“Lovest Thou Me More Than These?”

What things can you do within your own life to show that you love the Lord first?

In November 2019, my friend and I visited the Holy Land. While there, we reviewed and studied scriptures about Jesus Christ’s life. One morning we stood on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee at a place that may have been where Jesus met His disciples following His Resurrection.

After Jesus’s Resurrection, as we read in John chapter 21, Peter and the other disciples fished all night without success. In the morning, they saw a man standing on the shore who told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. To their astonishment, the net was filled miraculously.

They immediately recognized that the man was the Lord, and they rushed to greet Him.

As they dragged the net to shore, full of fish, Jesus said, “Come and dine.” John reports that “when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me more than these?”

While I was standing on that same seashore, I realized that the Savior’s question was one of the most important questions that He might someday ask me. I could almost hear His voice asking, “Russell, loveth thou me more than these?”

Do you wonder what Jesus was referring to when He asked Peter, “Lovest thou me more than these?”

Relating this question to ourselves in our day, the Lord may be asking us about how busy we are and about the many positive and negative influences competing for our attention and our time. He may be asking each of us if we love Him more than the things of this world. This may be a question about what we really value in life, who we follow, and how we view our relationships with family members and neighbors. Or maybe He is asking what really brings us joy and happiness.

Do the things of this world bring us the joy, happiness, and peace that the Savior offered to His disciples and that He offers to us? Only He can bring us true joy, happiness, and peace through our loving Him and following His teachings.

How would we answer the question “Lovest thou me more than these?”

When we discover a fuller meaning of this question, we can become better family members, neighbors, citizens, members of the Church, and sons and daughters of God.
commandments. We strive to be obedient. We make and keep covenants. We honor our fathers and mothers. We set aside negative worldly influences. We prepare ourselves for His Second Coming.

In “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” we read: “[Jesus] will someday return to earth. . . . He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.”5

As one of the Apostles who signed “The Living Christ” document, I can say that knowing that Jesus “is the light, the life, and the hope of the world”6 gives me a greater desire to love Him more every day.

I testify that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live. I testify that They love us. The scriptures teach that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”7 The scriptures also teach that Jesus “so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons [and daughters] of God.”8

Heavenly Father so loved us that He prepared His plan of salvation with a Savior as the central figure. And Jesus so loved us that in the great Council in Heaven, when Heavenly Father asked, “Whom shall I send?” Jesus, who was the firstborn of all the Father's spirit children, answered, “Here am I, send me.”9 He said unto the Father, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”10 Jesus volunteered to be our Savior and Redeemer so that we could become like Them and return to Their presence.

These two scriptures also teach that to return to Their presence we need to believe. We need to believe in Jesus and in God's plan of happiness. To believe is to love and follow our Savior and keep the commandments, even in the midst of trials and strife.

Today's world is unsettled. There are disappointments, disagreements, distress, and distractions. President Dallin H. Oaks, speaking in 2017, noted the following: “These are challenging times, filled with big worries: wars and rumors of wars, possible epidemics of infectious diseases, droughts, floods, and global warming.”11

We cannot lose our love for and hope in Jesus, even if we face seemingly overwhelming challenges. Heavenly Father and Jesus will never forget us. They love us.

Last October, President Russell M. Nelson taught us the importance of putting Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ first in our lives. President Nelson taught us that one meaning of the word Israel is “let God prevail.”12 He asked each of us these questions: “Are you willing to let God prevail in your life? Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other? Are you willing to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? Are you willing to have your will swallowed up in His?”13

We must always remember that our true happiness depends upon our relationship with God, with Jesus Christ, and with each other.

One way to demonstrate our love is by joining family, friends, and neighbors in doing some small things to better serve each other. Do things that make this world a better place.

What things can you do within your own life to show that you love the Lord first? As we focus on loving our neighbors as He loves them, we start to truly love those around us.14

I ask again, how would you respond to the Savior’s question “Lovest thou me more than these?” As you consider this question, as I have done, I pray that you may answer as Peter did so long ago, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee,”15 and then show it by loving and serving God and all those around you.

I testify that we are blessed to have the gospel of Jesus Christ to guide us in the way we live and treat each other. In Him, we discover that every
daughter and son of God is very precious to Him.
I testify that Jesus Christ is our beloved Savior. He is the Only Begotten Son of God. And I bear this testimony humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES
1. See John 21:3.
2. See John 21:11.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 34:3.

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I Pray He’ll Use Us

Small efforts collectively make a big impact, magnifying the many individual things we do as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This cookie made of phyllo dough and pistachio nuts is a thank-you. It was made by the Kadado family who, for decades, owned three bakeries in Damascus, Syria. When war came, a blockade stopped food and supplies from reaching their part of the city. The Kadados began to starve. At the height of this desperate situation, Latter-day Saint Charities and some very courageous staff at Rahma Worldwide began serving a daily hot meal, along with milk for the little children. After a difficult time, the family began their life—as well as their bakery—once again in a new country.

Recently, a box of cookies arrived at the Church offices with the following message: “For more than two months, we managed to get food from the Rahma–Latter-day Saint [Charities] kitchen. Without it we would have starved to death. Please accept this . . . sample from my shop as a small token of thanks. I ask God the Almighty to bless you . . . in everything you do.”

A cookie of gratitude and remembrance. It is meant for you. To all who prayed after watching a story on the news, to all who volunteered when it was not convenient or who kindly donated money to the humanitarian fund trusting it would do some good, thank you.

Divine Responsibility to Care for the Poor

The Church of Jesus Christ is under divine mandate to care for the poor. It is one of the pillars of the work of salvation and exaltation. What was true during the days of Alma is certainly true for us: “And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did