

Scenes from the Life of Peter

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[0 : 00] Let's remain standing and pray together. Father, we pray that you would open our hearts this evening to hear your word.

In Christ's name, Amen. You can grab a seat. So tonight we begin a five-week series called Scenes from the Life of Peter.

And I'm really excited about it because outside of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, Peter is my favorite biblical character because he represents the best and the worst of humanity.

He's brave, and he's loyal, and he's kind of over the top, and he's passionate, but he's also stupid and egocentric and cowardly.

So I love this guy, and he's involved in so many really interesting things that happen in the Gospels. For example, as we just read, Peter was called to be a fisher of men.

[1 : 04] It was Peter who walked on the water, but it was Peter who constantly misunderstood what Jesus was teaching. But Peter saw what Jesus transfigured.

Peter declared his loyalty to Christ and then slept while Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. But he was the first to say, you are the Christ.

He was also the guy that cut off the ear of the soldier when Jesus was arrested. But he followed Jesus after he was arrested, but from afar. Peter denies Jesus three times.

But when the news is heard that the tomb is empty, he's the only one that runs to the empty tomb. When the disciples see Jesus on the shore and they're in a boat, they turn the boat around to sail to the shore.

Peter jumps out of the boat and starts swimming. Peter preached the first sermon after Jesus' resurrection. Three thousand people were saved. And according to tradition, Peter was martyred.

[2 : 08] He was crucified upside down at his own request, saying he wasn't worthy to die the same death as Christ. So we're going to look at a few of these scenes from the life of Peter.

We're going to look at them not because Peter's a really great guy, but because we can learn a lot from him, from his really good moments and from his really bad moments.

But sort of best of all, we learn about who Jesus is and what he's done for us and what he does with humanity in general. So the first thing we're going to look at is Peter's calling.

And that was very well read. Thank you, Nick. So let's paint the scene here. It opens with Jesus. He's on a beach and up until now, he's been preaching in churches and synagogues.

But this is the first time he's actually out in the marketplace, out where the real people are. And so he's there. The crowd is a monster. So he does something quite practical.

[3 : 12] He jumps in Simon's boat and he says, let's just push off to shore a little bit and so I'm not completely crowded around so he can preach from there. He preaches a sermon. We don't know anything about the sermon, but he preaches a sermon.

And then he says to Simon and Peter, put out into the deep and put out your nets, which was an unusual request. And it's unusual because fishermen fished at nighttime.

They fished at nighttime because their nets were made out of linen, which would have been plainly seen by the fishies, right? And so they fished at nighttime so the fish couldn't see the nets and so that's when they catch the most of their fish.

However, Peter clearly says, Jesus, like we toiled all night, we took nothing. Like there's no fish out there. And you can almost hear in Peter's voice, the beginning of this, master, we toiled all night and took nothing.

You can sort of hear in his voice this sort of like, come on. Come on, mate. Like seriously. Like fishing is my thing. Like this is my thing.

[4 : 19] You've got your thing, the teaching and the healing, and that's great. That's your area of expertise. I've got my stuff. This is what I'm good at. So it's just a bit weird that you'd say that to me.

It's not unusual for us to have that attitude towards Jesus, I think. It's not unusual for us to assign areas of our life to Jesus, but others not to Jesus.

This is what I mean. It's not unusual as a Christian to sort of go, okay, well here's the stuff that Jesus is Lord over, right? One, my level of niceness to other people.

Because that's kind of Christian, right? Be nice to people, right? So Jesus has control of my level of niceness. He has control of a certain percentage of my income. He has control over swearing, cussing, because we don't cuss because we're Christians, right?

He has control over, I said the nice one, right? That's a big one. Okay, so he has control over these things, but these are other things where I'm the expert, where I'm the expert.

[5 : 37] Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. I'm the expert here. Like, I know about my career. Like, I know what I want to do. My sexuality, how I'm going to date, what I'm going to do with the rest of my money.

