

“I Love the Lord” inspired from Mark 8:27-29, Luke 22:31-34, John 18:25-27, and John 21:15-17

The afternoon sun cast long shadows across the city park as Raymond, Bobby, and Jimmy sat on a bench overlooking a busy basketball court.

They had been friends for years. Bobby was outspoken and confident. Jimmy was thoughtful and quiet. Raymond was known for helping people whenever he could, but lately he had been wrestling with questions about faith.

As they watched people pass by, a street preacher stood near the corner speaking to a small crowd.

Bobby chuckled. “Everybody seems to have a different opinion about Jesus.”

Jimmy nodded. “That’s true. Some say He was just a good teacher. Others think He was a revolutionary.”

Raymond stared thoughtfully at the preacher.

Then Jimmy turned and asked, “What do you think, Raymond? Who is Jesus to you?”

The question struck Raymond deeply.

After a long pause, he answered, “I believe He’s more than a teacher or prophet. I believe He’s the Son of the living God; I know him as the Savior of my life.”

Bobby smiled. “That’s a strong answer.”

“It’s the truth,” Raymond replied quietly.



Over the next several months, Raymond became more involved in his church. He volunteered at food drives, joined Bible studies, and openly talked about his faith.

One evening after church, an elderly mentor named Pastor Lewis pulled him aside.

“Raymond,” he said, “God has great plans for you, but you should be careful because difficult times test even the strongest believers.”

Raymond laughed confidently.

“I’m not worried...no matter what happens, I’ll never turn my back on my faith.”

Pastor Lewis looked at him kindly.

“Don’t be too sure of your own strength because everyone faces moments of weakness.”

Raymond nodded but secretly thought that could never happen to me.



A year later, trouble came unexpectedly.

Raymond’s company announced major layoffs as fear spread throughout the office. At the same time, several coworkers began ridiculing Christians whenever religious topics came up.

One afternoon during lunch, Raymond sat with a group of employees.

Someone mentioned faith.

A coworker pointed at Raymond.

“Wait, aren’t you one of those church people?”

The table grew silent.

Raymond felt every eye staring at him.

He remembered the jokes, the ridicule, and the risk of becoming an outsider at work.

For a moment fear took over.

He forced a nervous laugh.

“Not really. I mean... I'm not that involved.”

The conversation moved on, but Raymond immediately felt uneasy.

A few days later, he was standing outside the building with Bobby and Jimmy, who happened to work nearby.

One of Raymond's coworkers walked over.

“Hey,” she said. “Didn't I see you leading a prayer at that community event last month?”

Again, Raymond felt trapped.

He glanced around.

People were watching.

“Must have been somebody else,” he replied quickly.

The coworker shrugged and walked away.

Jimmy stared at him.

“Raymond... why did you say that?”

Raymond looked down.

“I don't know.”

The third test came during an important meeting.

A manager asked everyone about their involvement in community organizations.

When Raymond's turn came, he knew this was the perfect opportunity to mention his church outreach work.

Instead, fear won again.

“Nothing significant,” he answered.

The words felt heavier than he expected.

That night he sat alone in his apartment.

The silence was painful.

Three opportunities.

Three denials.

His heart sank.

Lord, how could I do that? he prayed. I said I would never be ashamed of You.

Tears filled his eyes.



Weeks passed.

One Saturday morning Raymond joined Bobby and Jimmy at a lakeside retreat sponsored by their church.

After breakfast, the three friends walked along the water.

The early morning sunlight danced across the surface of the lake.

Finally, Bobby spoke.

“Raymond, something's been bothering you.”

Jimmy nodded.

“You don't seem like yourself.”

Raymond took a deep breath and told them everything.

The questions.

The fear.

The denials.

The regret.

When he finished, nobody spoke for a moment.

Then Bobby placed a hand on his shoulder.

“You made mistakes.”

Jimmy added, “But mistakes don't have to be the end of your story.”

At that moment Pastor Lewis approached them.

“Raymond, can we talk?”

They sat on a nearby dock.

The pastor looked at him with compassion.

“Do you love the Lord?”

Raymond immediately answered, “Yes. More than anything.”

Pastor Lewis smiled gently.

“Then serve Him.”

A few moments later he asked again.

“Raymond, do you really love Him?”

Raymond's voice grew emotional.

“Yes, I do.”

“Then care for His people.”

After a pause, Pastor Lewis asked a third time.

“Raymond, do you love Jesus?”

Raymond's eyes filled with tears.

He understood what was happening.

Three times he had denied what he believed.

Now three times he was being given an opportunity to reaffirm his love.

“Yes, Pastor,” he said softly. “You know I love Him.”

“Then follow Him and help others do the same.”

From that day forward, Raymond stopped relying on his own confidence and learned to depend on God's grace.

When conversations about faith came up at work, he spoke respectfully but honestly.

When opportunities arose to help others, he stepped forward.

When fear appeared, he remembered that failure was not the end.

One evening, as the three friends left a community outreach event, Bobby grinned.

“You've changed, Raymond.”

Jimmy smiled. “Stronger than before.”

Raymond looked toward the sunset and shook his head.

“Not stronger.”

“Then what?” Bobby asked.

Raymond smiled.

“More forgiven.”

The three friends walked on, encouraged and hopeful, while Raymond carried a lesson he would never forget:

Failing God is painful, but God's love is greater than our failures. Those who return to Him with humble hearts can be restored, renewed, and given another chance to serve.