

A NEW BEGINNING

John 21:15-19 [MW21-15]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai, Sunday 18 April 2021

Peter stuffed up

- Peter stuffed up big time, huge, mega!
Peter more than dropped the ball
- he scored a spectacular own-goal that was destined to be shown on a YouTube
“it’s moments like these you need Minties” for all eternity!

Wooooa! How do you get out of that?

- how do you recover from that?
how do you get that to end?
- the simple answer is you don’t, you don’t
you can’t, you don’t, you won’t
- the Good News is *God* can
God can, *God* does and *God* will

God can, God does and God will offer a new beginning

- a new beginning
that’s what our gospel reading is all about this morning:
Peter’s new beginning

Jesus didn’t need to say to Peter:

- remember how on the night I was arrested, over dinner
you promised you would go to jail with me, and even die with me
and remember how I said that before the rooster crows
you would say three times you didn’t even know me?
- Jesus did not need to say that: it had been on instant replay in Peter’s head
ever since that third rooster crow

Now Peter has gone back to his fishing

- and you can bet it is not silvery fish but crowing roosters
that occupy the nets in Peter’s dreams!
- and now here He is, Jesus, Him! Right next to Peter
we don’t know if the subject has been broached
John doesn’t record it if it has
- certainly it was going through Peter’s head ... but how do you bring it up?
what do you say ... what can you say?

Jesus, as he so often does, leaps right in at the heart of the matter

- Peter is still digesting his fish
you can bet he’s also digesting how he’s going to get around to saying it to Jesus
- when Jesus turns to him and says:
Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?

Peter is momentarily stunned, like a fish flailing in the net

- then his brain catches up and engages before he speaks
before he speaks ...

Jesus asked Peter: "Do you love me more than these?"

- it could be that Jesus swept his hand around the boat
the nets and equipment, the fish
as if he was asking Peter: are you prepared to give all this up?
- abandon all hope of a successful career, steady job, reasonable comfort
in order to give yourself over to my people and my work?

Or it could be that Jesus looked at the rest of disciples and asked Peter:

- "Do you love me more than your fellow disciples do?"
perhaps gently reminding Peter of that night when he alone thought he could be true
- and how his courage had failed

As I said, Peter's brain is firmly engaged

- he no longer makes comparisons
he is content simply to say: *You know that I love you*

Three times Jesus asked Peter: do you love me?

- there is a reason for this
three times Peter denied his Lord
and it was three times his Lord gave him the opportunity to affirm his love
- with all his new found humility and wisdom
verse 17 shows a bit of the old Peter remains
- Peter was 'hurt', 'grieved', 'vexed' that Jesus asked him a third time!

However it was a new beginning

- it was not an erasing of that horrible "minties moment"
but that moment was no longer the end of the story
- Peter was given a new beginning
as the one who was to shepherd the sheep and the lambs of Jesus' flock
- he was to prove his love for Jesus not with words
but by loving others
- this time Peter would not follow Jesus at a distance
he would be pretty darn close, so close that he too would end up on a cross

Peter's story shows that there can be a new beginning after spectacular failure

- after humiliating falls from grace
after the most devastating disaster
- Peter's story also shows the kind of new beginning we are all invited to
we are to love others
for we can prove that we love Jesus only by loving others
- we are to follow the way of the cross
for we only really love Jesus when we are prepared to face his task
and take up his cross

There is something about the way John records this incident

- that lets us know it is a new beginning for all disciples, all followers
not just Peter ... everybody!
- and not just big-time failures who get a new start
not just the super-spiritual and obviously holy
not just the supremely gifted who minister in the spotlight

In the early church, some would say John, the author of today's gospel, was the 'great one'

- for his flights of thought went higher than any other person

on the other hand, some would argue Paul was the 'great one'

- for he went to the ends of the earth for Jesus
- but these verses tell us Peter too had his place
- he might not reflect and compose like John
- he might not voyage and venture like Paul
- however he had the honour of being the shepherd of the sheep of Christ

Which is really good for us, us 'ordinary ones'

- you see we may not be able to think and write like John
- we may not be able to travel and preach like Paul
- but we can all follow in the footsteps of Peter
- each of us can guard someone from going astray
- each of us can feed the lambs of Jesus with the food of the word of God

Because Peter chose to say "yes" to Jesus

- we too have a choice
- we like Peter may choose a new beginning
- like Peter we may make bold claims and spectacularly fall
- and, and later we may like Peter, with the wisdom and humility of 20/20 hindsight
- gratefully and caringly choose a new beginning
- and, and, and
- we may muck up, lose our way, fail again and again ... and yes, again
- however because of Easter, praise God,
- there is always the possibility of a new beginning!

The choice of a new beginning

- the invitation to guard and feed the lambs of Jesus
- here is a practical reflection on this by one of my favourite writers, Max Lucado
- titled "The Choice"

It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary I am free to choose. And so I choose.

I choose love ...

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.

I choose joy ...

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical ... the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

I choose peace ...

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience ...

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clenching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness ...

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness ...

I will go without before I take dishonest gain. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness ...

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love. And my children will never fear their father will not come home.

I choose gentleness ...

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it only be in praise. If I clench my fist may it only be in prayer. If I make a demand may it only be of myself.

I choose self-control ...

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek His grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

[When God Whispers Your Name, Max Lucado, p.71-73]

Tomorrow there will be another dawn

- and a new beginning
praise God!