

I guess my message from last week about grace touched off some great conversations at your homes this past week... In case anyone is pushing the envelope on your grace meter I would encourage you to challenge them with Romans 6 where Paul writes that we should not continue sinning so that grace may abound. Here is a gentle reminder: while your grace is unlimited; those who receive grace and truly understand the impact of the grace take the steps necessary to avoid needing to seek more grace. Just a few thoughts...and if you wonder what I'm talking about check out last Sunday's sermon on our website at LinglestownLife.org

I love the message of Easter! It is a message of God's grace and love for us demonstrated in Jesus conquering sin and death to rise victorious over the grave.

During Easter we celebrate that in Jesus' resurrection we find hope and the promise of life after death. That is one of the greatest messages that we have to share with the world!

However, many Christians get so caught up in thinking about life after death that we forget that the message of the resurrection is about the transformation of life- NOW!

The message of the resurrection is simple: you get a second chance at life TODAY! If Jesus' resurrection only had to do with heaven then we would have been whisked away to heaven after becoming a believer. But since we don't get relieved from this life; it must mean that Jesus expects his resurrection to make an impact on his followers TODAY and every day!

But many times we don't live with the confidence that the resurrection can make an impact on our daily lives. We think that we don't deserve to be a part of what Jesus calls his disciples to be about because of something we've done. We don't think we deserve a second chance.

That was certainly the case for one disciple.

He believed in the resurrection. He had seen the empty tomb- he had seen the resurrected Jesus with his own eyes; but after what he had done was there enough grace to change his life TODAY? Could or would Jesus give him a second chance? Could grace forgive his act of betrayal; Would the resurrection of Jesus give him a second chance at life TODAY?

Let's look at Peter's story from John 21.

v. 3 Sounds to me like Peter went back to what he knew; what he was familiar with from his days before becoming one of Jesus disciples. And it wasn't only Peter who went

back to fishing- he led six other disciples back to the boats. This motley crew of disciples who had abandoned Jesus at his greatest moment of need probably didn't know what to do since they had failed their Master.

I think that is often the pattern that we take. We make commitments, we determine to follow Jesus, we begin to make life-change; but then it all goes south. We don't live up to our commitments; we lose Jesus in the midst of all the other competing priorities of life; and that changed life fails to materialize as we slip back into the habits that have been so much a part of our daily life.

Like Peter, we don't see ourselves as candidates for a second chance. So we quietly slip back into the old way of living- forgetting that grace means we are given a second chance!

John then details the experience of these 7 disciples.

These washed up disciples had spent a night on the sea without catching any fish; but then Jesus arrives on the shore. In what looks and sounds vaguely familiar to the first time Jesus called Peter to become a fisher of men; Jesus told the men to cast their nets onto the other side of the boat.

According to this passage it was John who first realized that the man standing on the shore was Jesus. And when John told Peter, Peter leapt out of the boat like he did when Jesus had invited him to walk on the water!

Peter was still passionate about Jesus; Peter was still bold and spontaneous (that was just who Peter was) and he was all that and more when it came to Jesus. But in his flurry of excitement I wonder if Peter had given any thought to how similar this moment was to the first time Jesus had called him?

I believe Jesus chose this moment, this place, to purposefully remind Peter of who he was called to be; what his real purpose was in life? God had not created Peter to be a fisherman; but a fisher of men! Peter was to be a bold, passionate proclaimer of God's power to change lives- to give people a second chance! And who better to demonstrate that grace gives us a second chance!

I know when I fail, when I betray my words to Jesus; that I don't feel like I am worthy of Jesus love. But grace reminds me that I am loved; that I am given a second chance- that God still has a purpose and plan for my life and that God's grace is sufficient to enact a transformation in my life TODAY!

Up to this point Peter must have been a jumble of emotions. In the Garden of Gethsemane he had bravely drawn his sword to defend Jesus from a cohort of Roman

soldiers; but when a mere servant girl asked him if he was one of Jesus disciples he had denied even knowing Jesus.

Peter could not escape his label- betrayer. Yes, Jesus was alive; but Peter could not see himself again as the Rock upon which Jesus said he would build his church. When Peter looked at himself he saw a betrayer, a deserter, a doubter, a failure.

But the resurrection reminds us that we don't need to wear that old label!

You might have noticed that you have a name label in your worship folder this morning. I don't want you to do anything with that label right now, but I'd like you to think about the words that label you. Words like: failure, stupid, no good, fat, ugly...

Think about that label this week. Don't tuck it away and forget about it; but take a moment between now and next Sunday to think about the label that you wear. Maybe it is one of those words we've mentioned. Maybe it is a word that others have placed on you or that you have placed on yourself. I would encourage you-as hard as it may be, to write something on that label and then to bring it back with you next Sunday. Next week we're going to talk about how grace releases us from the power of those labels.

I guarantee you that you will not walk out of here next Sunday with that label and you'll find the freedom of God's grace to transform you into someone new!

Peter's second chance- Peter's encounter with grace- begins in what I envision as a walk down the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This is a place where Peter and Jesus had probably walked countless times before. But this time was different; this time Jesus had a grand purpose.

Read v. 15-17

Do you see what Jesus is attempting to do? He's not making Peter relive the pain and heartbreak of those three denials; Jesus is bringing grace into Peter's pain and hurt. With each invitation to return to his place in Jesus kingdom; Jesus is offering Peter an opportunity to experience a personal resurrection- a second chance. Jesus is demonstrating to Peter the power of the resurrection to change a life TODAY!

I wonder if Peter understood what Jesus was doing. I wonder if Peter thought with each question from Jesus, "You know I love you; but what you're asking me to do...how could I ever be that person?"

Do you ever question Jesus image of who you are and the purpose that he has for your life? Remember that when Jesus sees you it is through the lens of grace- he doesn't see you stained with sin or damaged from the mistreatment of the world or as a failure-

Jesus sees you by his grace as someone he loves, someone with a greater purpose, someone worthy of a second chance.

The message of the resurrection is that you and I, like Peter, get a second chance, TODAY! We don't have to wait for heaven to begin living like the new creation that grace enables us to become.

Think about Peter for a moment after this encounter where grace gives him a second chance.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter would be the one disciple who stood up and proclaimed the Gospel in the very streets where Jesus had carried his cross. The result of that experience with grace; 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus!

This same Peter, who coward at the words of a servant girl, boldly declared to the very men who had crucified Jesus; that he would not stop proclaiming the name of Jesus! The result was a church emboldened in their proclamation.

If that is the impact of the resurrection on Peter's life; think about what could happen in your life and in the life of the church if we begin to live in the power of the resurrection- if we live as those who by grace have a second chance at life!