

From Simon to Peter #16 - Go Tell Peter

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon explores the theme of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its significance for Simon Peter's life and experience, highlighting the persevering love of God and the possibility of new life and forgiveness.

Duration: 26:30

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Mark 16:7, Luke 22:31

Topics: "Simon to Peter"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the perseverance of the Lord in the lives of His followers. He acknowledges that the disciples, including Simon Peter, had a checkered spiritual journey with ups and downs. The preacher highlights that the gospel does not promise a life without temptation or failure, but rather a continuous work of transformation until believers reach their ultimate destiny of glory. He shares a story of a Puritan who believed in a persevering God rather than just the perseverance of the saints. The sermon concludes by referencing Mark 16:7, where Jesus instructs the disciples to go and tell Peter that He will meet them in Galilee, emphasizing the personal care and pursuit of the Lord for His fallen and faltering followers.

Transcript

We welcome very especially those that are joining us as a Knox family, and we trust that as we wait upon our risen Lord together, we may find that he is still the one who speaks to us by name. Now you will find the word of our text this morning in the passage that was read for us by Mr. Walker in Mark's Gospel chapter 16 and verse 7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him as he said unto you.

In our morning services at the present time we are following a theme which we have entitled from Simon to Peter. And I am taking the liberty on this Easter day of continuing that theme because the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ certainly had a very particular relevance to this man who was destined to become a leader in the Christian church. Any objective appraisal of the relevant gospel records will make it abundantly clear that a spiritual pilgrimage of the disciples generally, and of Simon Peter particularly, was very much a matter of up and down.

It was a checkered pilgrimage. Unfortunately we sometimes read things into the Gospels which are not there. And we sometimes represent the lives and the biographies of God's people as if they began the Christian life and ever afterwards it was just one clear straight line upwards toward glory.

Without ever a fall or a lapse. You know that simply is not true. These characters of the Bible were not men of straw.

They were real men and real women. And because they were real men in real situations facing a real enemy. There were times when they faltered and failed.

Miserably failed. The wonder of our gospel is this. Not that it transforms a man today and he will never be tempted anymore.

The wonder of our gospel is this. It begins a work today and that work pursues us and continues to go on within us until our Savior brings us to the appointed destiny which is glory. This is the glory of the gospel.

Our Lord is our risen Lord and he follows us. And even when his people fall and fail and falter miserably so. He comes after his own.

And to me at any rate I must say this is a note which I delight in. Because I have yet to meet the Christian that does not fall. The story is told of someone in the 17th century who was suspicious of the theology of a man who would be known as a Puritan.

In his suspicion he approached him one day and he said do you believe in the perseverance of the saints. The Puritan could smell something from a distance and he thought he would answer appropriately. And he said no he says I don't.

Ah says the questioner I knew there was something amiss. You don't believe in the perseverance of the saints then you are not true to the world. Says the Puritan I believe in something far better than the perseverance of the saints.

I believe he says in a persevering God. That is the message we have here today. Simon Peter has fallen miserably.

We do not blurt as we speak of this. We do not delight to call attention to this. We do so with bated breath and with reticence because we are not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes.

We do so nevertheless to magnify the grace of the persevering Lord. Of the risen one who goes after the sheep into the wilderness and brings it back again in his arms back into the fold. Now however challenging to the divine plan and purpose certain previous rebellions of Peter had been.

I must repeat that the events leading up to the death of our Lord are of an entirely different order. His denial three times his cursing and his swearing. His apparent rejection of Jesus Christ.

I say apparent. His apparent going back upon the confession of Caesarea Philippi when he said I know him not. I don't know anything about him.

Yet my friend I want you to see the good shepherd rising from the dead and first of all going after the worst man among the eleven. The man who'd sinned the greatest. Who'd failed the most miserable.

Go tell his disciples and Peter whoever else was on the heart as he died upon the cross. Peter was there. For Peter was his man.

So Easter day changed it all. And no sooner was the risen Lord risen from the dead than he finds Peter. And the whole process is reversed and something starts now again in the life of Peter.

May I say a sun was now to rise which was never more to set. This is our major turning point. We propose looking at Peter's experience as it passes through three stages.

I will speak of them as midnight darkness. From midnight darkness through twilight shade toward midday bright. First of all we think of the midnight darkness in Simon Peter's experience.

Oh yes darkness there is no other word for it. Bleak darkness, black darkness, barren darkness, oppressive darkness, soul shattering darkness. But darkness of a man who knew the Lord and yet failed to do it.

Not the darkness of a man who is in ignorance but the darkness of going against what you knew was right and persisting in so doing. Darkness, thick darkness is the only appropriate description of that spiritual experience which now overtook this disciple. I have described as denial supplemented by an oath and you know the revised standard version goes further and it says that Peter began to invoke a curse upon himself and to swear that he had never known this person.

