

God of Second Chances
John 21:1-19

May 19, 2013

Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: A couple of weeks ago, we considered Peter's three denials of Jesus. We remember his anguish upon the hearing of the rooster crowing, because Jesus had prophesied of these denials. Today, we return to that story, but see the renewal of commitment. In Peter's story we are reminded that God loves to give a second chance.

Text: After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way:

² Simon Peter, Thomas (called "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of His disciples were together.

³ "I'm going fishing," Simon Peter said to them.

"We're coming with you," they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore. However, the disciples did not know it was Jesus.

⁵ "Men," Jesus called to them, "you don't have any fish, do you?"

"No," they answered.

⁶ "Cast the net on the right side of the boat," He told them, "and you'll find some." So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Therefore the disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer garment around him (for he was stripped) and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But since they were not far from land (about 100 yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread.

¹⁰ "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus told them. ¹¹ So Simon Peter got up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

¹² "Come and have breakfast," Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.”

“Feed My lambs,” He told him.

¹⁶ A second time He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.”

“Shepherd My sheep,” He told him.

¹⁷ He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.”

“Feed My sheep,” Jesus said. ¹⁸ “I assure you: When you were young, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹ He said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, He told him, “Follow Me!”

Introduction The Bible is clear that sin has consequences. We have learned that sin has consequences. We have all been there.

We need to lay beside that Biblical truth a parallel truth. Here is that truth: **God is also the God who loves to give a second chance!** In fact, God loves to give second, third, fourth, etc. chances. We read today the account of “the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.” (John 21:14) The resurrection appearance culminated with a conversation between Jesus and Peter. Many of us, like Peter, have denied Jesus along the way. For a season, we have abandoned our faith and fellowship with Jesus. Like Peter, we need a second chance.

Who Needs a Second Chance?

Before we consider specifically “what does it take to begin again,” we ought to consider from Peter’s story the kind of person who needs a second chance. The simple answer is **anyone who has sinned needs a second chance!** Specifically, in Peter’s example, we see...

- Those with the greatest intentions need a second a chance. (Matthew 26:33-35)

Peter told Him, “Even if everyone runs away because of You, I will never run away!”³⁴ “I assure you,” Jesus said to him, “tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times!”³⁵ “Even if I have to die with You,” Peter told Him, “I will never deny You!” And all the disciples said the same thing.

Nobody has ever had greater intentions than Peter. However, sometimes our good intentions fail us.

- Those with the greatest passion need a second chance. (John 18:10)

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. (The slave's name was Malchus.)

- Those with the greatest guilt need a second chance (Matthew 26:75)

and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

You ever wonder why Peter went fishing? I've heard some suggest that maybe Peter, after Jesus' death was sensing the need to return to the fishing business. The ministry was over. However, our text makes clear that the disciples were already aware of Jesus' resurrection. The problem is not unbelief. It seems to me that Peter was struggling with whether he was worthy to continue.

- Those with repeated sin need a second chance.

You may think you have gone too far. You may think that you cannot be restored. Peter's story reminds us that we can begin again.

I heard a story about a promising young junior executive at IBM who was involved in a risky venture for the company and ended up losing ten million dollars in the gamble. He was called into the office of Tom Watson, Sr. the founder and leader of IBM for 40 years. The junior executive, overwhelmed with guilt and fear, blurted out, "I guess you invited me in here to call for my resignation. Here it is. I resign." Watson, somewhat caught off guard by this suggestion said, "You must be joking. I just invested ten million dollars educating you; I can't afford your resignation."

God does not want your resignation either. He has invested in us. He above all knows our every weakness. We can begin again. So, what does it take to begin again?

What is Needed to be Restored?

