

Sermon: *I Love You, Man*
Text: *John 21:1-19*
Date: *April 18, 2010 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

An elderly man had just come into a lot of money when he met the woman of his dreams. It was almost too good to be true so one night when they were out on a date, he asked her: "*Sweetie, if I lost all my money, would you still love me?*" And she said: "*Oh honey, don't be silly. Of course, I would still love you ... and I sure would miss you.*"

Miss Sarah was teaching her Sunday School class that money can't buy everything. She said: "*Money can't buy happiness and money cannot buy love.*" And to drive home the point, she asked: "*Now what would you do if somebody offered you \$1000 not to love your mama and daddy?*" Well, they all just sat looking at one another for a moment and then, Susie raised her hand; she said: "*Excuse me, Miss Sara, but how much would you give me for not loving my little brother?*"

Over the last two Sundays, we've been looking at the resurrection appearances of Jesus. And we saw how on that first Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to Mary and the other disciples; and then, a week later, He appeared to Thomas. And of course, each of these appearances was a life-changing encounter. And our scripture today is another example of that.

It has been a few weeks since Resurrection Sunday and the disciples were still a little confused; they didn't seem to know what to do. So, Peter said: "*I'm going fishing.*" And the others thought that was a good idea. So, they fished all night and caught no fishes and as the sun was coming up and they were

approaching the shore, they saw a man standing on the beach. And He called to them: “Children, you have no fish, do you?” Then, He told them to cast their nets on the other side and then, they were filled to overflowing.

Then, John said: “It is the Lord.” And Peter jumped into the water and went to Jesus. And later, when they were all on the beach, they found Jesus standing over a fire with fresh fish and bread. In fact, John tells us that Jesus even served them breakfast. And after breakfast, Jesus said to Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Three times, He asked and three times Peter responded, “Lord, I love you.” And three times, Jesus tells him: “Feed my sheep.”

You know, this is first and foremost a story about love. ***And the first thing we notice is: God’s love confronts us where we are.*** Now, just a few weeks earlier, in the Upper Room, Peter told Jesus: “I will lay down my life for you,” and then, within 12 hours, he denied knowing Jesus three times. Then, he decided to go fishing. Even after Jesus breathed on him and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit ... as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you,” Peter went fishing. And now, Jesus came looking for Peter.

That’s what makes the Bible different from the writings of other religions. Most of the religious writings in the world tell the story of humanity’s search for God, but the Bible tells us of a God who comes looking for us. When Adam and Eve hide from Him in the Garden, He came looking for them. When Moses was hiding on the backside of the mountain, God

came looking for him. And when Peter decided to go fishing, Jesus came looking for Peter.

And friends, God is looking for you today. In spite of our faults and failures, in spite of our hardheartedness, in spite of our disappointments, God confronts us where we are.

The second thing we notice is: God's love is tangible! Verse ___ says when they came ashore Jesus had breakfast waiting for them. Beyond a doubt, we know the reality of God's love. As children, we learned: "*Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.*" But we also know the reality of God's love. We experience it through His providence, His protection, and His provision.

A math teacher was trying to teach his students about fractions. He said: "*Now boys and girls, if there was one person and one pie, how much of the pie would you get?*" And the class said, "*The whole thing.*" He said: "*Good. Now, if there was one pie and two people, how much of the pie would each of you get?*" And the class said, "*One-half.*" And the teacher said: "*Good. Now, suppose your mama walked in the room while you and your friend were about to eat the pie. How much would you get then?*" And the whole class said: "*One-third*" except little Johnny. He said: "*Two-thirds, because my mama always lets me have her piece.*"

Aren't we blessed? Just like Johnny, we have come to understand God's love because it comes to us in tangible ways ... most of all in Jesus. John said: "**God proved His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**" "**For God so loved the world**

that He gave His only begotten Son.” God’s love is tangible.

A third thing that we notice is: God’s love demands a response. Jesus asked Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter said: “Yes, Lord, I love you.” And Jesus said: “Simon, do you love me?” Peter said: “Yes, Lord, I love you.” And Jesus said: “Simon, do you love me?” And Peter said: “Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.”

The Bible is clear that the only thing God wants from us in return for His love is ... love! Exodus 20 says: “You shall have no other gods before me ... you will not make for yourselves an idol ... for I the Lord your God am a jealous God ... loving those who love me and keep my commandments ... you will not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.” Later, when Jesus was asked what the most important part of the Law was, He said: “You will love the Lord your God and you will love your neighbor as yourself.” God’s love demands a response.

Two small children were playing out on the patio one day when suddenly one of them started screaming her head off. Well, the mothers went running outside to check on the kids and they found the two kids sitting there facing one another, but nobody could figure out what happened. So, once everything calmed down, one of the ladies said, *“Now, Kimmy, tell mama what happened!”* And she said: *“I hit Jessy.”* She said, *“Well, why did you do that? Don’t you love Jessy?”* And Kimmy said: *“Yea, but he didn’t love me back.”*

Listen friends, Kimmy expected a response. And the truth is that God does too. He loves us with an incredible love and all He asks for in return is that we love Him back. God's love demands a response.

And so, like God's love, our love must be tangible! And Jesus gave Peter a way to measure the reality of his love. He said: ***"Do you love me? ... Then, feed my sheep."*** In other words, *"If you love me, show me you love me by loving others."*

A recent article in *Rev. Magazine* says the number one thing people are looking for in a church home is: a family to belong to. People are looking for someone who will love them unconditionally, just the way they are, warts and all. And we can't just say, *"I love you,"* we have to truly love one another and show our love by the things we do, through acts of kindness and demonstrations of affection.

Our Love must be made tangible!

And then, one final thing: our love cannot be compared to another's. As they were talking, Jesus told Peter, *"When you were young you went where you wanted to go and did what you wanted to do, but when you're old someone will take you by the arms and lead you to places you don't want to go."* And Peter pointed to John and said: ***"But what about him?"*** And Jesus said: *"Don't worry about him, come and follow me."*

You know, it's really easy to look around at what everybody else is doing or not doing and compare ourselves to others. *"Lord, I've done more for you than they have"* or *"Lord, I've given you more than they have."*

And Jesus says: "*Don't worry about them; come and follow me.*"

Don't worry about somebody else's love; just love God and love others!

You know, brothers and sisters, Jesus asks of us the same question He asked of Peter: "*Do you love me?*" You see, He loves us. His love comes to us right where we are. It's a tangible love. And it's a love that demands a response. What an incredible love?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.