

WEDNESDAY 20 April 2022 "Peter's reflection"

Matt. 17:1-9

Good morning my 'Walking with Jesus' friends,

In the week following that first Easter, we only have one documented event in the Gospel accounts and that was on Sunday evening one week after Easter when the disciples were together again, and Jesus appeared to them. (John 20:26-29) *Therefore I assume each of the disciples and close friends of Jesus spent that entire week really searching their own hearts, and talking together about the experiences they'd each had with Jesus over these past several months together?* What did they remember about the miracles and His teachings? What about the events of the past couple of weeks leading up to Passover/Easter? What did it all mean? And the big, practical question... **what now?** *What would life be for each of them now?*

Let's spend today with Peter. If anyone was having serious heartburn a few days after Easter weekend I think it would have been Peter. Why? Oh, I'm sure you can imagine. Peter had been among the three disciples Jesus often invited with Him for very special experiences. Like the almost unexplainable experience Jesus, Peter, James and John had up on a mountain when suddenly Jesus was 'transfigured' before them. Matthew 17:2 says **"Jesus' face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. While they were speaking a bright cloud covered them and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!' When Peter, James and John heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified."** (Matt. 17:1-6)

The words used to describe this scene are clear, but can we really understand this scene? Can you explain to me what was happening here? Moses and Elijah, of course, were two of the greatest prophets in Israel's history. Their stories would have been well known to Peter. How they were recognized, I don't know, for of course no one had any pictures of them. *Moses had been dead almost 1400 years and Elijah about 850 years.* Do you remember that both of these great heroes of Israel had ended their earthly journey in unusual ways? Moses had climbed Mount Nebo at God's instruction and invitation. Deuteronomy 34 simply tells us Moses died up there with God, and God buried Moses, but no one knows where. Elijah was walking and talking with Elisha when suddenly Elijah was swept up to heaven in a whirlwind with chariots and horses of fire, according to 2 Kings 2:11. I assume both Moses and Elijah had amazing physical appearances on this mountain like transfigured Jesus.

And the cloud that enveloped them... does that sound familiar? How many times did Moses enter the cloud on Mount Sinai to meet and speak with God?

We don't know what Moses, Elijah and Jesus were talking about in this shocking experience, but *we do know a voice was heard and by the words used, it was apparently God the Father speaking about God the Son and challenging Peter, James and John to listen carefully to everything He told and taught them.* I wonder if God was especially speaking to Peter who too often spoke, sometimes brashly, with apparently little thought before he spoke. In fact, Peter did just that here on this mountain with Jesus, Elijah and Moses! Matthew records Peter blurted **"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah."** (Matt. 17:4) Have you ever done that my friends? Said something really dumb when you didn't know what to say and probably should not have said anything?

As these three fishermen disciples were lying on the ground, probably trembling in fear, the scene reminds me of the many times Moses and Aaron lay face down on the ground before the **"Tent of Meeting"**, when in crisis situations with the Hebrew slaves that they were trying to lead, God was demonstrating His power and great glory in frightening ways. Numbers 16:22; 20:6 are two examples. *May I ask friends, have you ever had an encounter with God that is so far outside the norm that you simply lay prostrate on the ground before God in worship, awe and perhaps fear?*

As they were coming down the mountain that amazing day, Jesus had said to Peter, James and John **"Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."** (Matt. 17:9) I wonder if now, three days after Jesus' resurrection, Peter was remembering this unexplainable mountain experience and wondering if he should tell someone? I doubt it. Who would believe Peter? *I think Peter was so ashamed of himself, having denied he even knew Jesus, that his heart could only think about one thing: would Jesus ever forgive Peter? That question was weighing heavy on Peter's heart every day, maybe every hour.* Oh, how he desperately wanted some private time with Jesus to discuss his terrible failure around the fire in the courtyard of the High Priest last Thursday night while Jesus was on trial!

Could it be my friend, that is where you are today? Three days after glorious Easter, are you possibly struggling with some sense of failure or great disappointment in yourself? As clearly as Peter remembered the emotions and words he had spoken in fear **"I tell you, I don't even know the man..."** (Matt. 26:74), he also remembered Jesus washing his feet in the upper room, and later warning Peter he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster's crow. And in both those personal moments, as always, Jesus only showed Peter unconditional love. No bitterness, no anger, no judgment. *So now, in his grief and shame I believe Peter was not as much fearful about Jesus' condemnation of him for his denials, as he was hungry for some time alone with Jesus to repent and get their relationship restored.*

My friends, may I ask us all to reflect today about each of our relationships with Jesus. Is there anything blocking an outpouring of Jesus' love into your life today?

Anything you and the risen Jesus need to talk about so you can be living in the full joy of knowing the resurrected Jesus is your Savior, your friend, your Master, and you and He are walking this journey of life in a joyful, wonderful relationship? Like Peter, do you have a great personal story of your experience with Jesus that you are ready to share with someone this Easter week?

Oh, Peter had a great story to tell, but he needed to get over his failure and shame first. We know that finally happened in a wonderful way when Peter and Jesus and six other disciples had breakfast together on the beach as recorded in John 21. *Peter was forgiven, restored into relationship, and even commissioned by Jesus in a wonderful way, to take Jesus' story to the world.* Oh, the healing power of Jesus' forgiveness, have you experienced it my friend? Jesus is always ready for that conversation, even right now, with you, wherever you are in the world.

And here's a song to celebrate your story... and I hope you'll tell your story to someone this week!

Today's Scripture is Matthew 17:1-9.