

Peculiar Treasures - April 26 2020, Pastor Chad Vandervalk

So today we're continuing this series that we're calling Peculiar Treasures, looking at the ways in which God has brought new life and renewal into the life of these peculiar or strange or unique individuals, throughout the course of the New Testament, with the hopes of understanding that God does work in our strange, and usual, unusual lives as well. Because we are His peculiar treasures, called to do the things that he has called us to do in this world.

And as we look at this story from Peter, I get the real sense that at the beginning of this story, [Peter]'s just kind of standing there wondering, 'Well, what's next?' What's next for my life, as Jesus has died and then has risen, which is great, but he's no longer around us all the time.

He goes back to Galilee and just wonders, 'What's next? Now, what do I do?' It's a good thing that Jesus has been raised from the dead. That's amazing for him. That's good news for him. But he doesn't seem to want to build the same kind of kingdom that I might have hoped he would at some point. And he's no longer teaching us all the time. The last three years, have they been a waste? What, what can I learn from them? How do I move on? What's next for Peter?

And you know, for many of us, I think that's the same question that we wrestle with. On Easter, I asked you to send in some things, some pictures or stories or other things that remind you about the restoration that we have, and that we are promised because of Jesus's resurrection. And thank you so much for sending in the things that you have sent in and continue to do so because we'll find ways to use them for sure.

But one submission I got was from Jack and Edith Denning. And they were talking about the restoration of a piano that they had had in their family for over 120 years. Jack put it this way: he said there was a grieving that had to be done before the resurrection or the restoration.

"We wanted to keep it, the piano, in the family, but the kids didn't want it." So that was a part of the grief. But letting go of that, of the plans that they had for this, for the future, they had to let that go. Then came the filling in of the scars and the

dents from kids who didn't want to practice and from the many moves. We didn't use piano movers back then. And then the resurrection of the piano. I'll show you a few pictures now of how it went from what it was before to being totally disassembled and then put back together.

Now that it's put back together, they're kind of left with this well, 'What's next?' "Now we think we'll keep it." Edith is the piano player and the piano was in her family since she was about 10 years old. But there's this recognition that pianos are meant to be used for something, they have a purpose. They're designed to be played. And so it's renewed and restored, not necessarily to be some decoration in the corner, but to be used. To fulfill its purpose.

The same is true for us, and the same was true for Peter. Now Peter stands there wondering, 'Okay, so what's next?'

Now what? Jesus has died and been raised from the dead, and [Peter] says, Well, I'm going out to fish. This is from John chapter 21 verse 3. Simon, while he's surrounded by a number of other disciples says, I'm going out to fish.

Now, if I were to say that, or if most of you were to say that, that would mean, I'm gonna go have a little bit of fun and spend some time doing some other things, but for Peter to say it, it means something more. It's more like Michael Schumacher saying I'm going racing, or Michael Jordan saying, I'm going to play basketball or Rob Gronkowski saying I'm gonna play football, or Dominic Hasik saying, I'm going to play hockey.

See, these are all people who had retired and then decided to come out of retirement and to play again. And that's kind of the feeling I get, at least from this story, is Peter says, I'm going fishing. I'm coming out of retirement. I'm going back to the way life was Before. This was a great three year hiatus, I learned a lot about myself and about what it means to be a good husband, to engage with other kinds of people and to love others. For sure. This has been awesome. And so now I'm going to take what I learned and go back and do what I was doing before. I'm going, I'm going back fishing and the other disciples say the same we'll go with you.

Now, as Peter is going out to fish, there's other things he needs to work through, as well. There's the pain and the shame that he experiences, I'm sure, from his own time of denial. And given three options to say yes, I believe that Jesus is the Messiah and I want to follow him or I am following him. Instead, he says to a young servant girl and to a guard and to another servant girl, "No, I don't know the man. I have no idea who you're talking about", because he was too afraid to be associated with Jesus. Afraid of what might happen to him.

So I'm sure that that's playing around with his emotions. And I, I would wager that there's also a sense of being a failure. Even as a fisherman in that culture, and particularly in the Galilee where they, they really highlighted or appreciated those who were religious and that the Jewish culture really looked up to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, that many wanted to be those kinds of people, or at least wanted their children to be those kinds of people. But only the best of the best of the best got called to be a rabbi and others were sent back to the trade of their parents.