1. The Compassion of Jesus

Let us, first of all, understand that the only way that we can be restored is because of the compassion of Jesus. Jesus goes to meet them at the sea. Jesus tells them where to fish. Jesus fishes himself apparently because there is already fish cooking. Jesus cooks. Jesus invites. At every point in this story, Jesus is the one initiating the activity. That's Jesus. He is always pursuing us. Wherever you are in relationship to Christ today, He is compassionately pursuing you. If you are an unbeliever, He is lovingly and patiently calling you today. If you have strayed from Him, He is calling for your return. If you are abiding with Him, He lovingly is calling you to launch even deeper—trust more completely.

2. Confrontation from Jesus

Restoration does not happen without confrontation from Jesus. Jesus' appearance to all of the disciples leads to a specific conversation and confrontation with Peter. Jesus asks the same

question, “Do you love me?” three times. The meaning of these three questions has led to lots of debate. There are two questions really. The first question is what does the “more than these” mean in verse 15. Some say that Jesus is asking if Peter loves him more than this great catch of fish. Others suggest that Jesus is asking whether Peter loves him more than all the rest of the disciples. The other question concerns the significance of change in the Greek word for love. It is true that the first two times Jesus asks, “Peter do you love (*agape*) me?” Peter answers, I love (*phileo*) you. The third time Jesus uses *phileo* and Peter answers *phileo*. Most contemporary scholarship believes that there is no significant meaning in the changing of these Greek words. There are several good reasons to trust they are right. First, John has used these words interchangeably elsewhere in the Gospel. Second and more importantly, Jesus’ conversation with Peter would have most likely taken place in Aramaic anyway, and the Aramaic language would have had no such distinction for the word “love.”

So, why does Jesus ask the question three times? I think there are two good reasons. First, the three questions **bring Peter back to his sin**. The third question was as clear a sound to Peter as the crowing of the rooster. Second, the three questions **cause Peter to deal with the authenticity of his love**.

3. Contrition

Where there is compassion and confrontation in regards to our sin, there ought to be contrition. Peter was grieved. Again, not grieved that Jesus asks three times, but rather the third time brought him back to the third denial and this grieved Peter. It seems to me to be a good thing to grieve over our sin. Not forever, of course, because of forgiveness, but initially, we are to grieve over our sin. The Psalmist understood this in Psalm 51, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

Listen to these words of author Max Lucado from his book *A Gentle Thunder*.

“Please note, there are two fires in Peter’s story. The first is the fire of denial, but the second is the fire of discovery. The first fire was built by men; the second was built by Christ. At the first fire, Peter denied Jesus. At the second, Peter confessed him.

What took Peter from one fire to the next? How did he journey from the fire of denial to the fire of discovery? In between the fires are two events: the tears of Peter and the cross of Jesus. Both are essential. If Peter had shed tears but not seen the cross, he would have known only despair. Had he seen the cross but shed no tears, he would have known only arrogance. But since he saw both, he knew redemption.

Mingle the tears of the sinners with cross of the Savior and the result is a joyful escort out of the canyon of guilt.”¹

4. A New Commitment

¹ Max Lucado, *A Gentle Thunder*, p. 173.

Your second chance is a call for your commitment. The stakes do not change. When Jesus first called Peter and you and me, He said, "Come follow me." Now He says, "Follow me." God's invitation for a second chance is not an invitation for another denial, another failure, but rather a new commitment.

Conclusion:

The often-quoted poet, Anonymous wrote:

*I wish there was some wonderful place
Called the Land of begin again.
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
and all our poor selfish griefs
Cold be cast like a shabby old coat at the door
And never be put on again
I wish there was some wonderful place
Called the Land of begin again.*

Well, Mr. Anonymous, that place does in fact exist. That place is the cross.

It's hard not to fast forward just a bit and remember what happened to Peter. Did this breakfast on the beach make a difference? The Book of Acts tells us that it did. It is Peter who preaches as recorded in Acts 2 and 3,000 people are saved at one time. It is Peter before the Sanhedrin who proclaimed, "There is salvation in no other name under Heaven given among me by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). And it is Peter, when commanded to not preach the name of Jesus replied, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Just as Peter, you can begin again today!