

## “Bold Peter”

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Acts 5:27-42

John 21:2-19

*Every day they spent time in the temple and in one home after another.*

*They never stopped teaching and telling the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.*

*Acts 5:42*

Let us pray... O God,

Let us be bold like Peter, letting go of past mistakes, yet learning from them  
to do better the next time.

Let us be bold as individuals to live up to our potential and as a church to proclaim  
your Good News of grace and glory and your Beloved Community of justice & peace.

Amen

On Easter Sunday morning at the Son Rise Service, I preached about Peter’s  
encounter with the Resurrected Christ.

John 21 begins on a somber note – Jesus has already appeared to the disciples,  
but Peter says, “I am going fishing” as if to say, “I have had enough.”

And so he goes fishing and some of the disciples go with him.

They try all night to catch something, but – they catch nothing.

At sunrise, Jesus is there on the beach and he has a fire going.

They are just offshore in their boat and Jesus calls to them,

“Lads, have you caught any fish?” and they call back, “No.”

Well, he tells where they’re biting and they just dump their nets over the side –  
but then, they can hardly pull them back in because of all the fish!

One of them says, “It’s the Lord!”

But when Peter hears this he does something odd.

He was in his skivvies for working on the boat – or may even have been *au naturel*.

So, he puts his clothes back on – but then... jumps into the water!

You would think he was trying to beat everybody to shore in order to meet Jesus,  
but what if he was trying to escape?

Later, they were all sitting by the fire, and Jesus calls him, “Simon son of John”,  
“Simon bar Jonah”, “Simon son of Jonah”.

That’s a reference to the ancient Israelite prophet Jonah

who was told by God to go to Nineveh – but he didn’t want to go.

The people of Nineveh were enemies of Israel,

and Jonah knew that God would forgive them.

So, Jonah got on board a boat that took him in the opposite direction,

to the farthest reaches of the known world, which was Spain at that time.

Yet God used all of Creation – including that Big Fish – the “Whale”,

to get Jonah’s attention, bring him back, and send him to Nineveh!

Willard,p.2

So, Simon Peter son of Jonah may very well have been trying to do the same thing,  
swimming in the opposite direction to avoid facing the Son of God.

But there was really no place for him to go, the sea was too big –  
it may as well have been infinite.

Therefore, Peter the Rock was drawn back like gravity pulls a stone to the earth  
and no sooner does he step ashore, Jesus says,

“Get some of the fish you have just caught” for there is a fire going  
and fish already cooking for breakfast.

Peter is the one who goes back on board to drag in the net –  
he should have just stayed in the boat...

just like he should not have panicked just a few days ago  
when he sat by an earlier fire on a bitter cold night  
waiting for the outcome of Jesus’ trial by the high priest.

Instead, he denied even knowing Jesus – at first to buy time,  
but then out of his horrified realization that Jesus  
was not getting out of this situation,  
so Peter figured it was every man for himself...

So there he was days later sitting by another fire as if it were Judgment Day  
on that sunrise to eternity, with Jesus asking Simon, “Do you love me?”

Three times Christ asked Peter if he loved him,  
and three times Peter assured him he did.

Jesus never does say, “I forgive you” in so many words,  
but it is implied when he says, “Feed my lambs”, “Take care of my sheep”,  
“Feed my sheep” – or in other words, “Get back to work!”

Something had changed for Simon Peter. He’s jumped back into life –  
like when he stepped out of the boat to walk on the water with Jesus.

On Pentecost when the disciples were dramatically enthused by the Holy Spirit  
it was Peter who stood up to calm everyone gathered there  
and interpret for them what this experience meant.

He took on a leadership role to guide the early Church into the next phase  
of bringing the Good News of Christ into the world...

It was just a few years ago, that we did a Bible study based on the Book of Acts  
and one of the members of that study was Monica Peidl  
who served our church as music director and  
who just passed away only a few months ago.

She had set as a personal goal to become commissioned  
in the United Church of Christ as a ‘Minister of Music’ –  
and she was on fire with the Spirit!

Monica was at every Biblical study and clergy fellowship activity  
we had going, but I remember talking with her about this particular text  
from Acts chapter 5...

Willard, p.3

Peter and some other apostles were hauled in to the high priest's council and called to account for all they were doing and saying to promote the message of Christ – whom these same authorities had condemned and killed.

*<sup>29</sup> Peter and the apostles replied:*

*We don't obey people. We obey God.*

*<sup>30</sup> You killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross.*

*But the God our ancestors worshiped raised him to life*

*<sup>31</sup> and made him our Leader and Savior.*

*Then God gave him a place at his right side,*

*so that the people of Israel would turn back to him and be forgiven.*

*<sup>32</sup> We are here to tell you about all this, and so is the Holy Spirit,*

*who is God's gift to everyone who obeys God.*

Something had changed for Peter. He was bold.

He was bold, but not in the impulsive and thoughtless ways of before.

