

## Sermon on Peter's restoration by Jesus - 9 August 2020

John Ch 21 v15-19

### PETER KAY

I don't know if any of you have watched Peter Kay's car share? It's a comedy series starring Peter Kay and Sian Gibson about employees of a supermarket who are thrown together in a car share scheme. Eventually they fall in love but Peter's character John is more reticent than Sian's character Kayleigh. At the end of the last episode Peter completely fails to declare his love in the right way at the right time, and everything is left hanging in mid-air. What happened to the main characters, did they or didn't they get together as a couple? The series was very popular and viewers were outraged at this cliff hanger ending. This meant Peter Kay had to produce another final episode, clearing up the loose ends.

### JOHN'S GOSPEL

John's Gospel is also a bit like this. The Gospel of John Comes to a crescendo in Chapter 20 with Thomas's realisation that Jesus is alive, that he has risen from the dead, and that he is God. However, much like Peter Kay's car share series, there are plenty of loose ends not tied up properly by the end of the last episode in the Gospel of John. One question left hanging was what happened to Peter? [That's St Peter I mean, not Peter Kay.](#)

### PETER'S LOW POINT

By the end of Chapter 20 in the Gospel of John, Peter had been left at a very low point. Peter had promised Jesus he would stick by him, even go to prison and die with him, but in fact he had just denied Jesus three times, as Jesus had predicted he would do. After this episode, Peter ran out and had a good cry. I'm sure we can all understand how he felt, because we like Peter are totally human, and we get some of the most important things in life wrong too.

Unlike Peter Kay's Car Share programme, where the same writing team wrote another episode after the finale, it was probably someone else rather than John who wrote Chapter 21 of John. Maybe the anonymous author just wanted to clear up some of those loose ends, or to add the amazing story of Jesus meeting the disciples on the beach and cooking them breakfast. Or maybe it was that he wanted to show us perhaps that Peter was not left at this low point of denial but transformed. Peter was clearly broken here. He had even decided to go back to fishing, his first career before he was a disciple. But then Jesus meets him on the beach and speaks to him.

### JESUS SPEAKS

Everything seems to have gone quiet whilst they ate the food that Jesus prepared. Then Jesus speaks. Jesus calls Peter "Simon" his old name, before Jesus changed it to Peter, the rock. Jesus is recognising that Peter is at that low point, he's gone back to being Simon, not Peter, and he's returned to being a fisherman.

Peter's shows his distress when he becomes hurt, that Jesus has asked him 3 times whether he loves him. Peter feels Jesus must know that he loves him already. Maybe Peter doesn't relate this incident to his 3 times denial of Jesus, but I feel sure the author of John does. Peter declares he loves Jesus three times. Each time Peter says it "I love you" Jesus gives him a task or a mission-feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.

**RESURRECTION** Peter's story here is a resurrection story, reflecting the story of Jesus resurrection. Peter has "died" through separating himself from God, by denying God, by failing in his faith. But the author of John Chapter 21 is showing us here, that even though Peter is at the lowest point, God can still make something really special of him. No qualifications are required for this work. All Peter has to do is to say he loves Jesus. Through this love Peter is raised, not just to life after death, but to new life as part of the body of Christ in this world.

### **PETER'S FUTURE**

Peter of course became a great leader in the early Christian church. Sadly it's highly likely Peter had already died by the time John Chapter 21 was written. We don't have many agreed historical facts about Peter's life after this meeting on the beach, but we can see a small glimpse of Peter's later work in Acts Chapter 5 v 15-16. **And this is what it says:**

"so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by..... and they were all cured."

Peter really did take on that role of being the Good Shepherd that Jesus asked him to do. He was so good at it, so filled with the Holy Spirit, that even his shadow could heal people.

### **US**

So what about us now, here in a church dedicated to St Peter?

### **THE CHURCH COLLECTIVE**

We too might feel at a low point now following the tragedy of coronavirus, the lockdown and a distancing of people within the church as a result. On top of that there is major repair work being done on the church building as we attempt to return to it. This is a low point for many, but we can rise again from this low point, be resurrected in this life, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. We can show the Glory of the Lord, and many new believers could be added.

A first step towards this is to reflect how we act out our values from now on, the ones we agreed on at St Peter's -they are listed on all the communications that come from the parish office -

Growing in love, deepening faith, working for God, welcoming all.

And especially in the context of today's story of St Peter, the Growing in Love part.

## INDIVIDUALS

As individuals, this story about St Peter can speak to us all personally too. We all know that like St. Peter we have done bad things, that take us away from God, and that hurt others. But for each one of us too, Jesus brings us forgiveness and resurrection, not just a resurrection after death, but in real life now, so we are forgiven we are restored, we are part of the body of Christ, and we can go and do his work in a more powerful way than we ever imagined.

It is Jesus who brings us our resurrection. All he asks in return is “Do you love me?” And if you do, then all things are possible.

AMEN

*Diane Reeve*