

March 15, 2006 Peter

Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. It is a play on words. The name Peter means rock.

Remember when Jesus asked the disciples who people were saying he was. Then he asked them who do you say that I am. There's another play on words. I am means God.

Then he asked them who do you say that I am. Peter said "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God". Jesus said to him you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church.

But this play on words is interesting. This rock in which the church will stand, the one who confesses Jesus as Lord, is also the rock that sunk in the lake when he saw the wind coming. This rock on which the church will stand was described by Jesus 4 verses later as Satan (which means one who opposes God). Jesus calls Peter Satan for having his mind on the things of the world instead of the things of God.

The other day at our dinner table we were debating some very important issues. We debated what George Washington's teeth were made of. Then we talked about the story about how he cut down a cherry tree but confessed because he couldn't tell a lie. We say that George Washington couldn't tell a lie, not because it's true. We know that he was a normal human being. But we tell that story because he is one of our country's heroes. So we tell this little white lie. If there is such a thing.

On the contrary, the drama and the puppet show do a great job pointing out that Peter, one of our heroes of the faith, is not perfect and he is humble he knows he is not perfect. Through out the scriptures as we read about the people of God, we see that there isn't one perfect person. In the whole bible, save that guy born in Bethlehem there isn't anyone who is perfect.

We see Peter tonight, one of our heroes of the faith, but he is not perfect. What does that mean for us?

When we see Peter and other of our heroes of the faith it almost has the opposite effect on us as looking at our national heroes.

Our national heroes are portrayed in a way that encourages us to strive to be like them. They are larger than life. We are encouraged to try and be larger than life, to at least be the best we can be.

When we look at the Biblical characters it is different. It's not that they don't have characteristics we want to emulate. But when we look at these people like Peter it encourages us to look beyond. To look beyond Peter to the real hero of life, Jesus Christ.

Since we are like Peter we are led to feel two different ways. One is that we like Peter feel

guilty for the mistakes we make. The times we have let people down, how we especially let Jesus down. On the other hand we are consoled and given hope for it is people like Peter, like Paul, like you who can rest and trust in Jesus' love and forgiveness and be used to do great things.

Remember in the drama God asked Peter: Remember you asked Jesus "how many times shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him... Seven times?"

Peter said: Jesus told me "no peter, seventy times seven."

God: Yes. Infinitely! Again and again and again. ... I am forgiveness.

Peter: I am forgiven for last night?

God: Yes

Peter: Thank you lord, I needed to hear that. Be with me, Lord in the days that lie ahead. I'm going to need your help to make it.

God: I am always with you.

Peter: I'll count on it, Lord.

## March 19, 2006 THE TEMPLE / THE CROSS John 2:13-25

One of the most radical and controversial things that Jesus did was to clear or cleanse the temple.

In our first lesson we have God giving the people the ten commandments. You have to remember the Israelites have been slaves for something like 400 years. When you are a slave you don't have to take care of yourself you don't have to think for yourself. Somebody else does that for you. In fact you probably forget how to think. God gives them some basic rules to live by for life. They basically come down to Love and serve God, love your neighbor and treat them like you would like to be treated.

You don't get any extra points for this because this is just what is expected of you. You stop for a stop sign don't expect someone to jump out of the bushes and give you an ice cream Sunday with a cherry on top and a trophy or a certificate. Hear ye, hear ye, Let it be known that on March 19 in the 2006<sup>th</sup> year of our Lord Arte Sharot stopped at the stop sign at the corner of Pine and Timberline Rd. That is probably not going to happen. But we need people to follow the rules if we are going to live together.

Now if you go through that stop sign without stopping you might find someone popping out with a cherry on top of their car wanted to give you a certificate.

That's the problem with rules and laws you only hear about them when you break them. Just like in School, Just like at work, just like hear at Church. People occasionally let us know when they think we have done a good job. But most of the time, unfortunately you only hear about what you did wrong, which doesn't help our self esteem too much.

I know this old pastor, great preacher bad secretary. It was a small Church; he was responsible for putting the bulletins together and making announcements. People would ask him to make an announcement just before he walked in and he would take 10 steps in and

forget about it. Oh they would get mad at him for that.

He would put the bulletin together and on some Sundays he would get everything right except one thing people would complain about that one thing. Not that he got everything else right but that one spelling error.

Anyway we all make mistakes and since the law has no compassion we all need a way to receive forgiveness, a way to make a mends. As Bishop Desmond Tutu says there is no future without forgiveness. That's an interesting quote to think about. NO FUTURE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS.

This leads us back to Jesus. No I didn't forget about Jesus. People need a way to receive forgiveness. How did people receive forgiveness in Jesus' day? Animal sacrifices right. You would bring your best sheep or some doves and they would be sacrificed at the temple. This showed your contrite heart and willingness to change your ways that is your willingness to repent and the priest would announce God's forgiveness on you.

If we keep that in mind we begin to see the problem Jesus creates. In John's telling of this story Jesus says that they have turned God's house into a market place. Let's concentrate on John's story. Jesus isn't claiming it's a den of thieves. When Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the story that's what they are concerned about. People are taking advantage of the people. But as John tells it there is another concern.

In John Jesus says you are turning God's house into a market place. Let's recap. People need forgiveness. People want forgiveness. Forgiveness brings us back into a restored relationship with God. When God forgives us we have a future.

Also remember that in Jesus' time people used animal sacrifices to receive God's forgiveness. What if you are a city boy like me and don't have any sheep or doves? What if you live far away and it isn't possible for you to bring your livestock? If that's the case you will need to buy an animal to sacrifice.

But Jesus is coming in and kicking out all of the people who are providing that service. What are you going to do? It seems like Jesus is taking away your forgiveness.

How are you going to get an animal for sacrifice? Jesus has taken away all the animals. How can you be forgiven? How can you become right with God? Where is your future?

I hope you can see it from this point of view so you can see how radical this is because it gets even more radical.

Jesus takes away your sacrifice,  
he takes away your contrition,  
he takes away your forgiveness, your future your hope.  
And he takes it all up on the cross with him.

In the foolishness of the cross he gives no miracles, no sign or wonders no wisdom of this world. He goes up on the cross and dies.

No more animal sacrifices,  
no more sacrifices at all.

Your forgiveness doesn't depend on your contrite heart.

It doesn't depend on our feeling sorry for your sins.

It doesn't depend on your willingness to repent.

Are you still wondering if you feel bad enough for your sins?

Are you frustrated in your abilities to change your ways?

Are you wondering how you will ever be worthy of forgiveness?

Jesus does a new thing. Not a miracle, not a sign or a wonder. The old rules no longer apply. Now its all about the cross.

Some say it is foolishness but for us who are being saved it is the power of God.

God bless your Lenten journey.

