

“Starting Over”

John 21:15-19

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Smoke Rise Baptist Church

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Communion Sunday

I believe I would have done it differently. The reason I know this is because I have done it differently. I have three children and I don't think I ever did it the way Jesus did that morning along the seashore.

When my children would make a mistake, I mean big mistake, I would usually have a long talk with them. I would ask a lot of penetrating questions, rehash the details, outline a new plan of action and get them to promise they would make necessary changes. Don't they teach this at parenting school?

What a contrast to the way Jesus handled the mistakes of his disciples after his crucifixion. In John 21, we read where Jesus prepared a meal for his weary fishermen-disciples. After breakfast, Jesus and Peter had some time alone. This was the same disciple who three times denied that he even knew Jesus the night he was arrested. Talk about a mistake, this was a big one! What a disloyal coward Peter was that night. All the more reason for Jesus to ask a lot of penetrating questions, rehash the details, outline a new plan of action and most of all, get Peter to promise with all of his heart that he would never do such a thing again. Scratch that method of discipline. So, what did Jesus do?

He asked Peter if he loved him. Three times as a matter of fact. No other questions. No details of that awful night. No ridicule. No humiliation. No guilt. No promise to never, ever, ever do that stupid thing again. Instead, he asked three times, “Do you love me?” And when Peter said yes all three times, Jesus told him to go back to work ministering to people.

As you begin this New Year, you may be painfully aware that you failed your Lord in many ways in the previous year. Maybe you denied him, disobeyed him or even deserted him. Perhaps you are waiting for him to come and treat you like a FBI interrogator or angry parent.

He's not going to do it. Ask Peter. Instead, he is going to ask you one question and now you know what that is.

Why does he ask but one question? That question, “Do you love me?” He knows that if we love him, we will want to change our ways. We will want to be loyal, devoted and faithful. We will want to please and honor him. We will want to help him. He also knows that if we do not love him, all the promises in the world will be quickly broken.

As we take the Lord's Supper this morning, don't focus on all the mistakes you made last year. Don't beat yourself over the head. Don't even promise Jesus that you will never do those silly things this year. Instead, answer that question, “Do you love me?” I think you will like his response if you say yes.