

The Lord's Day Morning

January 27, 1946

"Test of Love"

Scripture Lesson – John 21:15-22

Text – John 21:15-17

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Introduction

1. Christianity is over 1,900 years and many questions are still being debated.
 - a. Theological questions were settled by the early councils
 1. Person of Christ
 2. Inspiration of Scriptures
2. Since then have come attack after attack.
 - a. Church has come back stronger and more vigorous
 1. Still these great eternal verities are attacked
 - b. Are in midst of one of these today
 1. Called modernism
 2. But are the same old attacks
 - c. So long as Satan is loose in world we will continue to have this warfare
3. But there is another simple question which we need sorely to have answered today.
 - a. What makes one a Christian?
 1. Is harming and harassing the church today
 - b. Church should decide and give a positive answer to this question

I. Some answers are receiving today

1. Believe in social equality among races
 - a. Some in conferences are telling our young people cannot be Christians unless subscribe to this
 - b. Some churches in north and east make this predominant test
 - c. I love peoples of other races
 1. But cannot believe this is what makes one a Christian
2. Socialistic state
 - a. So called social gospel
 1. Equal distribution of wealth and privileges
 - b. Cannot be a Christian and use an article manufactured by one who does not treat employee as some think he should be treated
 1. I think Christians should treat their employees justly and that employees should treat their employer fairly
 - c. But cannot believe I must live in a socialized society before one can personally be a Christian
3. Belong to a particular church
 - a. Some say they do not believe in denominations
 1. They are the true Church

- b. Unless you belong this church you cannot be a Christian
- c. I cannot subscribe to this
 - 1. Do not believe any one church or any one earthly group are the sole representatives of Christ on the earth
- d. I cannot believe that one must belong to any one particular or to any organization which would make them Christian
- 4. This is really not a debatable question
 - a. You may have noticed that thus far I have been saying, “Some say, they say, I believe, I do not believe.”
 - b. But this question which has to do with one’s relationship to God and his eternal abiding place is far too important to be decided by what any individual or group may have to say about it or may think about it.
 - c. Let us turn to the Bible and see what God has to say about it.
 - 1. John 1:12, 13
 - 2. John 3:3-6
 - 3. John 3:16
 - 4. Ephesians 1:5-7
 - d. Here then is what God says
 - 1. Not what you think or I think, but what God says
 - 2. Let us take our stand here

II. How can we know that we have accepted Christ?

- 1. Surely we know some great change will come about in our lives
 - a. This change will manifest itself
 - b. How some say it will come
 - 1. Not dance
 - 2. Not smoke
 - 3. Not play cards
 - 4. Not go to theatre
 - c. John 6:24 – Have passed from death unto life
 - 1. Surely something much deeper than these outward things about which we have been speaking
 - 2. Something inward
- 2. We will love Him
 - a. Story of man who saved girl in Chicago and married her – Dr. Johnston’s sermon, “Love’s Challenge.”

“Some years ago, during my pastorate in Chicago, Dr. Hillis was also a pastor in that city. One Sunday he preached a sermon which was published in the next morning paper, in which he told a story which he said he knew to be true to the actual facts. He told of a young man who had enjoyed all the privileges of a Christian home, cultured and well educated, who had become greatly interested in the work of the Young Men’s Christian Association during his college course. After entering upon the practice of law in Chicago, he was anxious to do some kind of practical Christian work and became interested in the Florence Crittenden Mission. In that connection he was used of God to save a young girl from a life of

shame. She had been persuaded to come to the city on the promise of marriage, had been betrayed and abandoned, and in her despair had gone down in sin. But she was heartsick and hungry for a better life. The young man helped her to know Jesus Christ as her Savior, and then arranged for her to go to a women's college, where her past was unknown. There she became a strong and beautiful and cultured Christian woman.

As the time of her college commencement drew near, the young man wrote to her and told her that he loved her and wanted her to become his wife. He had been writing to her all through the interim years, helping her in many ways to be a victorious Christian. She wrote back that it would be impossible for her to yield to his desire, that his family would never consent to the disgrace which would thus come to them, that she was not worthy of him. But he urged that nothing could satisfy his love except her responsive love, and pressed his suit. We can understand that it was not difficult for her to be persuaded to give her heart to her lover who under God had been in very truth her redeemer, whom she already loved as she had never thought of loving any man. Now could imagine that one might have suggested to her, during those days of her betrothal, anything that she could have done that would have made her more worthy of him, that she would not have been eager to do, at whatever cost?"

- b. So then whether we are really Christians depends upon our acceptance of Christ
- c. The proof of our acceptance is whether we love Him or not
- d. Let us look now at John 21:15-17 – Christ's dealing with Peter
- 3. John 21: Lovest thou me more than these
 - a. Agape
 - 1. High and holy love
 - 2. Illustrated in 1 Corinthians 13
 - b. More than these
 - c. Peter said you know I phileo you
 - 1. Love of Greeks
 - 2. Phillip – lover of horses
 - 3. Philosopher – lover of wisdom
 - d. Peter was very cautious in his answer
- 4. Second question – John 21:16
 - a. Do you agape me?
 - 1. Omitted more than these
 - b. What agape means
 - 1. Story of woman whose husband was killed on mission field – From Dr. Johnston's sermon, "Love's Challenge."

"Down on the dock at Bombay there stood a woman one day watching a ship slip down over the edge of the sea. She had come from Jaipore, where she had stood beside her faithful husband, as they held up the rush light of truth in that darkness. Her husband was trying to lift the load of two men, and had fallen in his tracks, leaving her with two little children, one three,

the other six. What should she do? The people gathered about her begging her not to leave them without anyone to tell them of Jesus and his love. She wrote home to her mother, asking if she would be willing to take the children and be a mother to them, in case she should feel it her duty to stay and work on alone. Can you measure the meaning of that sacrifice? Her mother replied that she would try to be the same sort of mother to the children that she had been to their mother. So when some missionary friends were going home, she took the children to the steamer at Bombay. The younger child had not been told, but the older one knew, and was being brave according to agreement. As the tender pulled away from the ship, the two children were at the railing and saw their mother returning to shore. The younger child suddenly realized the truth and with a scream of agony which pierced that mother's heart like a sword, called to her mother to come back. And as that mother stood on the dock and saw that ship disappear over the edge of the sea, she sank down upon her knees sobbing: "O Christ, I do this because of my love for thee, and for these people, to save whom thou hast died." Dear friends, this is agape! That is the redeeming love that will save the world one day."

5. Third question – John 21:17

- a. Do you phileo me?
- b. Peter said, "Lord, you know I do."
- c. Do we really love Him?
 1. Not matter of whether we do these outward things
 2. Do we love Him more than we do these things – dancing, gambling, card playing, theatre?

Conclusion

1. Are you a Christian?
 - a. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior
2. How can I know I have accepted Him?
 - a. Do you love Him?
 - b. Peter still wanted to know about John, but Christ said what John does is none of your business. Do you love Me? Then, follow Me.