

Peters Re-commissioning

Objectives: To teach the John 21 passage. Look at the emotional journey of Peter. Teach that Jesus can use you better when you are honest about who you are, and are not pretending to be something more.

OT reading - Genesis 12 v1-3 – ‘.. and through you I will bless **all the nations**’.

Tobit's hymn of praise 13v3-4 – ‘Acknowledge him **before the nations**, O children of Israel; for he has scattered you amongst them. He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God, he is our Father and he is our God forever.

The blessing of Abraham contains three basic elements; the fact that he will become a great nation, he will have a new land for his blessed people to dwell in, and he will have the message of salvation through which all peoples on earth will be blessed. But as the years progressed Israel began to forget their task of blessing the nations in favour of national identity and national security. They became an ethnocentric religion with God locked up in a tent. They took on board the great nation and new land part, but forgot that this was in order for them to be a blessing to the nations. So there are times when God scatters them through catastrophe and they are then forced into contact with other nations. Israel's capture by the Assyrians, living their faith out in Babylon & Ninevah is one example. The folk story of Tobit is set in this period of exile in Ninevah, and when God rewards his faith and works, he finishes off the story with a hymn of praise which captures this third part of the covenant. As I will lead into the NT period these thoughts are not far from the mind of the Jewish people.

NT reading - John 21 v2-9 & 15-17

TALK.

Do you love me? – awkward question – especially as we don't really understand what is meant by the word love.

Bev Big D Peanuts story/ Curly Wurly. then explain the 4 different types of love in Greek – but we only have one word.

- **Éros** is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing.. **Plato** appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even becomes appreciation of beauty itself.
- **Storge** (στοργή *storgē*^[4]) means natural affection usually used between family members.
- **Philia** means friendship and affectionate love in modern Greek. It is a dispassionate virtuous love, a concept. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality and familiarity.
- **Agápe** (ἀγάπη *agápe*^[1]) means "love" (unconditional love) and sacrificial love. – prepared to give up everything.

We know that God's intention is for his chosen people to be a blessing to all nations. Jesus handpicked a group of men to be his disciples, a word used for those that are mentored by a Rabbi/teacher. It was a great honour to be chosen, and usually only the brightest of Jewish scholars would be afforded that honour. Peter probably a young man in his late teens was a fisherman in Capernaum. Perhaps he had been to a Rabbinical school, not made the grades, and turned to his family trade of fishing, but his rough nature suggests that he had been leaving a non scholarly life for at least several years.

Proverbs 16v32 states that *It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities*

We are going to look at Peter's poor attempts to win control of himself, and then see how Jesus restores him.

Their first encounter. Luke 5v8-10.

Peter is fully aware of his weaknesses and sinfulness. Jesus says its OK. Don't be afraid – from now on you will catch men. Jesus was offering him, a fisherman, he chance to be a Rabbis disciple. He knew how evil he had been He felt hopeless before him, aware of his weakness, but must surely take up this honoured opportunity. Here is a clue to what Jesus is telling us – an awareness of our complete inadequacy is closely linked with our possibility of being useful in the Kingdom of God. You might not share the love of Jesus because you feel inadequate that's good, but its Gods spirit that gives us the boldness to share.

Peter sure of his AGAPE love for Jesus

When Jesus named his diciples, he called Peter the Rock – HIS calling was not just to follow Rabbi Jesus and go fishing for more followers, but ALSO to be transformed into the central figure of Jesus's New Way community, the Christian Church. Even when he was puffed up with pride Jesus did not lose faith in him [Mk 14v29-31] .. I will never leave you even if all these others do .. I will not deny you, even if I have to die with you. The inference is I Agape you. My love for you is ultimate. But Jesus had foreseen Peters rise and fall, and knew he could rise again – why because he spent 3 years preparing him... He even tells Peter this just before he predicts Peters denial – Luke 22 'Simon, Stan has permission to test you, but I have prayed for you that your faith will not fall, and WHEN you turn back to me, you must strengthen your brothers'. Peter so cock sure of himself insists he will go to prison or die first.

