

application of this far more important epoch of their apostolic mission? Besides, he graciously provides for their present wants, and invites them to be his guests. Why, but to shew them that in their work hereafter they should never want but he would provide? And as connected with the parable in Matt. 13: 47 ff, has the net *enclosing a great multitude and yet not broken*, no meaning! Has the 'taking the bread and giving to them, and the fish likewise' no meaning, which so closely binds together the miraculous feeding, and the institution of the Lord's Supper, with their future meetings in his name and round his table? Any one who recognizes the *teaching* character of the acts of the Lord, can hardly cast all such applications from him;—and those who do not, have yet the first rudiments of the Gospels to learn."

III. THE MISSION. 15. Dined—Finished their breakfast. Simon, son of Jonas—R. V. "Son of John." (See 1: 42). Jesus does not call him Peter, "the rock," and the omission must have hurt him sorely. The form of address is solemn and impressive, but we are warranted besides in inferring from the absence of the apostolic title of honor, "Peter," that attention is drawn to Simon's natural state as previous to his call to discipleship. Compare Matt. 16: 17. It must be borne in mind that Simon must have been personally assured of the Lord's forgiveness and restoration of him to the office of apostle, which he had forfeited, in the private interview, of which we know nothing except the fact (Luke 24: 34; 1 Cor. 15: 5). The loving and thoughtful message, Mark 16: 6, had prepared him for what followed. But as the denial of his Lord was in public, and was known to all the disciples, it was fitting that his restoration to full apostolic office and privilege be also public." (Reith). *Lovest thou me*—The word here for "lovest" expresses reverential affection, founded on intelligent estimate of character and deliberate choice. Peter had denied Jesus thrice, now he three times affirms his love (1 Cor. 16: 22; 2 Cor. 5: 14; 1 Pet. 1: 8; 1 John 4: 19). *More than these*—The reference is to Peter's boast (Matt. 26: 33; John 13: 37). "Knowing how true at heart his disciple was, the Lord gave him the opportunity, painful in some respects as it was, of uttering his deepest

feelings and convictions." (Reith). *Thou knowest*—The accent here and in verses 16 and 17 is on "thou." "He did not now rest on his own knowledge of himself; that is discarded, but he will trust Christ's knowledge of him. He is silent as to the relative strength of his love and that of his brother disciples." (Reith). That I love thee—Peter throughout uses a word which signifies spontaneous and instinctive love, which gives no reason for its existence, but clings inseparably to its object. It is a personal heart affection. It is a less exalted word than that used by Christ and marks Peter's humility. *Feed my lambs*—"Little lambs," an expression of tender emotion. (Meyer). (Ps. 51: 12, 13; Jer. 3: 15; 1 Tim. 4: 15, 16). Only the heart that loves can teach others to love.

16. *The second time*—Jesus does not now say "more than these." Peter's silence and humility are answer enough. *Feed my sheep*—"Shepherd my sheep." Feed, lead, guard them (Acts 20: 28; 1 Pet. 2: 25; 5: 2).

17. *Lovest thou me?*—Jesus now adopts Peter's word for "lovest." Peter was grieved—Even the more humble affection seemed now to be called in question. *Thou knowest all things*—He bids Jesus look into his heart and see for himself (John 2: 24, 25; 16: 30). *Feed my sheep*—According to another reading "my little sheep." In verse 15 Jesus refers to the tender ones, the children and youth. In verse 16 the mature disciples are to be guided and pastured. In verse 17 those requiring special care, the weak, the wayward, are to be understood. They are to be "shepherded." "There is one indispensable qualification for all genuine christian work—a supreme, constraining love to Christ. The first, the second, the third prerequisite for all true feeding of the lambs, the sheep of the Saviour's flock, is attachment to himself—a love to Jesus Christ running over upon all who believe in him. To know and believe in the love that Christ has to us, to feel ourselves individually to be the objects of that love, to open our hearts to all the hallowed influences which a realizing sense of that love is fitted to exert—this is the way to have our spirits stirred to that responsive affection to him, which gives to all christians service, purity and power." (Hanna).

LESSONS. 1. Jesus bids us watch for his coming by being faithful in our daily duties. 2. Working as Jesus bids will be rewarded. 3. Jesus will be a guest at every table where he is welcome. 4. He freely pardons and restores the true penitent. 5. If we love Jesus we will try to bring others to him.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

P. R. L.

M

FRUITLESS TOIL
OBEDIENCE REWARDED
JESUS RECOGNIZED

M

THE PREPARATION
THE PROVISION
THE INVITATION

M

A TRIPLE QUESTION
A TRIPLE ANSWER
A TRIPLE CHANGE

"Lovest thou me?"