Now, he knew what he was doing; He was sure of himself;

He could step out into uncertainty with confidence;

He could walk into dark places because he carried a light within;

He could do these things, because he was no longer alone,

but had Christ to guide him and others who needed him.

I remember Monica's smile – she lit up with this realization that *Peter had become bold...*

I later saw the word, 'bold', in the lyrics of a hymn she composed,

so I believe that part of this story about Peter had become part of her story.

In what ways are you being challenged in your life to be bold?

Again, that is not to be impulsive or thoughtless like risk-takers

who give no thought to the consequences to themselves or others around them.

Rather, in what ways are you called to live up to your potential,

make a statement, scratch off an item on your bucket list?

Anna Ward did a lap in a NASCAR racer when she turned 90.

Doris Anderson scored 4 holes-in-one when she was 80.

What are you waiting for?

We as a church, are stepping out into some bold, uncharted territory guided we pray, by the Holy Spirit of love

as we reach out to our fellow churches and our interfaith allies.

An example of that is this Tuesday at 6:30 pm,

when an interfaith Prayer Service for Peace will take place

at St. Timothy Roman Catholic Church.

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This will reunite Sheldon Skurow of Temple Shalom, Imam Sykes of ISLAM, Inc.  
and me as we team up with other like-minded people  
from the St. Timothy Church, New Covenant United Methodist Church,  
and the Baha'i community here in The Villages.

We are very different in our traditions, and it's important to keep it that way –  
by celebrating our diversity as a strength.

At the same time, we will be able to recognize that what unites us is  
a common Spirit – a Holy Spirit of rational lovingkindness.

Amen

*Our lesson today from Acts 5:27-42 demonstrates how Peter was transformed from despair to step up and take a stand when he was needed...*

<sup>27</sup> When the apostles were brought before the council, the high priest said to them,

<sup>28</sup> “We told you plainly not to teach in the name of Jesus.

But look what you have done!

You have been teaching all over Jerusalem,  
and you are trying to blame us for his death.”

<sup>29</sup> Peter and the apostles replied:

We don’t obey people. We obey God.

<sup>30</sup> You killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross.

But the God our ancestors worshiped raised him to life

<sup>31</sup> and made him our Leader and Savior.

Then God gave him a place at his right side,

so that the people of Israel would turn back to him and be forgiven.

<sup>32</sup> We are here to tell you about all this, and so is the Holy Spirit,

who is God’s gift to everyone who obeys God.

<sup>33</sup> When the council members heard this,

they became so angry that they wanted to kill the apostles.

<sup>34</sup> But one of the members was the Pharisee Gamaliel, a highly respected teacher.

He ordered the apostles to be taken out of the room for a little while.

<sup>35</sup> Then he said to the council:

People of Israel, be careful what you do with these men.

<sup>36</sup> Not long ago Theudas claimed to be someone important,

and about four hundred men joined him.

But he was killed.

All his followers were scattered, and that was the end of that.

<sup>37</sup> Later, when the people of our nation were being counted,

Judas from Galilee showed up.

A lot of people followed him,

but he was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

<sup>38</sup> So I advise you to stay away from these men.

Leave them alone.

If what they are planning is something of their own doing,  
it will fail.

<sup>39</sup> But if God is behind it, you cannot stop it anyway,

unless you want to fight against God.

The council members agreed with what he said,

<sup>40</sup> and they called the apostles back in.

They had them beaten with a whip and warned them

not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go.

<sup>41</sup> The apostles left the council and were happy,

because God had considered them worthy to suffer

for the sake of Jesus.

<sup>42</sup> Every day they spent time in the temple and in one home after another.

They never stopped teaching and telling the good news

that Jesus is the Messiah.

*Let us be challenged and guided by these words...*

John 21:2-19

2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathan'a-el of Cana in Galilee,  
the sons of Zeb'edee, and two others of his disciples were together.

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

They said to him,

"We will go with you."

They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach;  
yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

5 Jesus said to them, "[Lads], have you any fish?"

They answered him, "No."

6 He said to them,

"Cast the net on the [starboard] side of the boat, and you will find some."

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in,  
for the quantity of fish.

7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter,

"It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,

he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work,  
and sprang into the sea.

8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish,  
for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards<sup>[a]</sup> off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there,  
with fish lying on it, and bread.

10 Jesus said to them,

"Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish,  
a hundred and fifty-three of them;

and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?"

They knew it was the Lord.

13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

14 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples  
after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

He said to him,

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

He said to him,

"Feed my lambs."

16 A second time he said to him,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

He said to him,

“Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

He said to him,

“Tend my sheep.”

<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time,

“Do you love me?”

And he said to him,

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him,

“Feed my sheep.

<sup>18</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young,

you girded yourself and walked where you would;

but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands,

and another will gird you and carry you

where you do not wish to go.”

<sup>19</sup> (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.)

And after this he said to him, “Follow me.”