesus Christ? Notice, I'm not asking you if you prayed a prayer when you were a kid. I'm not asking you if you walked an aisle or signed a card, made a decision. I'm not asking if you come to this church. I'm not asking if you attend Bible studies. I'm not asking you if you read your Bible. There will be people in hell forever who have done those things.

Jesus is still asking the same question, "Do you love me?" If you can take that test and you can honestly say, not by my own standards but by the standards of God's Word, while I'm not where I want to be, I can look at my life and I can honestly say, I see those things; they're really truly there. Then Jesus says, if you love Me, you are loved by My Father, you belong to Him.

If on the other hand you take that test and you have to admit to yourself, you know, I came in thinking I was a Christian. Or maybe you came in knowing you weren't. But you take that test and you say, Tom, those things just aren't true of me. Then let me say this as kindly and as gently and as graciously as I can, according to our Lord Himself in His Word, you are not a Christian. But you can be today. You can be if you will turn to Him; He never turns anyone away who truly comes to Him.

If you are here this morning and you are a believer, you do love Him, let me just warn you, there's a danger, not of losing your love altogether because true Christians don't do that, but of your love growing cold. You remember, Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians with that verse that says, "Grace be to all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an incorruptible love." Thirty years later Jesus says to the church in Ephesus, a lot of good things, "But," He says, "I have this against you, you have left [*what?*] your first love." There's a danger of that, believer, there's a danger of that.

So how do we guard against that? What do we do to cause the dying embers of our first love to burst into full flame again? The English Puritan Thomas Vincent wrote a book entitled, *The True Christian's Love for the Unseen Christ*. I commend it to you. In that book he gives nine remedies for an ebbing love. The first remedy he suggests, is this, "Be much in contemplation of Christ." Think about Jesus Christ and what He's done for you, and that will cause your love for Him to be reignited.

That's what we do in the Lord's Table. It's the divinely given way for us to remember our Lord and what He did, and in remembering to have our love freshened and kindled and inflamed again. Would you bow your heads with me?

Our Father, we thank You for this series of tests that You've given us in Your Word. Lord, for those of us in Christ, we confess to You that we're not fully satisfied with where our love for Christ is. It's weaker than it should be. It's not all that we want it to be. But at the same time, Lord, we are so grateful that we can see the work of Your Spirit in us, because we do love Your Son. We do consider Him more valuable than anything else. Our affection for Him is greater than for any other person. Lord, we do love His church. We love His people. And we obey His

commands. We pursue holiness and obedience to Him. We thank You for the encouragement that is to us.

And yet, Father, as we come to take of the Lord's table, we come confessing our sin. As we're learning in Romans, You've already bathed our souls in justification. And so, we don't come today seeking another bath, we come asking that our Lord would wash our feet. We thank You that we no longer stand before You as our judge in the courtroom of our sin, that our sin was placed on Christ and fully judged. But we still come to You as our Father, seeking forgiveness for the offenses against Your name.

So Lord, we joyfully open up our souls to You. We pray that You would search us and know us. We hide no dark corner from You. Instead, we open it all and we confess our sin. We resolve by Your grace and Your Spirit to obey You, new and afresh. And we ask that You would forgive and cleanse us, as You promised, because of the work of Jesus Christ. May this celebration of His death be an act of true worship from every heart that partakes. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.