And so Peter and the other disciples who were in the trade of being a fisherman had been passed up. They weren't the best of the best. I wonder if some of that is playing for him. I especially wonder that as he says they're on the edge of his boat and casts net, after net, after empty net, hauling back, nothing. I wonder if he's starting to feel like maybe he just is a failure.

So it's no coincidence then, from my opinion that Jesus shows up on the shore. Jesus stands on the shore, this is verse four, but the disciples didn't realize it was him. He calls out to them "friends", or actually a better translation is "little boys, little boys, do you have any fish?"

Or it's actually, the question is expecting a 'no' answer. It's more like, "Little boys. You don't have any fish, do you?" And then there's, I imagine, all kinds of emotions packed into this little word that they add through it. There's, there's frustration, there's bitterness, there's sadness. There's a sense of 'Mind your own business'. As they simply answer, "no".

So Jesus says, "Throw your nets on the right side of the boat and you'll find some." And when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the

large number of fish. Now, they immediately recognize because of this, that this is Jesus.

And that's because this happened way at the beginning of their time together, way back when Peter was a fisherman, and he had got he Jesus got into his boat to teach the crowds. And then after Jesus had finished teaching the crowds, he told Peter to go out into deeper water and to throw out his net and Peter had said, "No, we've been fishing all night, and we do not have any fish. There's no point in going out now when it's warm. We won't get any fish now." This is in Luke chapter 5 verse 5. Simon Peter answers to Jesus, he says, "Master, we've worked hard all night, haven't caught anything. But because you say so and you seem to be a really important Rabbi and you've done some amazing things already that I've seen, I will let down the nets" and when they had done so they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Then verse 8, when Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and he said, "Go away from the Lord for I am a sinful man."

See, Peter recognized that this was God in his boat, and that he wasn't worthy to be with him. But Jesus said, "You are loved."

And yes, you are a sinful person.

But I still want you to be with me. Jesus says to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people. You will come and be my disciple, you will tell them the good news." So they, Jesus, or Peter and these others who were with them pulled up their boats on shore, left everything and follow Jesus.

And now here at the end of the story, they stand again on the shore, the lake, the Sea of Galilee, and they gather in a net full of fish. Apparently, there's 153 of them. Who counts the fish after they've got Jesus sitting on the shore, like who does this? I don't I don't get this. For me. This is one of those internal proofs that just proved the consistency of the story. Because if it had been me writing it or making it up, I would have said, "and they ran to Jesus and they hugged him and they sat around the fire and they had a great time," but instead it says, Yeah, they pulled the fish on board up onto the shore, and they counted them.

Crazy.

So Peter and Jesus sit down around the fire. As those old voices of rejection run through his head, and he fails at fishing all night long. And then he has this reminder that Jesus has called him in the past to be His disciple.

And now he sits around a fire, it's actually a charcoal fire. And that that specific kind of fire is only mentioned twice in the scriptures: once here and once in the courtyard around which Peter warmed himself as he denied Jesus. And here they sit together, and I bet you could cut the tension with a knife. You know how, you know how when you've done something wrong, and the other person knows it, nobody wants to talk about it? There's this tension in the room. It feels like it's about to explode. And so nobody says anything. I feel like that's what this is like here and Jesus breaks the silence.

And he addresses Peter's failure by asking him three times. Do you love me? Peter realizes he's addressing his failure because he says, the third time, (this is John chapter 21, verse 17), the third time Jesus says to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And Peter is hurt because Jesus asks him the third time "Do you love me?" Peter says "Lord, you know all things. You know, I love you."

And Jesus says: Yes, Yes, I do. Know all things. Yes, I do know that you love me. And he doesn't say that directly. But in what he says, He says, Jesus says: "Feed my sheep." And he reinstates Peter.

He says your failures have not made you to be a failure. I still have called you and I have now restored you again to be one of my disciples and have renewed you for a purpose. So go feed my sheep.