That's the stuff that, you know, like I want to stay in control of. And if we keep these areas from the words of Christ, if we keep them from the word of Christ, we will never experience the power of Christ in them, like Peter did.

Now, Peter doesn't finish saying to Jesus, I'm the expert at fishing. You stay out of it. No, he says, we see in verse 5, but at your word, I will let down my nets.

So there's this little bit of pushback, but then ultimately there's surrender. But at your word, I will let down my nets. Now, why does Peter do this? Well, we don't really know.

But here's a really, really good stab at it. Peter was beginning to get an inkling into who Jesus was. And he decided that his word was good enough.

[6 : 44] It's a wonderful lesson for us. Just because Jesus asks us to do something, that is a good enough reason. That's a good enough reason to go along with it.

It might not fit into your five-year plan. It might not make you particularly happy right now. It might not meet all your needs.

But if Jesus asks you to do something, that is a good enough reason. And what it represents is that Jesus is actually the Lord of your life and not, you know, an ethical conversation partner or an advisor or someone to just really admire because they live this great life.

Mate, team, you've got to lead into every area of your life. He's got to be the Lord over all your money. He's got to be the Lord over your sexuality. He's got to be the Lord over your fantasy life.

He's got to be the Lord over that stuff. He's got to be the Lord over your five-year plans, over your goals. At your word, I will let down my nets.

[8 : 00] So in our series on the life of Peter, this is our first big lesson. Jesus must be the Lord over all, even the areas that we think we know best because his word trumps our expertise and our goals.

Okay, the second scene. The catch, as you know, goes really well. It's incredible. So there's all these fishies and this net started breaking and the boat started sinking. This is great.

Now what's really interesting here is Peter's response. He didn't say, this is awesome. Or as we'd say in New Zealand, this is awesome. What he says, or he doesn't say, you know, I can retire.

Or, Jesus, we've got to take this trick on the road. You know, this is great stuff. Now it's fascinating, it's really interesting what he says here.

Verse 8, Now we don't know how sophisticated Peter's Christology was at this point, but his response was the right one.

[9 : 21] That's the right response. Even the depart from me stuff, I think it's right. At the end of chapter 4, Jesus has been healing and teaching amongst this community of people.

And in verse 42, here's what it says here. It went, and when it was day, he departed, Jesus departed, and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them.

See, these people felt like they had a claim on Jesus. The problem with these folks is they hadn't met Jesus as Lord. They'd met him as this kind of really cool guy who can do cool stuff.

And so they wanted to keep him around because, you know, he could do some healing and he could do some talks. It'd be great to have him around as part of our community. We have no claim on Jesus.

Depart from me. For I am a sinful man. This is a wholly appropriate response to encountering Jesus. It's wholly appropriate because, well, what had happened in Jesus, in Peter's heart, I think, is that he had seen this awesome blessing, right?

[10 : 42] This huge catch of fish which feed the villagers for ages, right? And he'd seen this great blessing from God or an agent of God. We don't know exactly what he sort of thought about Jesus at this point.

And he thought, I don't deserve this. I don't deserve this great blessing. I don't deserve this great kindness. His gut reaction was, I'm a sinner.

Another way of saying this was that Jesus, Peter, recognised the holiness of Jesus. He recognised the holiness of Jesus and the vast chasm that exists between us and God.

Here's the second lesson from the passage and the thing we learn from Peter. To get near God. Now this is going to be, you won't like this necessarily, but it is true and it is biblical.

To get near God is sometimes dire. It's sometimes unpleasant. It's like hanging out with really smart people.

[11 : 46] They kind of show up your lack. When I was at Regent College, in the first sort of, for the first year I was there, I thought I was the dumbest person at Regent College.

Just the stupidest man with a, I had a stupid accent. I didn't, I just felt stupid. And I was kind of rocking like an A minus average, right?

Which is a fairly respectable, I had a fairly respectable GPA. But here's my problem. I was hanging out with straight A students. And so I just felt completely stupid the whole time.

