



Week 5 – Peter

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... it's almost summer! What are you looking forward to most about the season... lounging by the pool? Boat rides and river rafting? Sweltering humidity and endless sweating? Ready, go.

Opening Prayer

God of Redemption, break the hold our shame has on us, free us from the guilt of our past lives and open our hearts to living for you.

Introduction

There's only one "Stinger" left in the gospels. That is, in the stories of Jesus's life in the Bible, (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,) we've covered everything that happened between the Resurrection of Jesus, to the end of the books... save for one final story. We've covered Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene, the followers on the Road to Emmaus,

the disciples and Thomas, and to the men out fishing. Today's story picks up where last week's left off... but we'll come back to that. First, let's remember why we're doing this. These scenes are vital to understanding the true impact of the Risen Christ. If his followers do not meet him face-to-face after the resurrection, they don't become the world-changing sharers of Christ's love, the ripple effects of which we still feel 2000 years later. And so, embracing these stories gives us the chance to ask ourselves, "how will encountering the Risen Christ impact our lives?"

Set-up Question: Jesus evidently preferred charcoal with which to cook. Are you a charcoal fire person? Do you use gas? A woodburning oven? George Foreman? Perhaps your depth of grilling is the good ol' microwave?

Scripture

Let's reset the scene. Seven of Jesus's Disciples had gone home, back to their hometowns around the Sea of Galilee. It doesn't say why... but from context, it seems as if they were still unsure what to do next. Sure, they'd encountered Christ a couple times, so they knew he had risen. They probably even believed at this point that he was the Son of God, more than just the mortal Messiah of Israel. But it doesn't appear that they knew what Jesus wanted them to do with that information, yet. So instead, they went fishing. The next morning, after fishing all night and catching nothing, Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to throw their nets to the other side of the boat. They don't recognize him but follow orders anyway. And when they do, their nets become

so full of fish, they can't haul them in. It's a beautiful moment for these followers, because this exact scene, this exact miracle, was exactly what had happened the day they met Jesus three years ago. That day, they fell at his feet, and he said to them, "follow me, from now on, you will fish for people." Fast forward to last week's "stinger," they again race to shore. But this time, they're sure he's the Savior of the World, God on Earth. And that calling had to have come rushing back to them, "from now on, you will fish for people." And in a few days, that very mission would begin. And then, Jesus cooks them breakfast. The King of Kings, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, God-with-Us... cookin' breakfast. And so they eat. These friends, these companions, these dudes... chillin' on the shore, eatin' breakfast.

But one of them seems a little off. Simon Peter. He's quiet during the meal. There's a lot on his mind. The initial excitement of the news, the joy of his Master being alive... it's worn off a little. He's had some time to process the last few weeks, and his head is spinning. He was so overwhelmed and overjoyed at seeing Jesus again, he dove out of the boat and swam to shore, fully clothed. But now, he's pensive... he's distant... he's quiet. And Jesus notices.

Read John, chapter 21, verses 15 to 19.

Simon Peter finally got some one-on-one time with his friend and teacher, and Jesus knew something was on Peter's mind. It's a powerful exchange between the two, and one that can teach us a great deal about love and redemption.

Question 1: Discuss this “Stinger.” If you were Simon Peter, what would have been on your mind? What do you think Jesus was doing? Would this have been comforting or upsetting to you?

Reflection

This scene was overwhelming for Simon Peter. Perhaps no one loved Jesus more than Simon Peter. Perhaps no one had a closer relationship to Jesus than Simon Peter. Perhaps no one was given more responsibility than Simon Peter. And having lost his friend, mentor, teacher, pastor... perhaps no one was more lost than Simon Peter. Which is why he went fishing on that day. And so, when Jesus appears, he’s thrilled he gets to see his master again. But as their sitting around, eating McJesus’s Fish Biscuit, Peter starts thinking... and so much comes flooding back. We can imagine that he’s reminded of the mission Jesus had set him on and the responsibility he had been given, but also how badly he had screwed it up.

See, before Simon met Jesus, he was a self-declared “sinful man.” Jesus had given his life meaning and purpose. He was changed. Moreover, Jesus had given Simon the nickname “Peter” because it means, “The Rock,” (yeah, Dwayne Johnson, you weren’t the first,) because Jesus told him that he would be “The Rock” upon which Jesus would build his church. That’s a lot of responsibility to carry. He was supposed to be the leader. He was supposed to know what to do. He was supposed to have the answers. He must be feeling the pressure of the other

disciples looking up to him about what to do next, and he's lost. Sitting around that breakfast circle, he had to be afraid that, without Jesus, he'd be slipping right back into his old sinful life. More than this though, the last time he sat around a charcoal fire had to be playing over and over in his mind. A few weeks ago, around a similar fire, Peter had denied knowing Jesus while Jesus was being tried, beaten, and mocked, and eventually crucified. We cannot imagine the shame Peter must be feeling at this moment, sitting with his friend and teacher, recalling this betrayal.

Question 2: Let's dig a little deeper here. Is there a negative element of your life that you're afraid of going back to? Is something causing you shame and guilt from which you need to be released? Maybe it's not quite that dire... so think of it this way, what is something that stands in the way of a deeper relationship with Jesus?

Jesus is never one to let us wallow in our shame. Knowing what Simon Peter was thinking, the confusion, the shame, the sense of loss and being lost, Jesus goes to him, and redeems him through a series of questions... questions about love. "Do you love me?" (Go ahead and sing it "Fiddler on the Roof" style if you have to.) On Sunday, Pastor Mike broke down the Greek words for "love" used here... go watch Sunday's reflection for the full recap... For now, it's a beautiful back-and-forth between the two, clarifying just how much Peter loves his Savior. And at the end of the story, Jesus says, "follow me." In order for Peter to be the Rock upon which the church was built, he had to

know that Jesus still trusted him with the mission and he had to be relieved of his shame. This scene was the perfect place to do it... to bring Simon back into the pit of those things. And through this beautiful moment, Jesus gives him back his mission... saying, "feed my sheep," and, "follow me." And he gives him grace by offering him love for his shame.

Question 3: No discussion here. Just take a few moments in silence. Listen for the voice of Christ, and lay your shame at his feet. Whatever is holding you back, allow Jesus to take it from you. Know that you are loved.

Closing

This stinger, this interaction between Jesus and Simon Peter, shows us that love is the answer to shame. The personal, familiar, one-on-one relationship we have with our savior blots out our past, covers our guilt, and erases our shame. With this love, Peter was redeemed. And with this love... so are we. That's the power of the Risen Christ. That's the impact of a relationship with our Savior. It covers your past, and lets you move past the things that are holding you back from living into the fulness of life that God has in mind for you. Jesus is asking you... do you love me? What is your answer? Will you say, "yes." Will you say, "you know I do," and let that love conquer your shame, as it did for Simon Peter? In his grief and uncertainty about the future, Jesus in this moment redeems it all... frees him from his shame, gives him back his responsibility in the mission, and lets him know that Jesus will be with

him always. Christ says the same thing to us... You are free from your shame. You have a mission to fulfill... and Jesus will be with you always.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.