

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

John 21:15-23

Wednesday 13th May 2020

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" ²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" ²² Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." ²³ Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

In Luke as the cock crows and Peter is denying Jesus for the third time, we are told Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Peter then remembers what Jesus had said of him and he went and wept bitterly. I imagine that as the events of Jesus death and resurrection unfolded Peter would have had this image of Jesus in his mind, tightening his stomach as he remembered. How often have we either said something or done something and wished afterwards we could have said or done something differently.

A lot has happened since the denial and Jesus and Peter are now together. I wonder if Peter had played a conversation over in his mind as to how he would explain his actions, say he was sorry. He must have anticipated the time would come, but when? Breakfast is over. The fire has warmed cold, wet bodies and the fish has replenished them too. It is time to tidy the boats and deal with the multitude of fish. I wonder if it's as the men busy themselves that the conversation is happening. I thought Peter and Jesus may have gone for a walk then I realised more practically they could be checking nets and working alongside each other. Peter asking Jesus to 'lend a hand'. As they work Jesus poses the question "Simon son of John, do you love me? This is a safe place to ask such a question, Peter doesn't have to give eye contact as he works

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on the boat and it's not awkward. A brief look at Jesus, a smile, 'You know I love you'.

When reading the passage, the phrase 'son of John' stood out. I wonder why Jesus uses it. Is this about Peter's place in the family of God's people. I am reminded of the lost son's return and the embrace of his father. Peter needed to know this embrace. Peter you are the son of John, you are one of God's chosen people.

Each time Jesus asks the question 'Do you love me' Peter is taken deeper into himself until it hurts. 'Lord you know all things, you know I love you'.

In preparation for the work ahead Jesus is bringing deep healing. There is no condemnation only love and forgiveness. Oh, and there is of course the challenge, Jesus calls 'Follow me.' When Peter tries to hide behind the question about John, Jesus gently rebukes him and calls again. Follow me.

This sounds so easy, but I find it a challenge. Where is Jesus calling me to go today? Can I hear his voice? Am I concerned what others may think or do I want to hide behind someone else, as Peter does here?

'Follow me' How can I follow in lockdown? How can I test that its Jesus calling? Maybe before lockdown you were sure of your role in church. Now, so much has changed that you are starting to question, what is my role?

Vicki mentioned on Sunday the question what is church? Church is a people chosen by God to be the first fruits of God's kingdom. A church like Peter flawed but abounding in God's grace. A people who love Jesus and desire to follow him, though like Peter we are not very confident of the way. Jesus says I am the way, follow me.

As you go about your daily tasks, invite Jesus to join you. As you share with him be expectant of his love for you and your love for him and listen too for the Spirit's guiding. In the same way that Jesus gave Peter a role in his Kingdom 'feed my sheep'. Jesus will also reveal and affirm his role for you. It maybe the role you have already, it maybe he has something different. When you chat with others or with Vicki talk about what you feel God is saying. Together we can live the answer to the question 'What is church?' – we are church.

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