

# Peter- The Ultimate In Discipleship 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] Look at the passage, if you will, in John chapter 21, the last of the chapters of John's gospel. And I am at this point very grateful having...

I woke up this morning tired, angry, frustrated, and not knowing what this day held, and hurting. I don't know why I was hurting, and I don't know why I was angry, and I don't know...

But I'm so grateful I didn't meet anybody until I came to communion at 8 o'clock and heard these words again.

And you cannot, I think, remain the same under the impact of these words, and I hope that you will hear them too. You should all have been at Learner's Exchange this morning, let me tell you, where Dr. Olaf Slaymaker was talking about communicating the gospel, and Dr. Don Lewis was talking about Martin Luther and the Reformers and some great Christian men and women, and where Dr. Packer was doing a Bible study for...

as part of the Learner's Exchange course, and where Ruth... or Mary Ruth... Wilkinson was doing something on telling children's stories.

[ 1 : 34 ] All of you should have been there, there's no question. But it goes on next week and the week after, so perhaps you'll consider it for then. I'm sure you'll be greatly encouraged by it.

I am greatly encouraged by this story because it begins with the wonderful picture of seven disciples up in Galilee, not knowing quite what to do.

That reminds me of the trustees' meetings every week at Tuesday at 4.30. There we are, and we don't know quite what to do. And often we spend the time spinning our wheels trying to figure out what should be done.

And Peter broke through it all by saying, I am going fishing. And the other six said, we're going with you. And the great lesson for me out of that is, when people tell me that they won't be in church on Sunday because they're going fishing, I think, watch out.

That you could get into big trouble by going fishing, especially if you don't catch anything.

[ 2 : 44 ] And the wonder is that our risen Lord Jesus Christ meets us where we are as he met the disciples where they were on this early spring morning at the Sea of Galilee.

And he said to them, have you taken anything? Have you taken anything? Which is the perpetual question that everybody asks everybody that's fishing. Have you got anything? It's nice to be able to say that you have, but they couldn't because they hadn't.

He said, drop your nets on the other side. And so the very thing that they'd been doing all night without any success, whatever, they now do just barely, I suppose you might say, in obedience to what Christ told them to do.

And in that they wonderfully prospered. And they got a net so full of fish that they couldn't pull it up into the boat and had to drag it to the shore. And all the difference in the world between doing one thing out of your own impulse and doing exactly the same thing in obedience to Jesus Christ.

A wonderful prosperity marks it. I don't suppose that you could argue that you need to live your life a very different way than you're living it right now.

[ 4 : 13 ] But you do need to live it in conscious obedience to Jesus Christ in order that you might know his blessing on you. Well, anyway, the story goes on and they came to the shore and Christ had a breakfast for them and he fed them all.

And then he turned on Peter. And he asked Peter some wonderful questions. Well, Peter was the fairly, well, I mean, he is without doubt the disciple who shows you by his life what it's like to be a disciple.

And if you go back and trace the story quickly through the Gospel of John, these are the kinds of things through the Gospels you will find out about him. That his brother Andrew brought him to

Christ.

And Christ, when he met him, said, So you are Simon. From now on, you're going to be called the rock. You know, it's like taking a gawky, bony, skinny little girl to somebody and somebody looking at her and saying, You're Miss America!

You know, so contradictory was the picture of the man in himself and the man that was going to be as the result of God's grace at work in his life.

[ 5 : 45 ] He said, Peter, you are the rock. The next time we see him, he's being made not a fisherman any longer, but a fisher of men. And he's starting in the school to learn about that.

His whole life is going to be changed. The next time we see him, he's come back after having observed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. And many of the people who were fed decided it was such a good idea that they came back the next day to get more.

Now, most people have a fairly primitive view of religion and think that that's really what it's for. That if somebody can take away from you the responsibility for living your own life and provide for you endlessly, that that's bliss.

And people tend to like that kind of religion. Christ wasn't in that business. And so when he told the people that he wasn't in that business and told them some harsh words about what was going to be involved if they really wanted to follow him, many of them turned back and followed him no more. And how many people there are who had a taste of the Christian faith, they liked it and wanted more, and then when the cost of discipleship was presented to them, they said, see you later, and waved goodbye, and off they went.

[ 7 : 09 ] Right? Well, Jesus turns to Peter and says, Peter, will you also go away? And Peter, not brimming with faith, but having a kind of grasp of the obvious, said, to whom shall we go?

There is no other alternative. So Peter was beginning to see that there is no other alternative. We, in our religious creativity and imagination, can think of a million alternatives.

So Peter had come a long way when he said, there's no place to go. Well, then comes the question when Jesus, with Caesarea Philippi, turns to his disciples and says to them, whom do you say that I am?

And they gave various suggestions, and he turns to Peter and says, Peter, who do you say that I am? Peter says, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Wonderful.

But I can't tell you that without reminding you what Dick Lucas said. When Peter, you know, as a kind of off-the-cuff reply to Peter's brilliant insight, when he said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, he said to them, I mean, this is extra gospel.

[ 8 : 38 ] It doesn't come there. This was the Lucas imagination at work. He says, well, if that's all you know, you better stick around because there's a lot more to learn. A lot of people might have thought that he arrived when they said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

But Peter demonstrated immediately that he didn't really understand what he said, because when Jesus said, the Son of Man must suffer in order to enter into his glory, and Peter said, took him aside and rebuked him.

And Jesus turned on Peter and said, Peter, get behind me, Satan. You don't understand what this is all about. So Peter was humiliated again, which is going to be, I'm sure, the constant experience of any serious disciple of Christ, particularly one who is impulsive and generous and genuinely unreliable, as Peter was, and as most of us are.

