

ONE SMALL STEP

John 21:15-17

I was on the way to a staff meeting in San Bernardino, California, when I heard on the radio those famous words, “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” What once was believed impossible a few short decades earlier had now become reality. Those who had found themselves entertained in the late 40’s by the imagination and fantasy of Flash Gordon were now spellbound as that fantasy became actuality.

This month we celebrate the 40th anniversary of that historic moon landing. Where were you when Apollo 11 blasted off from Cape Canaveral, when the lunar module successfully landed on the moon and Neil Armstrong climbed down the ladder? The whole world watched as he took that first step on the moon.

What once seemed impossible had now happened. Or had it? Was this a political conspiracy to firm up President Kennedy’s leadership? Many believed it was a hoax to promote and finance a young and growing space program. The evidence was as unclear as the fuzzy, distorted pictures which flashed in black and white on the TV screens across the world.

Today, we know it was for real. The technology of the space program then exceeded the development of the ability to transmit this spectacular moment. That fuzzy, broken picture was taken by a TV camera in front of a crude monitor in the space control room and relayed by an even cruder camera from the Eagle.

In an age of high definition, quadraphonic sound and digital transmissions at the speed of light, there is no question about the present reality of what once seemed impossible. The sounds, pictures, and color are not only real but are as captivating as the spectacular lift off and flight of the Endeavor we witnessed this week.

A very real analogy can be drawn today in our own spiritual lives. Our faith in Christ is bombarded continually with impossibilities. Often what we see and want to believe as true becomes a fuzzy and distorted picture of reality. In contrast to the once held doubt and possibility of a moon landing, there are few today who truly believe in the clear reality of a personal God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, virgin birth, sacrificial death on the cross along with creation and the parting of the Red Sea. Even the thing with the frogs is seen as a hoax or religious manipulation. We have become a part of a culture that disregards—if not denies altogether—the reality of Christ, His ability to transform lives, and as importantly the possibility that we each can discover His purpose for us. It is only as we take a fresh look at the original *tape* of what actually happened that that which was vague, distorted, and unclear takes on a whole new dynamic of excitement.

John 21:15-17 crisply reveals in HD and quadraphonic sound the clarity of Jesus’ purpose for each of us. In just six words, “Do you Love Me? Follow Me!” He gives each of us the privilege to take that one small first step that results in one giant leap for mankind when we simply choose to follow Him.

LIFE RESPONSE

1. This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on Luke 9:62; “*But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’*”
 - (a) What relevance does this passage have to our study today and Jesus’ exhortation to “Follow Me”?
 - (b) What are some of the distractions or distortions you face which would cause you to “look back” or “love more than” Him and not “Follow Him”?
2. Describe the critical nature these two passages (John 21:15-17 and Luke 9:62) reflect in the value Jesus places on our love for Him and its effect on what we do.
3. Imagine for a moment you are Peter. Jesus is speaking to you in the present with exactly the same question and exhortation. What would be your response? What impact would it have on you and your family? How

would it impact your influence in your work? How will it affect your purpose as you prepare for the new school year? Your relationships, choices, etc?

4. Review the following passages in light of our insight from today:

Rom 12:1-2 Phil 3:10-20
Gal 2:20 1 Peter 2:11-24
Col 3:1-4 Rom 6:1-11

“Christ demands of His disciples that they follow Him with integrity of heart, without murmuring, envy, or calculation of consequences.”

- The Training of the Twelve, Alexander Balmain Bruce, DD

THE PRIVILEGE OF PROFESSION

John 21:15-17

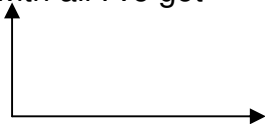
Jesus is defining the essence of what it means to be a disciple as He reveals the purpose and intent of the church. Here we see the two dimensions of profession.
Belief/Action

John 21:15-17

A vital life principle for every person who professes to be a believer

- Specifically addressed to Peter but within ear shot of the disciples
- Revelation and intent of the church
- Profession: Two dimensional
 - Do you love Me Feed My Sheep
 - Belief Action
 - Talk Walk

Love God with all I've got



Love neighbor as self – servant

1 John 4:20

THE PRESENCE OF GRACE

John 21:2-4

We are objects of God's unconditional love and grace at those low points and when feeling overwhelmed by our circumstances. It's so easy to miss His presence.

John 21:2-4

- At our low point
- When overwhelmed by circumstances
- Can easily miss the presence of Christ

THE PROVISION OF HOPE

John 21:1; 5-14

Hope is most always found in common experience. Hope is eternal and always confirmed in time.

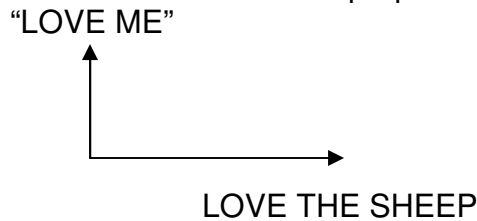
John 21:1; 5-14

- Found in common experience
- Always pre-established by God (Eternal)
- Always confirmed if patient

THE PRACTICE OF PURPOSE

John 21:15-22

Our purpose is simple



John 21:15

- The Diversion: 3 Possibilities
 - More than the boat and profession
 - More than these other disciples love Me
 - More than you love the other disciples

- The Decision John 21:15-17

Jesus: Do you love Me more than these?

Peter: Yes Lord; You know that I love You!

Jesus: *TEND MY LAMBS*

_____ MY _____

Jesus: Do you love Me?

Peter: Yes Lord; You know that I love You!

Jesus: *SHEPHERD MY SHEEP*

_____ MY _____

Jesus: Do you love Me?

Peter: Lord You know all things. You know that I love You!

Jesus: *TEND MY SHEEP*

_____ MY _____

- The Death (Luke 9:23-24

John 21:18-19

Peter – A follower with an eternal perspective and purpose. 1 Peter 2:11-21

√ John 12:24-26

Void of self

√ Galatians 2:20

√ Romans 12:1-2

Prayer

Father in Heaven, thank You for the unconditional love, grace, and hope You have provided for me in Christ Jesus.

Thank You for the privilege of being entrusted with the opportunity to care for, serve, and influence others in the way You have demonstrated toward me.

Thank You that because Your sacrificial love is becoming a growing part of my life, I can love You with a greater and deeper love.

I pray that as I continue to grow I will learn to follow You without any reservations, distractions, or diversions; and that others will respond to what they see of Your love demonstrated in my life.

I ask that You will be honored and glorified as I seek You and love You with all my heart and with all my soul, and with all my mind.

In Jesus name,
Amen