

Living it out (Application):

Last week's question: Have you prayed for the Kingdom with other people?

Immerse yourself in this story by reading the chapter again slowly. Then make it your own:

In your mind's eye, see Jesus

standing on the shore at sunrise encouraging and advising you what to do next.

Then see him arms outstretched, breakfast on the fire, inviting you to come and join him and share all that he has prepared for you.

Finally, walk along the beach with him, as he gives you the

opportunity to admit what is

wrong, and gently reaffirms you

and challenges you to make a fresh start in your relationship with him.

Be honest with yourself and God;

write down any thoughts that come into your mind. This is one way God can speak to us.

Coming Up at St Mark's

Andy's ordination. Just to flag up, Andy P will be ordained a priest at 9.15 service on 30th June and celebrate communion at 11.15 that day..

Date for your diary. **Church hog roast and summer celebration**, for all the family...keep lunchtime on Sunday 14th July.



Please pray for...

Pray for **someone you know who is facing disappointment** – that they would be given hope through the presence of God's Spirit.

Give thanks that Andy Patrick is taking on the role of Musical Worship Director.

Pray for him as he oversees the development of musical worship at St Mark's.

Pray for **Keelan Glendinning**, for swift healing and restoration. Pray as well for **Saheli Chaudhury**, facing an operation this weekend.

Pray for our **young people**, particularly for our youth cells, and for preparations for the holiday club in July.

Pray for **national leaders** as they seek to respond to the violence in London with wisdom.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Rwandachild, providing education and homes for street children.**

<http://www.rwandachild.com/>

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!

On Sunday 2nd June we will be giving people the opportunity to write down anonymously any questions/comments related to our future plans. I will collate them and do a video response...

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 26th May 2019

Worship/reflection:

The Way of Jesus Five: knowing God with all our senses. Worship Him while washing up, turning a daily act into an offering of love.

Issues at Work: Failure, Disappointment and Hope in the Way of Jesus.

Briefly reflect on the main way God spoke to you through this Sunday's teaching: John 21:1-19. We've all been there – a failed exam, a failed relationship, failure to achieve our goals, failure to trust God, failure in our prayer life - it happens all the time - whether it's own fault, or someone else's, or just circumstances; whether it's in our family life, our work situation, our relationship with God, we need to know that this disappointment, this negative feeling isn't the end – we need a hope for the future. In some senses failure contains in itself the seeds of hope. Think of a 1 year old baby learning to walk – again and again he staggers forward 1 or 2 steps and flops down on his bottom. Each time he gets up and tries again – and eventually he makes it. We all went through it, but we've forgotten, and as we get older, failure hurts more – we feel we ought to know better. Let's not be afraid of failure - however painful, it can be part of learning! So how do we transform disappointment into hope? Does God have anything to say to us when things have gone pear-shaped again..... and again?

The Bible has lots to say about hope, and is very honest about failure. It's full of real people who mess up, lose their faith, doubt God, doubt themselves, and generally struggle - just like us, in fact. Back in the OT, at a time when God's people had reached their lowest point, consistently ignoring God, and living in exile, the prophet Jeremiah gave them this message: “I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “....plans to give you hope and a future”. (Jer 29:11) We need to hear that God never gives up on us, even when we're tempted to give up on ourselves.

To earth this in a real situation, I want you to engage your imaginations, to enter into the story in John 21, and try to identify with that most accident-prone disciple, Peter. Imagine if you will, the little group of men, sitting on the rocks beside the lake that quiet evening.... Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John, and a couple of others..... Were they sitting in silence, feeling aimless, maybe one of them idly throwing a stone into the water every now and then?

Or were they having an animated conversation about what do next? As usual, Peter takes the lead....'I'm going out fishing – anyone coming?' Fishing is something Peter knows about, he can get his head round it; fish don't ask him difficult questions, they don't suddenly appear through locked doors and disappear again; fishing is something he's good at, something he can rely on, something he learned from his father and grandfatherand of course, fishing was something he'd given up 3 years earlier when Jesus first called him. Left the family firm, and followed his wandering Rabbi. People didn't understand – I daresay he was criticized for leaving his home, laughed at for following a dream.....

But life on the road became all-absorbing. For 3 years he saw an extraordinary man doing and saying extraordinary things, until he got to the point of believing that this must be the Messiah. And this Messiah, whom he was growing to love and respect, also seemed to have confidence in him, Peter, the fisherman from Galilee. He called him a 'Rock', he encouraged him to speak out, he treated him as a trusted friend..... Peter promised himself he would do anything for Jesus....