Now, if I were Peter, I would still be a little frustrated. Because at the beginning of this story, we have Peter wondering, well, what's next? What am I going to do? It's good enough for Jesus. But what am I supposed to do? And he goes back to fishing because that's what he knew. And now Jesus says, No, you can't go back to fishing because I've called you into something new, to something different. And I've called you to go to feed my sheep to take care of my lambs.

And Peter, I bet you Peter's wondering, what does that mean? What's next for me he, what's next for this whole story as I am restored into this and called to something again, given another opportunity, knowing that it's not going to separate me from God. Jesus doesn't give him any specifics, which to me is really, really frustrating because I wish he would just answer some of those questions sometimes. But he doesn't. But he does point Peter in a new direction. He says you can't go back. You have to move forward. I, I have renewed you, so that you can be my disciple, so that you can be my witness so that you can show other people the victory that has been achieved in my death and resurrection.

I bet Peter still went home and wondered what's next. But maybe this time, instead of feeling defeated, saying, well, what's next, it was more excited. Like, "What's next?!"

Now we might not know what's in store for us in the future. As individuals or as families or as a nation or as a society in the world, we might not know what's in store for us in the future. Not that we ever do. But now we're coming to realize that we don't have much knowledge. But we who are Christian, claim that we are renewed and restored. And restored for a purpose, to be God's image bearers here in this world.

We wait for a time for everything to be made new and for that image to be made perfect in us, and it's not going to be perfect. It wasn't for Peter. Peter had to learn all the time about what this meant for him. He had to be hit over the side of the head by the Holy Spirit who said, Look, nothing is unclean. I love all people. Basically, he says to him, and then later on, Paul has to remind Peter, when Peter starts to separate himself from the Gentiles and be only with the Jews, Paul has to call him to account to his face and say, Peter, what you're doing is wrong. We are all on the same playing field. Peter had to learn time and time again what this meant for him and he wasn't perfect. He failed over and over but, but he was always reminded that he was called to follow just like we are.

We're called back to our original purpose of being God's image bearers here on Earth. No matter how we feel about it, the reality is that Jesus has been raised from the dead. And because Jesus has been raised from the dead, he lays claim to all of creation and all of our lives.

His resurrection, achieved victory over sin, and death, and over all of those things that have kept humanity in bondage. That liberating event sets us free to be what God has called us, and designed us to be right in the very beginning: a community of people who love and follow God, who live as his image bearers here, and now a community of people who love as he loves, and who use the things of these earth as he would have us use them.

N.T Wright, in his book, *The Day the Revolution Began*, he puts it this way. He says “to reflect the divine image means standing between heaven and earth. Even in the present time, adoring the creator and bringing his purposes into reality on earth ahead of the time when God completes the task and makes all things new.

“The royal priesthood, the community of peculiar treasures, is the company of rescued humans who, being part of Earth, worship the God of heaven, and are thereby equipped with the breath of heaven and their renewed lungs, to work for his kingdom. On Earth. The revolution of the cross sets us free to be in-between people, caught up in the rhythm of worship, and mission.”

See, the resurrection was a liberating event, as God claimed victory over all those things that held us hostage. And so we have the ability to be witnesses, not only to that liberating event, but how that liberating event impacts and affects us here and now and sets us free and renews us to be what God called us to be right at the very beginning.

We are set free to be in-between people, people who are aware of and living out of the liberating knowledge of Jesus resurrection, and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit people working to give witness to this good news and everything that we say, and we do. Now, I know that that doesn't give us a whole lot of specifics about what's next for you, for us as a church or for Christians in general, but it does provide us a direction.

We are God's witnesses proclaiming the victory of Jesus over sin and death and hell, announcing forgiveness and release so that we can be the people that God has originally created us to be, is restoring us to be. Even though we don't know

what's next we can be excited, trusting in the One who will be with us every step of the way. Amen.

Let's pray together:

Father, you know all of the people who are hearing this, who are gathering around screens in their homes who are connecting, maybe by themselves.

All of us who wonder what's next?

May we trust that no matter what comes next, we are called and restored to be your people. May we continue to acknowledge this liberation and share it with others. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

At this point I invite you to sing the song we believe by the Newsboys: "In this time of desperation when it seems like all we have is fear, we declare that we believe in God the Father and Jesus the Son, and we believe in the Holy Spirit and that the victory has been won."

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>