

Three Causes for Anxiety

#0892
1962

Study given by W.D. Frazee—August 31,

In our vesper service tonight, I want to share with you some blessings that the Lord has given me in recent days in meditating on the last chapter of John's Gospel. As one man very aptly said, "I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me." I wouldn't take anything for the blessing that came to my heart the other day as I read over this chapter again, and then began to study it. The nearness of the Lord was very precious, and I trust that He will come preciously near tonight.

You remember the story of the meeting of Jesus with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee, between the day of His resurrection and the day of His ascension. And let me say very simply that the thing that has impressed me, as I've studied this chapter, is how much God cares for you and me; how He enters into the little needs of life as well as the larger things; and how His heart goes out to men. I'm sure He's thinking of us tonight, dear friends—you and me.

Now, I'm going to read it from various translations, and to avoid spoiling the sequence, I'm not going to give the reference to each one. But I'll just read this story as translated by various ones, Phillips, 20th Century and others. I want you to get the beautiful narrative. You can follow it in your King James Version. It's simple there, but sometimes as we get the turn of a phrase in some modern form of expression; it shines out just a little clearer. And so we'll read the story, as I say, as given by various ones:

"Later on Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberias, and He did it in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together when Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' 'All right,' they replied, 'We will go with you.'" John 21:1-3.

Now, we're told in the comment on this in *The Desire of Ages* that it was by the Savior's appointment that the disciples had returned to Galilee. You remember reading in the scriptures that frequently Christ had pointed forward to His approaching suffering and death and resurrection and said, "After I'm risen again, I'll go before you into Galilee." The angels who met some of them at the tomb had said, "He will meet you in Galilee as He told you." So they had met the Savior in the upper room after the resurrection. Now, in harmony with His directions, they had gone to Galilee.

The time had not yet come when they were to meet Him on the mountain. That took place a little later with the 500. But here they were on the sea once more. Many of these disciples had been fishermen.

This particular place where they were was very close to the place where Jesus had called them in the first place. You remember that they were fishing in their boats that day when Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I'll make you fishers of men." Nearby was the mountain where He had fed around 10,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. All about were those things that brought back memories of Jesus and His care for them, and His care for the people in His teaching.

They had been through some interesting experiences. They'd gone up to Jerusalem hoping to see the kingdom established. Instead they had seen Jesus taken, crucified, put in the tomb. Now He had come from the grave, but they didn't understand it all; they were wondering what the future was.

We're told that at this time their finances were in a low state. I suppose that when Judas left that night he didn't leave very much in the treasury. There never had been a great deal in the treasury, for between the generosity of Jesus and the covetousness of Judas, there wasn't very much surplus. But now there wasn't anything. We're told in *Desire of Ages*, that the disciples at this time were actually in need of food and clothing, and a night's successful fishing would take care of their needs. Also, they enjoyed fishing. That had been their lifework.

And so, in the evening as the shadows gathered there on the lake, as they talked over the past and the present and the future, Peter said, "Let's go fishing. I'm going fishing." They said, "All right, we'll go with you."

So they went out and got in the boat and during the night caught nothing at all. Oh, friends, how often the plans of men, good plans, fail. How often the best-meant efforts end apparently in nothing. But no sincere effort fails, as far as God is concerned.

And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

And all during those dark hours, as the disciples went back and forth over those fields of water where they had so often reaped fish and caught nothing, there was a lone Watcher on the shore. Oh, how His eye followed those men, how His love went out to them!

And as the morning began to break—and night, of course, is the time to fish—and they knew that they didn't have a single fish, and they had just as well pull into shore, call it a night's work without anything, they saw Someone standing there in the morning light on the shore. A voice, which at first they did not recognize, rang out

across the waters, “Lads, have you caught anything? Do you have anything to eat?” And they said, “Nothing.”

“Throw the net on the right side of the boat,” said Jesus, “And you’ll have a catch.”

“So they did. They threw out the net and found that they were now not strong enough to pull it in because it was so full of fish. At this, the disciple that Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord’” John 21:6-7.

Recognition came at last.

