

New Start

Following Jesus' crucifixion, Peter had to live with the guilt of his denial. He was probably very pleased that Jesus was back with him and the other disciples but nevertheless feeling guilty. We heard in our reading this morning that Jesus true to form, responds to everything that has happened in a very surprising and unexpected way. Indeed, Peter seems taken aback by it. What we learn from this is that when we let Jesus down - and we will - that what Jesus most wants to know - is that we still love him. Not that we promise we'll never do it again - remember Peter tried that trick before - it fools know one, but 'Do you love me?' Let's think for a moment about the different experiences of two disciples Peter and Judas, both knew they were wrong and both regretted their respective actions of denial and betrayal. Both were devastated to have hurt Jesus. However, their actions under the circumstances were very different; Judas ran away, but Peter ran to Jesus. Judas felt that all was lost and gave up on life, but Peter trusted Jesus dusted himself down and carried on. Peter's story as a follower of Jesus started with 'On this rock' and 'Follow me', and finds fulfilment in 'Feed my sheep' and 'Follow me'. If we love Jesus we carry on. Peter receives forgiveness and much more from Jesus. Both phrases 'Do you love me?' and 'Feed my sheep' - seem to have been designed to probe further into Peter's motives and intentions for following him and perhaps this is not all together surprising given Peter's track record when on several previous occasions Peter's actions were characterised by speaking now - thinking later, particularly when set against his potential future role. However, finding Peter's motives pure Jesus forgives him and restores him to the calling he was previously given. More than that, the command 'Feed my sheep' seems to expand upon that calling. Jesus is now entrusting Peter with an even greater role. Where Peter the fisherman had probably got pretty used to the idea of 'fishing for men' he is now being called - using an entirely different metaphor with new implications - to the business of shepherding 'Feed my sheep' Jesus welcomes back those who make mistakes and entrusts them with even greater things. In bringing God's salvation Jesus offers hope to individuals; and he offers forgiveness and a new start to those who fail.

What a Friend we have in Jesus!

Amen