



Last Sunday we came to the end of our post-Easter series on 'meeting the risen Jesus.' We put ourselves in Peter's shoes and thought about the difference that following the risen Jesus makes for us now as Christians. We asked ourselves to think of past events or current circumstances which prevent us from fully following Jesus and we were encouraged to remember ...

For the past which lies behind us Jesus forgives

John 21 deals with some unfinished business between Jesus and Peter. Peter, who declared that he would lay down his life for Jesus denied him three times at his trial. Peter knows his mistakes and Jesus takes the opportunity to bring reconciliation with Peter. Jesus asks him if he loves him three times to match his three denials. Peter reassures Jesus of his love for him and Jesus shows he forgives by commissioning him to 'feed my sheep'.

For the future which lies ahead of us Jesus commissions

Jesus' commission for Peter was to be the one to take care of God's people when Jesus had ascended into Heaven. Jesus also tells Peter that one day he will face another occasion when he will have the opportunity to give his life for Jesus. Jesus describes the kind of death which Peter will endure which will bring glory to God.

In the circumstances which are around us Jesus is in charge

Peter's first thought after hearing the kind of death he will suffer is to ask Jesus about John, the disciple Jesus loved. Jesus tells Peter to 'mind his own business.' What will happen to John is of no concern to how Peter must follow Jesus. Peter has his commission from Jesus and John has his. They are both important and needed for the growth of the church. Peter must focus on his walk with the Lord Jesus.

Here are a few questions to start discussion off - as always, feel free to adapt for your group

Questions

A) - Set the scene, how do you think Peter is feeling at the beginning of our passage?
 - What are the thoughts you think may be going round his head?

- Why does Jesus ask Peter the same question three times, what is his purpose?
- Why does Jesus call him Simon, son of John?
- Why focus on Peter, because in different ways, most, if not all the disciples denied Jesus or ran away at his trial?
- What do you think John is telling us in verse 17 about Peter being hurt? What is Jesus doing with in Peter's heart?

- Are there things in your past which you feel keep you from following Jesus, or create a barrier between you and Jesus? Have you brought them to Jesus?
- What does Jesus' response to Jesus teach us about forgiveness?

B) - What is the commission Jesus gives to Peter and how do we see this fulfilled in the rest of the NT?

- What does it mean for him and church leaders today to feed/take care of Jesus' lambs/sheep?
- Why do you think Jesus chooses to describe Peter's future death in the way he does in verse 18?
- How does the death (martyrdom) of a Christian glorify God?

- Do you believe that God has a plan for your life? What principles does the Bible give for us to know what that is?

- What are the costs of Christian discipleship? Do the costs ever keep you from following Jesus fully? If so why and what can we do about it?

C) - Discuss the rivalry between Peter and John in John's gospel? How has God gifted them both in different ways?

- How does Jesus respond to Peter's question, 'what about him?'

- In what ways are you tempted to focus on other people's Christian walk/service rather than your own? How does this distract you from following Jesus fully?

- What needs to change in our hearts and minds if we are negatively (sinfully) comparing and contrasting our ministries, gifts, character, resources, time etc with others?