Peter Falls

Jesus is arrested. Peter slices off the ear of Malchus in anger which Jesus repairs with a rebuke to him. All the disciples run away, but what Peter does is a little braver, but actually probably more hurtful to Jesus. He hangs

back in the shadows, then when challenged, denies Jesus, in ear-shot of him. When the time came for him to be strong to stand up, be imprisoned or die for Jesus, he failed. Even after Jesus' resurrection, and him particularly asking for Jesus, it did not take away the shame of his failure and cowardice. He denied his friend, right in front of his eyes. Surely he could be of no further use to Jesus, so he goes back to what he he knows he can still do. 'I'm going fishing lads, do you want to come' They do. They fish all night and catch nothing.

The repeat miracle.

They had fished all night, with no success. Had they lost their touch. Dawn came and they would be tired and fed up. They were close to shore in the shallows, could just make out a figure on the shore, with a strong voice asking them what they had caught – rubs it in –nothing.

John 21 v3-6. They give up, and start returning to shore, A stranger at dawn on the shore tells them to try again and throw their net s out on the right hand side. They catch so much fish they can not haul the net in properly. A repeat miracle. Peter jumps over the boat and rushes over to Jesus. They drag the net to shore along the beach with their miraculous catch. Peters emotions would no doubt go back to the first time this happens, his shame then, his calling to be a fisher of men.

Peter is recommissioned.

So Peter once more is convicted of his past failures and is confronted with Jesus. This time Jesus does not use the direct approach he had done so before – Stop fishing, follow me, and fish for men. He needs to get an important point across to Peter first. This is where our English translation is not adequate enough to tell the story –so I will reread v15-17 replacing the word Love with the actual greek words and we can start to understand the exchange.

Do you Agape me – You know I philos you – Take care of my lambs

Do you Agape me – You know I philos you – Take care of my sheep

Do you **philos** me – You know I philos you – Take care of my sheep

Peter was sad because he asked him the third time do you Philos me [Not because he asked him three times – do you Agape me].

Peter is being honest with Jesus – he can not Agape him – he tried and failed. He had great philos for Jesus, loving virtuous friendship, but he did not feel at that moment that he could love him enough to die for him. He did of course eventually do so, but right now in this passage, Peter needs to come to Jesus in truth, being honest and acknowledging once more his own weakness. Just like after the first miraculous catch.

Jesus is doing two important things here – he is recommissioning Peter, stop this fishing and take care of my lambs, take care of my sheep. You have a central role to play. The other important message is that he is saying – I know that you can only Philos me right now, and that is good enough for me. You, just as you are, are good enough for me. The three questions from Jesus, will no doubt remind Peter of his 3 denials. Probably intentional, but in the bible phrases are often repeated 3 times, to stress its importance – e.g. Holy Holy Holy. Jesus also referred to Peter, not as Peter my rock, but using his 'pre-disciple' name of Simon. Again this re-emphasises that we're starting again.

Remember Jesus' words just before he predicted Peter's denial – Satan can test you, but I have prayed for you, you will fall, but WHEN you turn back to me you must strengthen your brothers. His response then was one of false Agape and pride. Now it is one where he is sad because he realises Jesus' expectations of him are low, Philos not agape, but in being who he is, and giving what he can, Jesus will use him to fulfil his purposes. He is of use again to Jesus. Not only that he is now a key figure in the fulfilment of Abraham's covenant, to be a blessing to all nations. Jesus emphasises this soon after with his great commission is to take the message to Jerusalem, Samaria and to all nations.

Control of ourselves:

The Proverb said *It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities* – and this is of course our battleground, our pride, our habits, emotions, memory of our past sins, our ongoing weaknesses, - just as it was for Peter. Would you die for your faith? Perhaps not – but you Philos Jesus and you want to do your best for him. You should come to him in honesty and truth about who you are, and he comes to you and accepts you just as you are. If you've failed before, remember you get a second chance and a third and a fourth. Acknowledging your weakness and you open up the possibilities to using his strengths, to help carry out the fulfilment of Abraham's covenant, and Jesus' great commission – to take this good news we have to others of all nations Amen.