

March 8, 2020

“Walking With Peter: Try Again”

Luke 5:1-7

Typically during the Lenten season, the Church focuses on following Jesus toward the Cross and beyond. This year we are more specifically following Jesus to the cross by staying close to a person who is Walking With Jesus toward the Cross and doesn't know it yet. His name is Simon, but Jesus gives him a new name: Peter; which means? As Peter walks with Jesus, we are Walking with Peter; through his multiple ups and downs, amidst his moments of clarity and confusion, in times of victory and defeat. We're going to look at what Peter said and what he did; including what he said he wouldn't do and did AND what he said he would do and didn't. More importantly, we will see what Jesus says to Peter, and did for/with Peter. [**Prayer**]

How did all this start? Peter Walking With Jesus?

Last week we saw how John the Baptist had pointed out to one of his followers, Andrew, that Jesus was the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” (John 1:29, 36) and that he should change the trajectory of his life to start following Jesus. Andrew hangs with Jesus for a few hours and is convinced He's the Messiah, so he goes and gets his brother to come and see for himself. And the minute Jesus sees Simon, He gives him a nickname: Peter, The Rock.

You may be more familiar with Matthew and Mark's very brief summary of how Jesus and Peter got connected. “As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon – also called Peter – and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow Me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed Jesus.” (Mark 1:16-18, Matthew 4:18-20)

With so little information to go on, there have been some not-so-great conclusions drawn and sermons preached. Messages that include: ‘Come on people. Why can't you be more decisive, full of blind faith like Peter? What are you waiting for? Follow Jesus!’ Obviously, John gives us more of the story, and we can add that to what we've discovered here in Luke.

But Luke gives us even more than we just read at the beginning of chapter 5. Before Peter drops everything and follows Jesus here in chapter 5 (which we will look at next week), there is this miraculous catch of fish. And before that, Peter and Andrew, James and John are cleaning their nets while Jesus paddles out in one of their boats and teaches to a huge crowd in a natural amphitheater on the lakeshore. But before that we read that Jesus is actually in Simon's home and heals his mother-in-law, and many other people. (See Luke 4:38-41)

If we're going to be true to scripture when we talk about Walking With Peter (as he walks with Jesus) we have to tell the whole story of how it started between them. And when we look at all the accounts of Peter's initial connection with Jesus (from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), here's what we see:

First, there is a grace-filled Learning Curve when following Jesus. Second, that we must, at some point and in one way or another, deal with the Authority of Jesus Word. And, lastly, that there is an inspiring and hope-filled Call of Jesus To Try Again.

Let's think about the Learning Curve when following Jesus. Following Jesus is an ongoing journey that doesn't always take root right away. I'd say it rarely takes root immediately. We do have the story of Saul on the Damascus Road – and that's undeniably instantaneous. But many people have numerous episodes, encounters and pieces of evidence that get compiled before choosing to follow Jesus. If that's your story, it's Peter's too. It takes him some time (we don't know exactly how long but it's more than a few days) before he decides he's all in.

Others – over an even longer period of time – take less dramatic and less detectable steps in the direction of following Jesus until they finally declare He is Lord. Some struggle with the word 'conversion' or being 'born again' because it sounds so sudden and dramatic (like Saul/Paul). These can be confusing words. I love to share this quote whenever I'm talking about trusting and following Jesus. We include a larger passage of Diogenes Allen's book called *Quest* in our Connection Class material. He says, "The main issue of the Christian faith is whether or not we are devoted to God, not whether we turned toward God so rapidly that we felt the change in the direction of our life, or turned so gradually that we did not feel the change." Mark and Matthew make Peter's decision to Walk With Jesus sound so sudden. Luke and John tell us much more. There's a Learning Curve.

I'm grateful for this more realistic picture because, even when we find ourselves "Rooted in Jesus," it doesn't mean we still don't have a lifetime of ups and downs as we Walk With Jesus. God is constantly inviting us to go deeper, turn around, re-enter, come home, wake up to His love. In looking more closely at Peter's story we see the Grace and Space God provides for those who choose (are choosing, might choose) to follow Jesus.