And so the next time we see Peter distinguishing himself, it's when Jesus gathers his disciples in the upper room, girds himself with a towel, and takes a wash basin and goes to wash their feet. Peter says, you're not going to wash my feet. You know, it's, I love that. I mean, I, I, it speaks so much.

[ 10 : 08 ] I'm not going to let them do that to me. And I run into that spirit lots of times in myself and in other people. I'm not going to suffer that humiliation.

Jesus says, Peter, if I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me. And Peter immediately and compulsively says, all right then, my hands, my feet, everything.

Again, he takes over and tells Jesus what he should do and how he should do it. And that's what disciples mostly do. And that's why you can't trust disciples very far.

You have to go to the source yourself. Well, then you get, then you get the time drawing near for the cross.

And the cross is there and there doesn't seem to be any way around it. And Peter now is at the point where he's about to make the great sacrifice. He says, though everybody turns away from you, I won't.

[ 11 : 13 ] I'll die with you. Well, that's good raw material for a disciple, too, to have those romantic aspirations.

But it was to that that Jesus said, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me thrice. It's not easy being a disciple, is it?

And getting your nose rubbed in it over and over again. Well, the cock crew only after Peter had denied him three times.

Then Peter runs to the tomb on Easter morning and finds it empty. He comes back and tells them and Christ appears to them and he appears to them again because Thomas had doubted and this is the third appearance on this morning at this breakfast and the breakfast is over and everybody is feeling so much better and nourished and having a good time on a lovely morning such as we've enjoyed here these last two days after having looked for it for a long time.

And they were just feeling very well indeed and Christ turns to Peter again and says, Peter, do you love me more than these? Now, Peter, I mean, you know what his answer is going to be.

[ 12 : 41 ] I love you way more than any of these people. But something has happened and Peter doesn't do it. He says, you know that I'm your friend.

And Jesus says, tend my sheep. Peter, are you my friend? And Peter says, Peter, like Peter's three denials, he turns to him again and he says, Peter, do you love me?

And Peter says, you know that I'm your friend. And again, Jesus says, Peter, are you my friend?

And Peter says, you know everything. You know that I'm your friend. And he thus lays what to me is the most magnificent basis for our relationship to the Lord Jesus.

that he loves us and he knows who we are and he's prepared to use us. Obstinate, impulsive, rebellious though we may be.

[ 14 : 06 ] Having our own ideas and full of our own importance and full of bravado and full of all sorts of magnificent things. That Jesus pushes us and pushes us and pushes us as he pushed Peter.

to the point where Peter was no longer going to make any great claim about what he was going to do as a disciple of Jesus. And he said to Jesus, you know everything.

You know that I'm your friend. And you know my weakness and you know my failing and you know my boasting and you know that time and time again I've lost out.

And just as Peter's answers become smaller and smaller and smaller in terms of the claim that he makes for himself, so Jesus' response becomes bigger and bigger and bigger as he says, tend my sheep, tend my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.

I am your shepherd. Peter, you are my shepherd of my people and this is the ministry you're going to have and you're going to have it because you're my friend.

[ 15 : 25 ] And you know that I know who you are and what you are and I want to use you. It speaks so eloquently to people like you and me who with wonderful modesty say, well I would never attempt to do anything religiously myself because I'm much too humble a person for that.

Are you too humble to be even a friend of Jesus Christ? Are you too humble to hear his word which goes right down to the full understanding of your heart so that you have to confess to him, Lord you know who I am.

My weaknesses, the lusts and passions which take hold of me, the disobedience which is so natural to me, the failure of which my life is a long compendium.

All these things, well, Peter's told, feed my sheep. and as you know, he has assumed in the history of the church a great and exalted position and Christ has used him to model discipleship.

And so, we're here this morning and I know that those children who were baptized will at some point in their life face the Lord Jesus who will say to them, do you love me?

[ 17 : 13 ] And the most important question they will ever answer is that question. And that's not only true for them, it's true for each of you.

It's not my question to you, it's the question of the Lord Jesus himself. And I can't tell, nobody can tell what your answer to that is.

Only you know the answer. And probably only you will ever know the answer to that question. And if you go fishing from time to time, that's a good place to look at that question again.

When Jesus says to you, do you love me? And the crisis will come and the hardship will come and the failure will come and the humiliation will come.

All those things are part of life. We can't protect ourselves from them. We can't protect our children from them. But the one thing we can give them is that when Jesus turns and says, do you love me? [ 18 : 25 ] They will be able to answer, Lord, you know who I am. You know that I am your friend. And that's a lovely thing to be able to say.

You can't you can't do anything else but say that. And it's so important that these children be brought up so that when they're asked the question, they don't say, well, who are you?

We don't want them to be in that position. We don't want them to be so learned in the cynicism of our day that they will dismiss the question.

We want them simply to be able to hear the question and to be able to answer it. I thought to preach you a little sermon this morning on what if Jesus, our risen Lord, came and said to us as we are assembled on this Lord's day, congregation of St. John, do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Well, I'm sure we'd all check off we'll take envelopes or some other modest little reply.

[ 19 : 48 ] But that's, you know, it's such a wonderful, wonderful question and it cuts through all our questionings and our imaginings and our pride and our self-sufficiency and goes right to the heart.

and you might find it a great help to you just to work through who do you say that I am? Will you also go away?

Peter, do you love me? Wonderful questions that we all need time to answer. and, uh, what a great thing it would be if today you in a new way could answer those questions for yourself.

Drop all the pretense and all the hypocrisy and all the romanticism and all the, all the stuff that we usually indulge in as people and quietly in our own hearts answer as Jesus turns to us and says, calling you by your first name do you love me?

Amen. Amen. you