Probably that is the correct translation of the words. When suddenly the cock crowed and as Peter looked yonder at the scene the other end of the courtyard he saw his own blessed Lord looking at him and that look and the crow of the cock tore his heart to pieces and he went out for the fountains of the deep broke loose in him and he wept. So we read he wept bitterly.

Now to describe the overwhelming darkness that now developed and enveloped Peter is something that is not humanly possible. We don't mind, we don't know how he thought, we don't know how his conscience functioned at this time, we don't know how the spirit of God dealt with him, we really do not know. One thing we do know is this that the big fisherman became a broken man and the tears and the circumstances that bring a man to the place of brokenness are blessed tears and blessed circumstances because my dear people let us face it on this Easter morning no man can be made after God's image until he's broken.

Apart from the inevitable sense of guilt and of shame that must have featured very largely in Peter's thinking. It must have been harshly gruel, grueling for him to sense now a chasm opening between him and the one that he had been so near to, who had befriended him, who had brought hope and joy and gladness to him and much much else over the last three and a half years. And now there is a thick cloud coming between them.

God becomes strangely distant again who had been so very near. You just think of it, suddenly the sky has become black and ominous and it's not long ago since Simon Peter stood at Caesarea Philippi and heard the Savior say to him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood didn't reveal these things to you but my Father which is in him. Simon Peter is in touch with heaven, he's on the right way of living.

God is speaking to him, God is dealing with him but not now. It isn't long ago since Simon stood on the mount of transfiguration and he beheld the glory of his transfigured Lord and he wanted to build there three taverns, three booths, one for his Lord, one for Elijah, one for Moses. Oh the glory, the majesty, the thrill of it all.

But it seems as if that were in an eternity in the past. A cloud has come betwixt the present and the past and the glory of the past is shut away. And here he is in sick, oppressive, soul-shattering darkness.

Everything commends him now. There is nothing to comfort him. No Simon did not need a Nathan to come to him as David did and say look you are the guilty culprit.

You did this or you did that. Simon knew full well he had sinned. If Judas knew that he had betrayed the innocent blood, Simon Peter knew that even though he had not betrayed him as Judas did, he had sinned against the very Messiah, son of the living God and therefore the profanity of the occasion and the persistence of the occasion and all the ingredients in that awful incident in his life are like a bar tearing his soul to shreds.

Black midnight darkness. Could it be that there are some of us in Knox this morning who are going that way? I hope not. And yet it could be that there is someone here this morning just yearning as Simon must have been during those three days, yearning for a ray of light.

Nothing is clear. There is like a curtain of black that separates you from an experience of God that you had yesterday or yesteryear. You too had your transfiguring moment.

You saw the glory of the Lord and you wanted to stay on the mountaintop. You too have your Caesarea Philippi and you made your confession and you could not do otherwise. But today you've denied him.

Not once, not twice, not thrice. And if you are honest with yourself the heavens are black to you. There is very little you get out of the means of grace.

And you read your Bible and it is scarcely more to you than an ordinary novel and the throne of grace is just like an unoccupied throne. You shoot your prayers into the distance. That's all.

Midnight, darkness. Before I pass on may I note it again and underline it. There are experiences of this nature through which the people of God may pass.

Now please let us take this seriously. Through which the people of God may pass. Not through which the people of God need pass.

I did not say that. The Bible doesn't say that. But may pass.

If you are there this morning it does not necessarily mean that you're not a child of God. But it does mean that you have rebelled and you have sinned. As Simon did.

For God did not call us into darkness but into light. Not into misery but into joy and glory and peace and hope. And fellowship with himself.

Midnight blackness. Now come with me for a moment to the second portrait or picture or scene that we have here. I speak of it as twilight cherry.

The dictionary describes twilight as referring to the light from the sky when the sun is below the horizon either in the morning or the evening. And those of you who get up very early in the morning know what it is. Sure there are more early risers here.

You know what it is. The sun is about to shine. You can't see anything distinctly.

You can see, you can see features. You don't know whether it's a man or a woman. You can't distinguish between things but you know there's something there and something moving.

It's just twilight. Nothing is clear yet. Now that's the stage I want to speak about.

Something happened in the experience of Simon Peter. It was leading towards something bigger and greater of course. But it's just this twilight shade.

Its glory resides in the fact that it is sun rising not sun setting. It's the prelude of sunrise in all its glory. It's not indicative of a sun that is setting not arising yet.

Twilight is a great advance from the pitch blackness of a starless night. But it is far short of clear daylight. Let's look at it for a moment.

The first flicker. Now it is given to us with our Bibles in our hands. It is given to us to see the kindling of the first ray that was to bring hope into the unrelieved and tense darkness of Simon Peter's heart.

Mark describes it for us. A group of women folk including Mary Magdalene arrived early on the morning of the first day of the week. Soon as the Sabbath day was over early in the morning it was still twilight.