“Hearing it was the Lord, Simon Peter threw on his blouse (he was stripped for work) and jumped into the water while the rest of the disciples came ashore in the little boat, they were not far from land only about 100 yards, dragging their net full of fish. When they had landed, they saw that a charcoal fire was burning with a fish placed on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring me some of the fish you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter got into the boat and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three altogether, but in spite of the large number the net was not torn. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have your breakfast.’” John 21:7-12

You know, I’ve thought of the loving care of Jesus for those poor men. He knew they were hungry. He knew they’d worked all night. Probably, they were working on an empty stomach, too. Although He had some wonderful things to talk over with them, He was very conscious of their physical needs. That was the first thing on the agenda that day.

I think, dear friends, we have little idea of the great interest that God has in our practical needs. I think we sometimes misunderstand God and misrepresent God. We suppose that God is more interested in our fasting than He is in our feasting. God is not interested in gluttony, friends, but I’ll tell you *why* He isn’t interested in gluttony: in the end it will make us unhappy.

But the One who made us to need food, has certainly given us abundant evidence that He enjoys watching us enjoy our food, for look how many things He made just on purpose for us to enjoy eating. Think of those good watermelons we’ve been having this week, the nice tomatoes, the corn and the green beans, the peaches and the applesauce. And we could name a lot more, couldn’t we? Why on earth has He made so many delightful flavors? Just one reason: because He loves us.

And so, this morning, there on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was thinking, first of all, of their physical needs. And He said, "Children, have you anything to eat?"

"No."

"Well, come and dine. Come and have your breakfast."

Jesus got breakfast for them. Isn't that wonderful, friends? My mind goes from that to that day so soon to dawn when we shall be ushered into the city of God. When it comes time to eat, we're going to be seated at that table miles in length, and Jesus says, "I will come forth myself and serve you." You remember? Isn't that wonderful, friends? Jesus is interested in our physical needs.

You know, we're told that we should accept the fruit, fresh from the tree, as though Jesus Himself plucked it and put it into our hands. Isn't that nice? Oh, yes. Somehow I think that to get hold of what we're looking at here tonight, instead of making us gluttons, would tend to help us to just relax and enjoy the blessings He gives us. What do you say, friends? I think so.

I think if we're conscious as we sit at the table that it is Jesus' hand that has prepared the food, that His cross is stamped on every loaf of bread and reflected in every water spring, that it will tend to take away the gloom of undue fasting and also the gluttony of undue feasting. I think it will tend to make us as God wants us to be: temperate and relaxed, remembering that He gives us richly all things to enjoy.

"Blessed be the Lord [The Psalmist sings] who daily loads us with benefits..." Psalm 68:19.

All this I see as I view that early morning breakfast on the shore of Galilee; but oh, friends, the simplicity of it touches my heart. Jesus just standing there through the hours of the morning watch as those disciples toil, toil so fruitlessly, and all the while He's waiting for His opportunity to minister to their needs. I wonder if at times we toil fruitlessly today with this and that. Not that we shouldn't, friends. There was nothing wrong with their trying, was there? But oh, isn't it wonderful to know that when with all our trying we fail to accomplish, there's Someone standing by, waiting to make up our deficiency. Breakfast is going to be ready whether our harvest fails or not, friends. Thank God. Wouldn't you say so? Thank God for it.

All right:

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than the others do?' 'Why Lord,' he said, 'You know I love You.' 'Then feed My lambkins,' Jesus said. Again He asked him for the second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' 'Why Lord,' he said, 'You know I love You.' 'Then be a

shepherd to My sheep,' said Jesus. For the third time He asked him, 'Simon, Son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was hurt because the third time Jesus asked him if he loved Him, and he answered, Master, 'You know everything. You can see that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Then feed My dear little sheep'" John 21:15-17.

Then He went on to tell about Peter's future.

Here again, I get a wonderful view of the love of Jesus, friends. He fed them all their breakfast. They're contented and happy. He has taken care of their needs of body; now He has a work to do.

