

Apostle Peter is commissioned to feed the lambs and sheep of Christ



John 21: 1-17

After Jesus Christ had risen, he appeared to his disciples on several occasions. He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and gave them final instructions on how they should act. On one of these occasions he asked Apostle Peter three times: "Peter, do you love me?" Peter answered with a clear "Yes".

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Then the Lord Jesus told him to feed his lambs and sheep.

The children learn how Apostle Peter became the shepherd over Christ's flock.

They perceive that the chief apostle,
the apostles and ministers are our shepherds and teachers.

Apostle Peter returns at last. Some time has elapsed since he left the congregation. Chava has missed him. She knows that the council has forbidden him to preach in the temple. But the apostle is not intimidated. He is thankful though that he is back with his brothers and sisters again. He knows that they have all worried about him and that the whole congregation was praying for him. Chava is happy that she is one of the first to greet him.

Only a few of the members have gathered yet. Chava's mother appears very concerned. She speaks to the apostle. "I am so afraid for you. The council is looking for you. You are in danger here. Would it not be better if you moved away from here?"

"You mean very well," replies Peter, "but can a shepherd leave his flock? How could I leave you in this difficult time? After all, the Lord Jesus gave me the task of looking after you." This answer pleases Chava's mother. Dan adds: "That is what Jesus Christ also did, he fulfilled his task. He is no longer with us, but has told you to care for us. He gave us a good shepherd before returning to his heavenly Father. We are happy and thankful to have you, Peter!"

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The apostle lovingly looks at his friend and says "I am so happy to be with you again, I love you very much."

"How did you actually receive your commission?" enquires Chava. The apostle smiles and after they have all seated themselves, he starts relating: "Do you remember me telling you last time how the Lord Jesus appeared to us in Jerusalem? Well, some days later while some of the other disciples and I were at the sea of Tiberias, we met him again.

"We had been fishing all night. That morning the Master was waiting for us on the shore of the lake. John recognized him first. I was so overjoyed that I jumped overboard and waded out to him. I wanted to be with him as soon as I possibly could. Oh, it was so wonderful, after that tiring night, to sit around the fire, fry our fish and have our Master in our midst!"

Chava understands. She is also happy to have the apostle back. Peter continues: "After we had eaten, the Lord Jesus asked me: 'Simon Peter, do you love me more than the others?' I answered: 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' The Lord then said: 'Feed my lambs!' After a little while the Lord asked again: 'Simon Peter, do you love me?' This gave me quite a shock! Why did the Lord ask me a second time? Did he not believe me?' Again I answered from the depth of my heart: 'But, Lord, you know that I love you.' Then the Son of God replied: 'Feed my sheep!' And he asked me that same question a third

time: 'Simon Peter, do you love me?' I could not hold back my tears thinking the Lord did not trust me anymore. Did I not love him enough? I know that I had often disappointed him and that often I lacked faith! But the Lord, who knows all things, must have known how sorry I was about it all! He had forgiven me again and again and had not sent me away. Surely he must have felt how much I loved him! Deeply distressed I answered: 'Lord, you know everything, you must know that I love you.' Then Jesus said to me once more: 'Feed my sheep!' Those were the words of our Master and that is how I became your shepherd."



Dan nods in agreement. He knows how important these words are to the apostle. He also knows how hard he tries to be a good shepherd. When the apostle resumes his duties, Dan gently strokes Chava's hair. She is amazed at how the apostle has become her shepherd. He was given this task by Jesus Christ himself! He told him three times to feed his lambs and sheep. She feels very strongly how much Peter loves them all, just as he loves the Lord. He will do anything to care for them.

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*Jesus Christ asked Apostle Peter three times: "Do you love me?"
Peter answered with a heartfelt "Yes".
The Lord then commissioned him:
"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep!"*

1 Jesus has told us that he is the good shepherd and what a good shepherd should be like. We recall this. (We can look at the pictures from teaching unit 2.7.)

2 We look at and describe the picture. What are the Lord Jesus and Peter discussing?

What would their thoughts and feelings have been at that moment?

The teacher supplements: The Lord Jesus did not leave his sheep (the faithful) without guidance.

He chose Apostle Peter as his representative. Peter became the good shepherd in his stead, the visible head of the congregation. He served his fellow-apostles, all the helpers and the brothers and sisters as a good shepherd. He led them, closely connected with the heavenly Father and the Son of God.

He saw to it that the faithful remained closely united so that they would be preserved.

3 What about today? Today the chief apostle is our shepherd. Now he does what the Lord Jesus told Peter to do. He is the visible head of the Church of Christ. The apostles and the other ministers help him fulfil his great commission.

We speak about the ministries in the New Apostolic Church.