

Peter - Ransomed healed restored forgiven

Our series on Peter has revealed to us a flawed and interesting person. Someone drawn into Jesus inner circle yet capable of misunderstanding Jesus intentions.

Peter is the one who steps out of the boat and sinks...but he gave it a go. He's the man who recognises Jesus holiness and his own sinfulness...he wears his heart on his sleeve. He makes bold confident claims, and spectacularly fails by denying he even knows Jesus.

We are learning that most of what we know Peter has allowed to be told...he's letting his story be a means of showing God's forgiveness and grace.

At morning prayer on a Thursday, one of the ending prayers says....

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new.
Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives, make known your heavenly glory...
Though Jesus Christ our Lord – Amen.

In the passage of scripture we read today we are witnessing the renewal of Peter's life and in allowing his story to be told, Peter is making known God's heavenly glory.

In the story we recall the poverty of Peter's nature and see the riches of Christ's grace.

We are witnessing Peter being made new.

Question – how willing would you be to allow your life story to be the means by which God's goodness was told? In particular – your failings, flaws and faults.

From time to time I've heard someone preach or read an account of someone with a terrible life story.

John Newton was a slave trader who was converted. He wrote the words of one of today's hymns.

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.

Some months back we couldn't remember the name of the former cabinet minister who was sent down and in prison found faith. I think it was Barry who remembered it was Jonathan Aitken who recently has been ordained.

Where there has been a total transformation and to some degree the old self is a matter of public record...telling your story isn't perhaps quite as exposing.

But I'm not sure we would want our faults and failings to be known or be the means of God's glory being shown.

As we heard last week – Peter's bold claim that he would follow Christ to prison and even death is found to be hollow. Whether he slipped into it without thinking, or found himself in a tight spot...we know he denied even knowing Jesus.

From that moment on, Peter is a broken man. His conversation with Jesus transforms the brokenness but it's a painful and poignant encounter.

After the breakfast on the beach Jesus and Peter go for a walk together alone. We only know what was said, because Peter told John and John wrote it down.

Three questions echoing the three denials.

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Q1 – do you truly love me more than these. Most people think the “more than these” means a general indication of the other disciples, the boats, the fishing, the old life and other people.

Peter Answers Yes Lord – you know that I love you.

Q2. Simon son of John, do you truly love me.

The inference of this “truly love me” is towards the whole personality including the will – a rational, conscious decision. So – you are a higher priority in my life than fishing, family, the other disciples. To quote an old song “I have decided to follow Jesus”

Peters answers Yes Lord – you know that I love you.

But Jesus isn't finished.

Q3 Simon son of John do you love me?

This “love” refers to the spontaneous, deep, emotional response to Jesus and naturally this hurts Peter to answer – because the answer is YES, but the truth is he denied Jesus and let him down.

After each question and answer Jesus has given a mandate and instruction to Peter.

Feed my lambs

Take care of my sheep

Feed my sheep

And the conversation and restoration with him continued.

Peter could only do those things and grow into the role he took because Jesus took him to the place of failure, showed him his own brokenness and called him despite it to fulfil his calling.

From then on – Peter was set free, because he had nothing left to hide.

It reminded me of the Japanese art (KIN-SUGI) Kintsugi which means golden joinery.

It's a centuries-old Japanese art of fixing broken pottery with a special lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. Beautiful seams of gold glint in the cracks of ceramic ware, giving a unique appearance to the piece.

This repair method celebrates each artifact's unique history by emphasizing its fractures and breaks instead of hiding or disguising them. Kintsugi often makes the repaired piece even more beautiful than the original, revitalizing it with new life.

It seems to me this is exactly what Peter has intended by revealing his own story. The brokenness, healed by Christ's love and grace allowing him to tell the story of Jesus Christ.

To varying degrees, we all worry and are anxious and at the core of that can be an anxiety that who we truly are and who we can truly be is found out and found wanting.

That we are not good enough.

That we don't live up to expectations.

We are not what we could be or should be.

It can take a lot of energy and effort to hide the fears we have of being found out.

The Christian faith takes a direct approach. It doesn't skirt round our faults and failings, in fact it points them out...as the apostle Paul wrote...For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Although we accept that, we still don't want our failings on display.

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There's no expectation on anyone to suddenly start rehearsing their failings in public...but this meditation dropped into my inbox and it gives a clue to how we might allow the renewal of our lives to make known his heavenly glory.

Only people who have suffered in some way can usually save anybody else.

They alone have the space and the capacity for the other.

Deep communion and compassion are formed much more by shared pain than by shared pleasure. Jesus told Peter, "You must be ground like wheat, and once you have recovered, then you can turn and help the brothers" (see Luke 22:31-32).

In general, you can lead people on the spiritual journey as far as you have gone. Transformed people transform people.

When you can be healed yourself and not just talk about healing, you are, as Henri Nouwen said, a "wounded healer"—which is probably the only kind of healer!

Being a Christian is a wild ride and not for the faint hearted. If we sell it as a cheap fix and a route to heaven we are not telling the truth. For anyone who chooses to follow Christ will find that journey takes in some dark places. He takes us there in order to shine his light – and although what we see can be painful...the purpose is always our healing, wholeness restoration and calling.

At morning prayer we are trying to take note of words which seem to grab our attention more than others, but the other morning the passage to be read from the prayer book spoke rather enigmatically about slugs – and I'm not sure we felt edified by it. But our resident artist has been writing out the notable words and came with this little bookmark

Slugs.

It is the transformed we can transform and our artist has taken pity on the squalid slug to say that he too can be included in grace.

We naturally want to give of our best to God. Are you willing for the healed cracks, the unfinished story, the inadequacy, the slug-like moment to be, like Peter, a way of telling of the grace of Jesus Christ.

Honesty and genuine humility – are hard to resist.