But, at some point, choosing to follow Jesus means we have to deal with The Authority of Jesus' Word. We have to decide if we're going to obey what He asks us to do. Period. Peter has heard Jesus teaching and seen a demonstration of Jesus' power. He's been told, "You are Peter." 'I see something in you that you can't even see. You're a **Rock**.' He's certainly drawn to Jesus at some level by the time we get to the beginning of Luke 5. Still, Jesus is asking Peter to do something very specific. Will Peter respond to Jesus' authority or not?

Now, let's face it, Peter knows more about fishing than Jesus does. Everyone knows that Sea of Galilee fishing is much better at night. And when the fish aren't biting at night, there's no use trying in the day. Jesus tells Peter to get back out there and give it another try. If Luke gave us one of those thought bubbles like the comic strips, I can imagine Peter thinking to himself, 'This guy may be a great teacher and know how to heal people, but He doesn't know anything about fishing.' Peter does feel comfortable enough with Jesus to whine a little. But then comes the moment when he, like each one of us, must decide whether to obey or not. "Yet if You say so, I will let down the nets." (Luke 5:6)

We all struggle with authority at some level, right? We all stiffen up when ordered to do something, (with a memory of our father or mother's voice) "Because I said so!" Being authoritarian (high power/low love) doesn't seem to work in just about any circumstance. But Jesus is authoritative (high power/high love), and we know that's the most effective form of leadership or parenting. But we still have to be willing to do what He asks or commands: with our money, in relationship with others, in our hearts and minds, in the way we spend our time.

What I hope we will hear more than anything else in what Jesus is commanding Peter to do is Try Again.

"Hey Peter, Try Again!"

What might God be asking you to try again? Beyond fishing?

Here are some ideas and options:

Try again to **Communicate** – parents of all ages, in marriage; have those crucial conversations . . . and where necessary apologize or attempt reconciliation

Try another career path or job situation; for students try a different major/club/team or circle of friends

Try again to connect with people here at FPC

Try again to find your place of purpose and service in retirement

Try another hobby that will feed your soul

Try to do some more self-assessment/awareness work (counseling/support group)

Try again to break an addiction (get some accountability/ practice vulnerability)

Try again to Walk With Jesus on a daily basis, and don't get discouraged when you get off course for a few days or even a couple weeks

To any of this (and more) Jesus says, 'I know you've tried, and I know you want to give up. The thing is you can't see what I see . . . BELOW THE SURFACE of the windswept waves, or even deeper under the surface of your life.'

Trying again is worth it. What is God asking you to Try Again?

When God asks you to try again, how are you tempted to respond?

(Be honest; Peter was – "Master we fished all night/I've already tried this and it didn't go well.")

God has asked Shelly and me to try Foster Parenting again and we're excited that, after a 4 month break, we will welcome a brother and sister into our home this week.

Peter says, "If You say so, I will let down the nets." And then we read about **The Catch** . . . and the abundance. Of course, the reward of trying again isn't always (or usually ever) so clear and so instant. But God knows what He's doing. Someone at Wednesday in the Word pointed out that all the money that the huge catch of fish brought in probably helped support the families while Peter and the others followed Jesus.

I don't pretend to know how Jesus got all the fish to go into the nets. But I do know that **God is way more excited when we try again courageously and fail, than when we succeed at stuff we're good at and think we don't even need Him.**

As we Walk With Peter . . .

Can you hear Jesus asking you to "Try Again"?

What about a relationship with Jesus? [Rooted in Jesus]

(Try Me. If you've been burned: Try Me Again.)

What about going deeper? [Growing in His Love]

(Try Tithing, Joining or Starting a Small Group, Engaging Daily With His Word)

What about going out there? [Branching Out To Serve Others]

Try Again!