What had Peter done a few days before this? Denied his Lord three times. Do you suppose that was the reason He asked him three times this question? Doubtless it was. You notice Jesus did some surgery, some heart surgery. Heart surgery on the body is fairly recent, but heart surgery in the soul God has been doing for a long time, dear friends.

So this morning, there on the shore of Galilee, Jesus set up His clinic. It was time for surgery. Peter's heart had to be operated on. Peter had basely denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. He had forfeited his place in the church. He had forfeited all right to be an apostle. We're told that the disciples didn't think Peter would be allowed to resume his place. I guess they had reason to think that. Probably we would have voted with them on that.

But Jesus knew the heart, and He knew that a deep work of repentance had gone on in Peter's soul. He wanted to use Peter. It was for this He had chosen Peter 3 ½ years before. It was for this He had labored with him and loved him and wrestled in prayer for him again and again. You remember that night in the upper chamber He said, "Peter, I have prayed for thee ... and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." That was the time that Peter had broken forth in a vociferous way. He had said, "Why, Lord, I love you and I'll go with you to prison and to death, and even if all the others forsake you, I'll be with you." In other words, "I love you more than they all do."

That is why that Jesus in the tenderest way, and yet, shall I say, in a very sharp way—sharp in the sense of getting right at the point; (It is love that uses a sharp knife. If the doctor has to lance a boil on me, I'd rather have a sharp knife than a dull one, wouldn't you?) so Jesus, with a sharp knife, got right at the point. The boil was ready to lance.

Jesus said, "Simon, I want to ask you a question. Do you really love me more than all these others do?" That was bringing him right back to the upper room and those repeated avows of loyalty. But this time Peter doesn't raise his voice and protest that no matter what all the others do he'll be true. He just says, "Lord, You know everything. You know I love you."

And then again He brings the question, “Simon, do you love me?” And I can imagine Peter wondering, “Why does Jesus ask me? I’ve already heard that question, and I’ve already told Him. He knows. But ah”, he says, “if He has asked, all I can do is answer.” So he said, “Lord you know. You know I love you.”

Now, the third time Jesus comes still closer and He probes deep. “Oh, but Simon, do you really love me?” Perhaps the thought went through Peter’s heart, “Oh, I said the other night that I loved Him, but look what I did; is that why He’s asking me, ‘Do you really love me?’”

You know there’s a saying that talk is cheap. It is cheap, isn’t it? Yes, very cheap. And actions had spoken far louder than Peter’s words that dark night in Gethsemane and in the courtroom.

So, now Jesus is probing, “Peter, do you really love me?” Now Peter is hurt, not hurt in a mean way or a sulky or an offended way. He’s just grieved. I think he should have been, don’t you, friends? Yes.

You know we’re told that while the Lord freely forgave Peter for that awful sin in Gethsemane and the courtroom, he never forgave himself. That doesn’t mean he went around with a guilt complex all the rest of his life. But it means that the memory of that failure always kept him humble.

While you and I are not to morbidly mope over our past failures, friends, we can learn some lessons from them, and we ought to. We’re to study our lives as the printer studies the proof sheets to detect the errors that we may correct them.

So as Jesus probes Peter’s heart and life, “Peter, do you really love me?” the third time. Peter wounded clear to the inner heart can only bow his head in shame and repentance and say, “Lord, you know all things. You know everything. But You know that I love you.”

“All right,” Jesus says, “All right.”

In response to that thrice-repeated question and the thrice-repeated response on Peter’s part, Jesus says to him, “Peter, I have something for you to do. If you love Me, I have something for you to do. I haven’t cast you off. I want you to take care of My dear little sheep, My lambs, My flock. I want you to be an under-shepherd.”

No greater evidence of Jesus’ love and forgiveness could have been given, friends, and no greater joy could have come to Peter’s heart than the responsibility of being trusted with the care of the flock.

No greater evidence of Jesus’ love can come to you and me, dear friends. He says to each of us tonight, “Children, do you love me? If you do, I have something for

you to do. There are sheep to be fed. There are little lambs to be cared for. There's a flock that needs to be fed and watered and shepherded. Take care of my flock."