Early in the morning they arrive at the garden too. They came because you remember before the feast began they had to hurry the last rites. And though they had with great consideration poured the spices that were lovingly brought by a secret disciple.

Poured the spices between the linen garments and then wound the garment around the body of the dead Christ as you would wind a bandage around the limb. They had done that but they had something more they wanted to do. They couldn't do it whilst the feast was on but the moment the Sabbath is over they're up early because they want to finish the last rites they might perform upon the body of the dead Christ.

But they were amazed. The problem in their mind as they approached was who shall roll us away the stone. There was a mighty stone placed by the Romans over the mouth of the cave and it was sealed with a Roman seal.

Who will roll it away for us? But when they came they found the stone moved away. Perhaps carried away. There's a question about the meaning of the word.

A massive stone that no ordinary human could move but it was taken away. It was moved away if not lifted out of its position. That was wonderful in itself.

So they rush into the these women. Can you see them? They rush into the tomb and lo and behold there are two things that startle them. The first is the absence of their Lord.

The second is the presence of someone else. Their Lord was not there. The body was not there.

And sitting down there just where the body of the Lord had been there was someone a young man as they speak of him dressed in white. And he turned to them and he said this to them. Do not be amazed he says you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified.

He has risen. He is not here. See the flesh where they laid him.

But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee. Now John tells us how the first flicker of light was carried into the dungeon of Peter's darkness. The flicker that was lit there in the garden carried into the dungeon of Peter's darkness.

John puts it like this. He Mary Magdalene ran. How a forgiven soul can run.

You know this is a theme all on its own. Men and women if you're not forgiven you can't run on divine errands. Men and women are glued to their situations in this world and to their idols.

They can't run until they're forgiven. But to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much and runneth well. This dear woman out of whom seven devils have been cast ran.

Of course she did. Her Lord was risen from the dead. He's no longer in the tomb and she runs.

This is what we read. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciples. The other disciple the one whom Jesus loved and said to them they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

Now notice what's happened. Bless her. She's run all right.

But she's run at this particular point more out of fear than out of certainty or knowledge of his being a risen from the dead. This is not a hopeful word. She's misrepresented the whole thing.

She's only seen the fact that he was not present. The body was not present. This is a pessimistic misconception which revealed Mary's terrible fear.

Neither was it a faithful record of the message because she was asked to say something special to Peter. She never said anything about it. But it was the first glow.

The first flicker of light. Now I said to you it was twilight. You can't see clearly here.

This is not much good for anyone but it's the beginning. It's the dawn of a new day. It is the dawn because at least it struck a match that sent Peter and John running to the tomb to see what had happened.

So the first flicker brightens. It's still twilight. Nothing is clear still but the first ray of light brightens as Peter and John dash for the tomb.

Now Peter was the older man. John was the younger. And we read that John got there first and he looked in and he saw that the body was not there and all he could see from outside.

And you see the reticence of the man. All he could see from outside were the linen clothes lying where the body had been. Then Simon came hunting and puffing.

The older man. The bigger man probably. And he comes at last but Simon of course doesn't think twice.

In he goes. And John follows him. And it was exactly as John had seen.

They saw the linen clothes lying there in an orderly way. As if they were exactly in the position where the body had lain. Remaining undisturbed as the body made its exit.

Now obviously this is not light. This is not resurrection glory. It's twilight still.

But the Lord has left the tomb. Moreover there is more light to this because you see for one thing for one thing they recognize at least John did and I suppose he shared it with Peter. Peter was not as quick thinking as John.

John noticed it. The clothes. The clothes were lying in a very strange suggestive way.

I don't know how to describe this to you. But the impression made not only upon me but on one or two of the commentators that I have led is I read is this. That the clothes were laying may I may I this morning illustrate by thinking of this pulpit cross from here this this area here as as the slab on which the body had lain.

Here was the head of our Lord. There was his body. There was a cloth around his head represented by this.

And there was a cloth around his body represented by this. And the cloths were wound bandage like around his head and bandage like around his body. And the significant thing is this.

The cloth around his head was just where his head had been. Still wound around unmoved unfolded just in its original fold. And the cloth around its body was likewise just as the bandage had been wound around the body with the spices in between.

There they were full and flat on the slab where the body had lain. And this was strange. It means that the grave was not plundered.

If someone had come in to rob the body they couldn't have got the body out of those folds and folded them back as they now lie. It couldn't have been a plunderer. It couldn't have been a thief.

It couldn't have been anyone in a hurry. The significance of what they see indicates something of this order. Now I deliberately put it like this.

It seems as if the body has almost evaporated. Almost evaporated and left the garments lying flat there as if something of a supernatural order has taken place. Leaving them there as a testimony.

This is not man. This is not a robber. This is not a thief.

This is something of a different order. I agree with any skeptic here this morning. It's not daylight still.

We're still in twilight.

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