**SUNDAY, 5/1/22**

**SERMON ON JOHN 21:1-19**

Back in the pioneer days George was making his way west

 when he came to the Missouri River.

It was winter, and the ice covered the river from bank to bank.

But how could George be sure it would hold his weight?

He knew people often drowned in that river when the ice broke.

Yet he had to cross the river.

He walked out a little way,

 then gripped with fear he crawled on his hands and knees.

He looked back and saw how far the shore was now behind him.

George knew he would drown if the ice broke,

 as the frigid water swallowed him up.

To spread his weight even more, he lay out flat on his belly.

Slowly he pulled himself across the river a few inches at time.

All of a sudden from behind him he heard whistling.

He turned his head and there was a big man, a farmer,

 walking across the ice leading a team of horses

 drawing a heavy wooden sleigh full of hay.

He was smiling and whistling and tipped his hat as he passed by.

George watched as the farmer confidently traveled past.

Carefully he stood and brushed off the ice crystals covering his clothes.

With a sheepish smile, he continued on his way.

That old farmer had crossed the ice many times, and knew it could be trusted.

Often we need to learn from others when things are safe,

 and when they are not.

 As we watch others struggling through difficulties,

 we learn how to keep on going.

As we watch those who trust in God's presence

 we discover we really can do amazing things with His help and guidance.

Jesus asked Peter: "Do you love Me more than these?"

The word "these" isn't identified.

It could mean more than "these fish, these boats and nets.,"

 referring to his occupation and his first love - fishing.

It could also mean "these men," referring to the disciples.

Do we love Jesus more than friends, money, possessions?

It is a question we ought to consider at times.

Do we love Jesus?

The one basic qualification for ministry

 is found in this most probing question from Jesus,

“Do you love me?”

Jesus didn't ask, "Do you love people?"

Ministry does not begin with a love for people.

It begins with a love for God and that love overflows to people.

When we love God, we will love His people.

It all begins with our love for God.

Years ago there was an elderly woman in New Jersey named Dorthea Clapp

 who lived across the road from a local high school.

She would sit at her window every day and pray for the students.

There was one student in particular she prayed for,

 Jonathan, the boy who lived next door.

She put him at the top of her prayer list,

 and would pray daily that he would grow to love God.

One day while Dorthea was talking with him, she gave him a Gospel of John.

She prayed for him for years, and then one day he told her he was going to

 a Billy Graham meeting at Madison Square Gardens in New York,

 and he became a Christian.

He began to share his faith with his classmates and eventually

 over 200 of his classmates had also come to faith in Jesus.

That boy's name was George Verwer.

He went on to form Operation Mobilization –

 one of the largest missionary movements in the world.

Only God knows the number of people

 who were impacted globally by that ministry.

It all started with an ordinary woman who loved God,

 and used what she had for His kingdom.

She loved God and let that love change others.

Jesus invites us to come into His presence and love.

He calls us and says:

 "Let's eat together.

 Let's fellowship together.

 Let's share our lives together."

That's His invitation to all who have failed Him,

 to all who are at times lukewarm in their commitment to Him.

Jesus doesn't reject us when we fail or make mistakes.

On the contrary, He invites us: "Let's get together."

God can find a use for broken things, and broken people:

 broken soil to produce a crop.

 broken clouds to give rain,

 broken grain to give bread,

 broken bread to give strength.

Peter, weeping bitterly, returned to Jesus,

 And found healing in His presence and forgiveness.

He was able to do more than he could have imagined.

When we come close to Jesus, and love Him,

 our actions will speak louder than our words.

It will make a great difference in our lives and in the lives of others.

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

Peter said to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You."

 He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

Jesus said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Peter said to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You."

 He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Jesus said to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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 all things; You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep"

Jesus wants us to love Him, and when we do love Him,

 we will follow Him

 and walk in His ways,

 caring and helping all people.

Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

When they returned Jesus asked if they had caught any fish.

And they told Him: "Master, we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, we will try again."

And this time their nets were so full they began to tear!

A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat,

 and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

When we follow and obey Jesus, amazing things happen.

God is always with us.

He has given each of us talents, and roles, and gifts,

 so we are able to do His work throughout the world.

"Do not be afraid, from now on you will be fishing for people!

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"

We are called to show compassion, bring healing, and give comfort.

Often we spend a lot of time fishing, a lot of time trying to do something,

 without seeing any results.

But we continue doing His work throughout the world.

Sometimes He tells us to throw our nets on the other side of the boat.

And amazing things happen when we obey Him.

AMEN