

**Sermon for May 4 – John 21:15–17**  
**“Do You Love Me?”**

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On a small farm lived a chicken named Charlie who dreamed of flying.  
The other animals laughed.  
“Chickens can’t fly, Charlie!”

But Charlie was determined.

One day, he climbed the tallest tree, flapped his wings, and took a leap of faith.

To everyone’s surprise, Charlie glided for a few moments before landing softly.  
The animals cheered, and Charlie said:  
“See? Even chickens can fly when they believe in themselves.”

That courage inspired the others to try, and they learned they could soar—  
even if just for a moment.

The lesson?

With determination and courage, even the most unlikely possibilities can become real.

Peter’s story in John 21 carries a similar message—  
not about flying, but about *rising again* after failure.

After everything that happened—his denial, his shame—  
Jesus meets Peter with one simple question:

**“Do you love me?”**

Jesus asks it three times.

And three times, Peter answers:

**“Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”**

Jesus responds each time:

**“Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.”**

There’s no accusation.

No shaming.

No punishment.

Just grace.

Jesus doesn’t ask Peter to explain himself.

He doesn’t need a long confession.

He simply wants Peter’s heart.

He's not after guilt—  
He's after love.

I think a lot of us know what it's like to fall short.

We've disappointed people.  
We've made promises we didn't keep.  
We've acted out of self-interest and called it love.

I know I have.

But Jesus doesn't meet Peter—or us—with a list of wrongs.  
He meets us with breakfast by the fire and a new beginning.

He meets us in the place of our deepest regret and says,  
*There's still work to do. I still want you.*

This is a moment of restoration—  
not rejection.

Jesus entrusts Peter with his people,  
not because Peter is perfect—  
but because he is loved.

That same invitation extends to us.

To lay down the weight we've carried.

To stand up straight again.  
To see the waves, the rising sun, the fire on the shore.

To believe—again—  
that there is purpose ahead.

Jesus believes in us, just as he believed in Peter.

He gives us the courage to step out of our comfort zones  
and the Spirit to live and love boldly.

So yes—maybe even chickens can fly.

And maybe even we—  
flawed, fearful, forgiven—  
can be part of something beautiful.

Not because we've earned it.  
Not because we've never messed up.  
But because Jesus meets us where we are and says:  
*"There's still a place for you here."*

He looks us in the eye—not with judgment, but with love—  
and asks,

**“Do you love me?”**

If the answer is yes,  
then we already know what comes next:

Feed the hungry.  
Tend to the hurting.  
Care for the people around you.

Love Jesus.  
Love his people.  
And trust that grace is always enough to begin again.

**Amen.**