**What Do We Do Now?**

**Scripture:** Psalm 8 and Romans 5:1-5

Easter Season has come and gone. This year, due to scheduling conflicts, I was unable to get involved in every aspect of the Easter Weekend. Maundy Thursday Service, the Cross Walk on Good Friday, and on Easter Sunday, I was at a waterpark in Orlando with the Springboro Band. However, I do recognize how important that weekend is to my faith. So, I made a point to get into the scripture and spend time reflecting on all that Christ endured, the sacrifice he made and the love that he showed His people. While doing that, however, I found myself thinking about Jesus’ disciples and what they must have been going through during that time. The emotions they felt, the questions they had, and the uncertainty of what they were to do next. I specifically thought of Peter. Not only what he experienced over those four days, but how, I suspect, he must have looked back over the previous three years and reflected in joy and sadness about the time he spent with Jesus.

So, let’s spend some time looking at Peter . . . .

Originally known as Simon, Peter was a natural-born leader and was generally considered the spokesman for the Twelve Disciples. More significantly, it was Peter who first confessed Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” when Christ asked him “who do YOU say I am.”

Peter was part of the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples, along with James and John. Only those three were present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus and when Jesus went through His transfiguration on the mountain. Peter and John were given the special task of preparing the final Passover meal.

In several instances, Peter showed himself to be impulsive, at times reckless. For example, it was Peter who left the boat to walk on the water to Jesus and promptly took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. It was Peter who took Jesus aside to rebuke Him for speaking of His death and was swiftly corrected by the Lord. It was Peter who drew his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest and was immediately told to sheath his weapon. It was Peter who boasted that he would never forsake the Lord, even if everyone else did and later denied three times that he even knew the Lord.

Through all of Peter’s ups and downs, the Lord Jesus remained his loving Lord and faithful Guide. Jesus reaffirmed Simon as Peter, which means the “Rock,” in promising that he would be instrumental in establishing Jesus’ Church.

Then it happened, Christ was put on trial and was crucified on the cross. What a horrifying ordeal it must have been. Rightfully so, we usually focus on the brutality that Jesus had to endure that day. But what was the experience like for Peter and the disciples? Did it make it any easier that Christ told them in advance what was going to happen and reassured them that he would rise from the grave? – probably not. Then came the morning after Christ was crucified and was buried in the tomb. I can only imagine how emotionally drained the disciples must have felt. And, for Peter, the overwhelming guilt he carried for denying Christ so adamantly. I can visualize them looking at each other asking, “What do we do now?” Is this the end, do we speak up and possibly risk our own lives, do we wait until things settle, or do we go back to what we use to do before we met Him?

Thankfully, the story does not end there. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and began to answer those questions. He specifically named Peter as one who needed to hear the good news and made a special point of forgiving and restoring Peter, re-commissioning him as an apostle.

On the day of Pentecost, as Pastor Suzanne shared last week, Peter was the main speaker to the crowd in Jerusalem, and the Church began with an influx of about 3,000 new believers. Later, Peter healed a lame beggar and preached boldly before the Sanhedrin, the 71 member high council of the ancient Jews. Even arrest, beatings, and threats could not dampen Peter’s resolve to preach the risen Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit!

You may be thinking, “those were different times, Peter and the disciples actually spent time with Christ on earth, how does this relate to us?”

If you think about it, our faith journey may have followed a similar path as Peters. We may not have walked side by side with Christ, but we know a great deal about Him thanks to the four gospels. If you are like me, you grew up in the church, attending Sunday School, worship, youth group, small groups, bible study, hearing the stories and lessons of Jesus, learning about how he healed the sick, cared for those in need, reached out to sinners, loved everyone, everything the disciples had witnessed. For some, your journey may just beginning, but at some point in our lives, we understand who Jesus really was and will or have confessed that he “is Christ, the son of the Living God”.

Through the power of the holy spirit, we have the choose to become active in our faith and get involved in the life and outreach of the church, as if we are part of Christ’s inner circle.

Because of our human nature, however, we too make impulsive decisions. We appear to be brave, confident in our faith, even outspoken, then doubt might set in, questions linger and, like Peter, we begin to sink, only to have Christ lift us up and put us back on our feet, ready to start again.

We recognize that through our ups and downs, the good times and the bad, Jesus continues to love us, faithfully guiding us. But, haven’t we also denied Christ through our words and actions?

And, what does Christ do? He forgives us, He encourages us to seek Him, and asks us, no matter how unworthy we are, to follow Him and share the good news with others.

So, I ask you, what do we do now? I believe the answer is quite simple. But, achieving the task is where the challenge lies. Allow me to offer these ideas . . .

1) First of all, PRAISE HIM! Praise Him in everything you do, it’s not enough to just come to worship every Saturday night or Sunday morning. Glorifying God should be our daily mission and reflect in every aspect of our daily lives. Also, remember to praise Him even during the difficult times of your life, for this is when your faith can grow the strongest.

James 1 says **“**Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.”

It’s taken me a while to fully understand what James meant by this statement, but I know that when I have made an effort to Praise God during trials in my life, that I have come out of that trial with a stronger faith and have experienced great joy knowing that God was with me through the entire experience. God is in control and we should continue to praise Him no matter what we are going through.

2) Keep Learning, read, not just the bible, there are many resources out there to help you better understand who God is and to strengthen your relationship with Christ. I’m not much of a reader, so what I have done over the years is get involved in bible studies, Sunday School, and small groups. I receive daily devotionals, scripture and videos through e-mail from sources like Bible Gateway, Faithit, Godvine, & K-Love.

3) Pray – a good, healthy relationship requires regular, meaningful communication. Have daily conversations with God.

1 Thessalonian 5 says “Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

2 Chronicles 7 says if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

And, if you think your prayers are one sided, well then, your just not listening. Pause in silence and take time to listen.

4) Seek forgiveness and repent of your sins, change your behavior, turn away from sin that separate you from God – Christ used his body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. All you need to do is ask.

5) Help those in need. Jesus made it clear in his teachings that we should “feed the hungry, provide nourishment for the thirsty, clothe the naked, be hospitable to strangers, and visit those who are sick or imprisoned”. This is how you share the love of Christ to others.

6) Share the good news of Jesus Christ. Don’t keep it to yourself. Let’s expand His Kingdom by looking for opportunities to share the gospel. When that door opens, be willing to walk through it. Ignoring it or keeping your mouth shut out of fear is like shutting the door in the face of a possible new believer. Never be ashamed of your faith and always be ready to share the gospel, for you never know when that opportunity might come.

In closing, I want to bring this all together by sharing an excerpt of Paul’s letter to the Romans. This is Romans 12:9-21:

**9**Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. **10**Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. **11**Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. **12**Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. **13**When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

**14**Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them. **15**Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. **16**Live in harmony with each other. Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all!

**17**Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. **18**Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

It is my hope that God’s word, his son, Jesus Christ, will reflect in all we do and say. And that the Holy Spirit will guide us as we do our part in spreading the good news and building the church that Peter began so many years ago. Amen.

**Benediction**

 May God, our Creator, who crowns each of us with glory and honor,

 Christ Jesus who bears our pain and shows us the Way,

 And the Holy Spirit who gives us light and life,

 Go with you and fill you with strength, courage, hope, and love.

 Amen.