

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”

This is a very challenging question. And it is also one of the most critical questions of our time.

Because, to love Jesus, to follow Jesus, is to love and follow truth. Do you believe that?

I ask because an amazing number of people in this country don't believe it. In fact, they don't believe much of anything. They have a lot of opinions about a lot of things, including religion, but they are lacking the conviction of absolute truth.

Why?

In what many call our post-modern society, the “truth” is treated as something that is subjective. No truth is absolute; no truth is greater than another. What is true for me does not have to be true for you. So let's just agree to disagree and we can all get along. You say tomato to I say tomato; whatever, right? That may work for pronouncing words, but when it comes to truth, “whatever” doesn't cut it.

Our sense of right and wrong, our moral compasses, our understanding of good and evil are threatened by the “whatever attitude”. The word and attitude of the “whatever” is the best description of how prior principles have lost their meaning.

Marital relations outside of marriage? Whatever.

Change the definition of marriage? Whatever.

Abortion, euthanasia, or protect life? Whatever.

Catholic, Buddhist, atheist? Whatever.

In our first reading the Apostles are brought before the judges of their day and told to stop speaking of Jesus. And for many today, this would be a “whatever” moment. Let's not offend anyone. Don't rock the boat.

But Peter and the apostles understood that genuine love is not a compromise, that truth doesn't always take an easy road. **"We must obey God rather than men"** was their response.

If as Christians that is our answer as well, then moral ambivalence in the face of all of the burning issues of our day **cannot** be our response.

"Whatever" is not a part of our love vocabulary.

And how, then, do **we** answer the question on the beach? Let's try to understand the depth of the question.

Peter, do you love me more than your career as a fisherman? Do you love me more than your boats and nets and all these fish? Do you love me more than you love your friends?

Do you love me more than your human freedom, more than your very life?

Peter's answer of "yes" led to a papal mandate to shepherd the flock of Christ.

And it did cost him . . . his career, his freedom . . . and eventually, his earthly life.

We must all eventually answer this question this burning question for ourselves.

Acknowledging that love is **not instantly mature**, that it is something that grows over time, being fully aware that there are times when we will fail, **how do you answer that question.**

In the end, perhaps no question is more important . . . nor more costly.

Jesus asks each of us, not once, not three times but every day in every situation, do you love me more than these? It is a question, that if taken seriously creates more questions than it answers.

Do we love Jesus more than our comforts, our money, our prestige and popularity? More than alcohol or pornography or marital infidelity?

Is our relationship of love and trust in Jesus, a commitment to the truth?

Can we demonstrate this truth in words and actions to our friends, our spouse and children... to strangers?

Can we stand up for this truth against the rising tide of common public opinion? Can we rock the boat when it is, for the sake of truth, in need of rocking?

These are tough questions. The stakes are high and the outcome is too important to be treated as trivial.

If we can say with Peter, “**Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.**” then we can never again shrug our shoulders in a moral conflict. We can never again fail to take a stand for what is right. We can never again forsake justice for convenience.

And we can never give an answer of “whatever” to the important truths in this world, for as Christians, we **MUST** obey God and not man. This is a truth of our faith... do you believe it? It is a very personal question. . . do YOU believe it?