And then his whole world crashed around him, and in the space of a few days, Jesus, his Master, friend, the focus of his life, was arrested, tried, condemned and executed. And in the midst of this mayhem, Peter, the Rock, his loyal confident right-hand man completely lost it, and failed spectacularly and publicly. If ever a person knew about failure and disappointment, it was Peter: 3 years of his life wasted, his faith in Jesus obviously totally misplaced, his self-confidence shattered.

The interesting thing is that Jesus' resurrection hasn't actually solved the dilemma for these disciples. They are on this mysterious roller-coaster where Jesus appears to them, obviously alive, but obviously different, then he disappears again. They see-saw between feeling incredible joy when he's there, to worry about where he's gone. Meanwhile what are they supposed to do? They're in limbo, not sure what to believe, and Peter is still carrying round this weight of guilt and failure..... So when I ask you to imagine that peaceful scene by the lake at the beginning of John 21, I'm asking you to get your head round a whole swirling back-story of confusion, disillusion, guilt and lack of purpose. V3, with its innocently simple description, might just be the last straw for Peter - he goes back to fishing - something he's good at, something he can rely on, and he fails..... again. He can't even get that right.

And at that moment Jesus shows up. V5 *Friends, haven't you any fish?* V12 *Come and have breakfast...* He talks to them as he always did, easily, as if none of the past few weeks had happened. There is no hint of blame or criticism, and yet during the course of this chapter, Jesus addresses Peter's deep need of healing, and in so doing gives him hope for the future. But healing is painful.....When they land on the shore, what is the first thing they smell? The pungent smoke of a charcoal fire. When was the last time John links Peter with a charcoal fire? In the courtyard of the High Priest's house. It's not too far-fetched to imagine the feelings of shame and despair coming flooding back as the evocative smell takes him back there, and forces him to confront his failure. But nothing is said until a little

later when Jesus and Peter are alone, and still without blaming him, Jesus gives Peter 3 opportunities to say he loves him, 3 opportunities to cancel out the denials. Peter can't move forward until this guilt is dealt with – hope for the future has to deal with the past first.

HOPE = GOD'S HEALING OF THE PAST If we are struggling with failure, we may need to start by being honest with God about the past, and allow him to start a healing process. Forgiveness and healing of guilt or self condemnation is not easy, it's not without cost. If someone else is involved, it may demand repentance, & possibly restitution by one party, and sacrifice and pain as well as generosity by the other. Jesus had already paid a heavy price for Peter's forgiveness - he has done so for all of us. Failure can be transformed, but it may be costly.

HOPE = GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE PRESENT After the disaster of the night's fishing comes a net full to bursting, and a cooked breakfast ready on the shore. Jesus is waiting for them. He's been waiting some time, but they didn't recognize him. Hope is a gift from God. He has already provided all that is needed, and he offers us the hope, (i.e. a confident certain expectation) of a future with him, now in this life, and for ever. Failure, however disastrous it may seem, is not the end of our relationship with God, nor of his love for us. *Come and have breakfast...* Sometimes we just need to recognize him. But although he had fish there ready and waiting to be given to them, he tells them in v10 to *bring some of the fish you have just caught.....* Jesus doesn't need their contribution, but he chooses to ask for it. Jesus has done everything for our salvation, but he doesn't impose it, he asks for our response, our involvement. What a privilege to know that Almighty God accepts what we are able to offer him, and uses it in his service.

HOPE = GOD'S CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE If you let someone down, or failed in a task you were given, what would be the most encouraging words you could hear? I guess something like: 'I'd like you to have another go. Try again.' When Jesus and Peter had their private chat after breakfast, I imagine Peter wondered whether he'd be valued any more – he'd failed on so many levels. But unbelievably, Jesus still had confidence in him, still wanted him to serve him, even gave him the responsibility of encouraging and caring for others..... *feed my lambs....take care of my sheep.* Hope means that however much you've messed up, however useless you feel, Jesus still wants you on his team, still has a job for you, still trusts you to serve him - you and Jesus have a future together.

3 years earlier Peter had heard these words: *Follow me*, and it changed his life. Now he hears them again (v19) – Jesus hasn't given up on him, and there is hope for the future.

Study

Psalms 62:5-8; Isaiah 40:28-31; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 15:13.

Choose some of these passages and think/talk about your understanding of hope:

- Where does it come from?
- What are its effects?
- What might prevent us having hope?
- What might encourage us in hope?
- Why is it so important in our Christian experience?