It's like, um, Salieri, that's a terrible pronunciation, but Salieri, um, and, and Mozart, right? You know the story? You know like, he hated being around Mozart.

They were both composers. Salieri was a good composer, but Mozart was a genius. He hated being around him. It was unpleasant because it showed up his lack. There was a chasm between them.

[12 : 52] When we get near God, we can experience this conflict and it's actually okay. It's, it's the right thing to experience. In fact, it's actually the test to see if your religion is actually worth anything.

If your religion is the real thing, I think this is the test. You know, Vancouver is full of very spiritual people who, you know, sort of have a relationship with God or try and experience God in different ways and great, you know, but if they never experience the horror of encountering God, if they never experience what it's like to feel that great chasm, to know that they are sinful people confronting a holy God, if they never experience that, these people are not encountering God.

Holiness, God's holiness is like a storm that stirs up a lake. It stirs up a lake and all the silt and rubbish and trash at the bottom of that lake comes to the surface and bubbles out.

It's like, there are lots of biblical examples. Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve, after they ate the apple or the apricot or whatever it was, you know, they're hiding from, what was their reaction?

Jesus comes, God comes along, what was their reaction? This, right? Shame, guilt. Isaiah 6, Isaiah 6.

[14 : 24] You know this passage, let me read it to you. It's about Isaiah encountering God and what happens. Isaiah 6, in the year that King Isaiah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple.

I'm reading from the King James because it's just as rocking in the King James. Above it stood the seraphims. Each of them had six wings. With thwain he covered his face, with thwain he covered his feet, and with thwain he did fly.

And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said, Woe is me, for I am undone. I'm undone. When we encounter a holy God we should be undone.

Now listen to Christ's response to Peter. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid.

[15 : 30] I know you feel terrible. Do not be afraid. Two things happen when we encounter Jesus it would seem. The knowledge of our sin and the assurance that God loves us and will make a way for us.

What did God do for Adam and Eve? He covered them with skins, right? He made a way for them. And in that little scenario of covering your body with animal skins there is a little hint in his ultimate solving of this shame and guilt problem.

Because to cover them with skins he had to kill an animal. To kill an animal sacrifice it there had to be a sacrifice in order for that sin to be covered.

In Isaiah let's go back to Isaiah what happens? Isaiah is going on I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from the altar where sacrifice happens. And he laid it upon my mouth and said Lo this has touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged.

[16 : 54] So two things happen when we encounter Jesus an authentic encountering of Jesus knowledge of our sin and the assurance that God loves us anyway. It gets better Jesus goes on to say Peter from now on you will be fishers of men.

Now there's a pun sort of in the original language here. It literally means you will capture men alive. So instead of capturing dead fish and selling them in the markets you will capture live men and you will liberate them.

So Jesus is basically saying to Peter I know you're unclean I know you're a sinner I know there's darkness in your heart but I have a cunning plan. I have a cunning plan.

I'm going to make a way for you. Not only that I want you to help me. I want you to participate in me covering the sins of people.

So it would appear three things happen when we encounter Jesus a knowledge of sin an assurance of his love and we are sent out to work for the gospel.

[18 : 07] people. The story finishes in verse 11. And when they had brought their boats to land they left everything and followed him.

They left everything leaving all the things they valued. Their fundamental sense of belonging and purpose had changed. It had become anchored to their relationship with Jesus his community and his call on their life.

It would seem four things happen when we encounter Jesus. One. We are flayed open and our sin is exposed.

Two. We are assured of God's intention to cover that sin to make a way. Three. We are sent out to work for the gospel. And four. Our sense of purpose our sense of identity becomes anchored to Jesus and his call.

I thought a long time on how I would end this sermon. And I came up with a prayer that is just a single line which I will say three times and that's how I'm going to finish.

[19 : 27] So would you pray with me now? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, would we encounter you?

Would we encounter you? Would we encounter you, Jesus? In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.