

Jane Ward-Hall.
21 October 2018

Luke 5:1-11
Mark 8: 27-30

PETER
Sinner, follower, insightful, broken

This morning we are continuing our sermon series looking at what we know of Peter, one of the apostles, and what we can learn from him.

I've always had a soft spot for Peter. It dates back to my school days. Peter was the reason for my annual birthday treat! No school! I was born on His Saints day! At that time it was a day off!

In the intervening years I've found other reasons to be fond of Peter! He was the disciple who Jesus called the "rock". He became the first Pope. But the thing I love the most is that he was so human! Just like us, he got things wrong!

What do we know of Peter so far. Terry told us of his bold impetuous nature when Peter was the only one to get out of the boat. Of how fear overcame him and he started to sink when he tried to walk on water. At least he tried! Chris told us that Peter was part of the inner circle, how he would often speak up when others were silent. Sometimes insightfully, sometimes without thinking which could get him reprimanded. Trouble with being inside the circle it is only one step from being outside. Peter made lots of mistakes. Every Easter he is remembered as the man who denied Jesus 3 times. How awful Peter must have felt, how ashamed, an utter failure. He was human! He messed up! Don't we all at times?

I find it very comforting that Peter sins, gets it wrong, yet Jesus still forgives him and things work out well in the end. Jesus knows we are fallible human beings and he wants us to turn to him. He accepts us just as we are. But he doesn't want us to stay just as we are.

A metaphor for life which is frequently used is "journey" People often speak of a faith journey. Today we will look at a bit more of what we know of Peter's faith journey. Hopefully it will inspire us and challenge us. We'll start with the dramatic events of Peter's calling, we heard about in Luke 5:1-11.

Jesus certainly has a way of grabbing people's attention. He was already getting quite a name for himself. By word of mouth people had heard about this travelling rabbi who healed sick people. This was the most exciting thing to have happened for years (actually ever). As soon as Jesus was spotted walking towards a village, word went round, people stopped whatever they were doing because something exciting was going to happen and they didn't want to miss out. (FOMO isn't a new thing!)

Jesus walked from village to village telling everyone about the coming of the Kingdom of God, healing miracles demonstrated the good news. The people were hungry for change, life was tough under Roman rule. They thought "This Jesus might be the one to free us".

The action in our Luke reading takes place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. It is a fascinating place to visit. Now in ruins, an outdoor museum, because it was never rebuilt after an earthquake. Standing on the shore its easy to imagine the scene. Jesus starts to talk to a group. More gather, the group becomes a crowd. Spotting a couple of fishing boats Jesus climbs into one and asks Peter, (or rather Simon as he was then called, but I'll refer to him as Peter throughout,) who was sitting mending his nets, to move out a little way from the shore. Sitting in Peter's boat Jesus taught the crowd. I have no idea if Peter paid any attention to what Jesus was saying. He might even have been worrying about what his family would eat that day as they hadn't caught any fish the night before.

When Jesus had finished speaking to the crowd he turned to Peter asked him to put the boat out to deeper water "put down your nets". I can almost imagine Peter shrugging his shoulders thinking "what a crazy idea, we only ever catch fish at night, but as I've been taught to do what rabbi's say so I will". Peter was open to Jesus' suggestion. As soon as he obeyed Jesus, lowering the nets over the side, over a 100 large silver fish filled it. Peter hanging on with all his strength, calling his friends to help haul in the catch.

Nobody had ever seen anything like this before. It was so exciting and overwhelming all at once. Who is this Jesus? As soon as the catch has landed Peter knows he is in the presence of a person of incredible greatness and power. He kneels and says "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Peter acknowledges the truth about himself, he recognises his own insignificance. What response might we expect? Jesus could have said "you're right, you are a sinner, go and train at the temple before I can consider having any more to do with you" But he doesn't, ever surprising Jesus invites Peter, James and John who were his fishing partners, to come with him. Jesus accepts them just as they are and says "do not be afraid from now on you will be catching people". "Yes" they say "this adventure is an opportunity we might never have again! Let's go!" I have to say, I feel sorry for the wives and mothers who would've been left to deal with all those fish! At least they had plenty to sell at market!

Our reading from Mark 8 comes directly after a miracle where Jesus heals a blind man. Jesus opens eyes to see. Jesus opens Peter's mind to know He is the Messiah. True to form Peter speaks up for the group.

But as time goes on some people find Jesus' message more difficult to hear.

At the end of John chapter 6 we read that disciples are offended and leave Jesus (there were more than just the 12 we usually think of). Jesus then asks the 12 "Do you also wish to go away". Peter again the spokesman says " Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life".

Yet we know a few weeks later all the disciples flee when Jesus is arrested in the garden of Gethesame. That same night Peter denies knowing Jesus 3 times. How absolutely gutted he must have felt!

Peter isn't the only one. The bible is full of stories of people who mess up, disobey God, get things wrong. What is Jesus saying to us through Peter's life and the stories of other people who mess up?

What I think Jesus says to me is "It's Ok to be human, accept yourself as I accept you". If Jesus waited for us to get ourselves sorted before we could join him in his family and his

work he wouldn't have many disciples. The word disciples means "learner". Isn't that what we all are?

I think Jesus wants me to be a bit "kinder to myself." Terry is always telling me that I'm "too hard on myself". That I set my personal standards too high. This means that when I fail to meet them I can feel like a complete failure. No wonder I have a soft spot for Peter.

At new wine I was sitting next to one of the speakers, talking to him about his life, he said "it's an adventure really, you just open yourself up to God and see what happens."

This is what Peter did. Peter chose to be open to Jesus and amazing things happened. Jesus invites us to be open to him. Will we accept his invitation?