Well, you remember that after this, Jesus told him about how he was going to die:

"He said, 'Peter, when you were young you used to put on your own girdle and walk wherever you wished, but when you have grown old you will have to hold out your hands while someone else will put on your girdle and take you where you do not wish.' Jesus said this to show the kind of death by which Peter was to honor God" John 21:18-19.

You remember he was crucified at the close of his long life of service.

"After saying this, Jesus added, 'Follow Me'" Ibid., verse 19.

So, Peter was walking down the beach with Jesus. He was talking with him at this time privately, telling him about his life.

"Peter turned around and saw the disciple who was very dear to Jesus following" Ibid., verse 20.

Who was that? John.

"Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, what about this man?' 'If I were to choose that he should wait till I come,' answered Jesus, 'what has that to do with you? Follow Me yourself'" Ibid., verses 21-22.

That's the proof of love, dear friends, and that's what Jesus is saying to you and me, tonight. I'm persuaded that much needless anxiety comes to us through trying to watch too much what others are doing, or failing to do, and wondering about what's going to happen to them.

So, tonight, in this lesson, it seems to me that Jesus leads us away from three causes of anxiety. First, He shows us that He's interested in our daily, practical needs. That's one of the great things that's causing people anxiety, isn't it? Second, He assures us of forgiveness of our past failures, and invites us to share with Him in His work. The removal of that guilt takes away a big load of anxiety, doesn't it? And third, He says, "Never mind about other people. That's not your business." That takes away the rest of the anxiety. Doesn't it? Yes.

If God is looking after all our practical daily needs, if He has forgiven us our sins and given us a place in His work, and if He has helped us to get our eyes off of worrying about others, either through curiosity or whatever the reason, and to simply follow Him

down the beach in love and in service and in fellowship, then, dear friends, I ask you, what more could we want?

From *Steps to Christ*, I read this:

“...God cares for everything and sustains everything that He has created. He who upholds the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, at the same time cares for the wants of the little brown sparrow that sings its humble song without a fear. When men go forth to their daily toil, as when they engage in prayer; when they lie down at night, and when they rise in the morning; when the rich man feasts in his palace, or when the poor man gathers his children about the scanty board, each is tenderly watched by the heavenly Father” *Steps to Christ*, page 85.

—Like that lonely Watcher on the shore, watching those struggling men.

“No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that He does not mark” *Ibid*.

Listen:

“If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed” *Ibid*, page 86.

Do you know what pupils do when school is dismissed? They leave the room, don't they? And if we'll fully believe this, all undue anxieties will be dismissed.

“Our lives would not be so filled with disappointment as now; for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God, who is not perplexed by the multiplicity of cares, or overwhelmed by their weight” *Ibid*.

Listen:

“We should then enjoy a rest of soul to which many have long been strangers” *Ibid*.

Ah, dear ones, have you toiled all night and caught nothing? There's a voice echoing from the shore, “Come and dine. Breakfast is waiting.” Jesus, the Lord of Heaven and earth has something for you.

Break Thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves

Beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee,
O living Word!

Who has a word of praise that you would like to share with your fellow pilgrims?

[A testimony service follows.]

May the audience kneel with us as we unite in prayer? Brother Boykin, would you pray for us all as we have come here to the altar?

Our kind Father in heaven, we rejoice tonight that Jesus has come down to be in our midst, to shed a sweet influence. Thou hast told us that we may have a little heaven on earth to go to heaven in. Tonight we are seeing a little glimpse of what heaven will be like, with peace and joy and love.

We thank Thee, dear Jesus that Thou in Thy infinite love, doest watch over each one of us, as if we were the only one in all the world. When we think that Jesus would have died if we were the only one that would have accepted Him, what love it should bring from within us for Thee and for our fellow man.

Wilt Thou give assurance of Thy love to each soul who has come forward this evening. May they lay their sins on Jesus. Like Peter of old, may they catch an experience; get an experience with Thee, in knowing that there is forgiveness and restoration. Now tonight, we rest in Thee as we go to sleep. In Jesus' name, Amen." [Brother Boykin]

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