

**Youth Sunday
May 1, 2011**

Youth Readers - Andrea Raab, Victoria Stansberry, Jennifer Erickson, David Lonowski, Kori Klinglesmith, Mercedes Walsh, Becky Torrey, Anne Lonowski, Hannah Wright

Listen to this word from the Gospel of Matthew about Jesus and his disciple Simon Peter.
Matthew 16:13-19

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Now we will read from the Gospel of Mark. This passage is about an even that took place some months after Peter called Jesus the Messiah. Now we see a totally different Peter. Listen to this word.

Mark 14:66-72

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I do not know or understand what you are talking about.' And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.' But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know this man you are talking about.' At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept.

Now listen to a contemporary interpretation about the disciple Peter. In this reading, Peter himself will be speaking to us.

Dramatic Reading: *The Rock of God*

I'm the one who said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God," and then Jesus changed my name to the Rock and said that he would build his church on that rock. Peter the rock? I crumbled like limestone. Three times I crumbled, like a stone under the carver's chisel, chip, chip chipped away at, only to reveal a flaw in the stone, a flaw that reveals the rock is a waste, unable to be used by the mason. I was so ashamed. How could I have thought my reputation was more important than his? They mocked him, spit on him, beat him and killed him, and I hid. No, not just hid. I denied that he was important to me. I denied that I knew him. I denied that I believed he was the savior, my savior. My tears were bitter, knowing that he would never be able to use me. He could never build

his church using me. I failed and was useless to him. This rock would never serve the foundation set by the cornerstone. After he was crucified and buried, I went to be with the other disciples. That's when the women ran in telling us the news, that he had risen. They had seen an angel who had told them the good news, but that was not good news for me. Until they told me that the angel said to them, "Go tell his disciples and Peter..." And Peter! I was still his rock, and it was true that he is the Christ, the son of the living God.

Listen now to the word from the Gospel of John.

John 21:1-14

After the resurrection, and appearances in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Now we have a contemporary reading based on the Scripture about the disciple Peter. A disciple friend who stayed in the boat when Peter jumped out is speaking:

Dramatic Reading: *Swimming to Shore*

Hey! Hey Peter man, how's it going? Are you okay out there? How's the current? All right, Peter man, that's cool. Holler if you need me. Look at that guy go! Swimming like a regular Olympic athlete! Well, his form's a little odd, I guess, but he seems to be making good time. Well, even if he does get sick, the good news is that Jesus is on the shore, and he can heal him, right? At least I think that's Jesus. That's who Peter man said it was, anyway, as he stripped off his cloak and dove over the side. He's going to feel real dumb if it isn't. Peter man's always been that way. A couple of years ago, a similar situation. We were on a boat in a storm, and there was Jesus walking on the water. So Peter man, bold as he could be, steps out of the boat to walk on water too. Of course, he took his

eyes off of Jesus for just a second, and started to sink, but Jesus was right there to grab him. Such a rare moment, really, Peter man taking his eyes off of Jesus. He's been passionate about following Jesus since the day they first met. Always the most bold and outspoken and the quickest to insert his foot in his mouth. And yet, Peter man's the one that Jesus said he would use as the cornerstone of his church. I don't know, it just seems like such an unstable foundation to me. But God chose him. There's something different about Peter man than the rest of us. Sure, he fell away the night that Jesus was betrayed, but no one among us would question his commitment. He's been a follower from Day One. He'll follow till the day he dies. And it's not just the way he follows Jesus, but that he does it with such passion. He loves Jesus so much, as if his very life depends on it. Good job, Peter. You made it, buddy. He made it. And here I am. I stayed safe in the boat. All of us, sitting in the boat watching. Makes a person wonder. What kind of disciple to I want to be?

Hear the word as it comes to us through the Book of Acts.

Acts 2:36-42

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd gathered in Jerusalem. 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Now listen to a contemporary reading. We will hear a Jerusalem reporter interviewing a witness to the new role of Peter, some weeks after that first Easter morning. Peter is different now. He has become the leader of the followers of Jesus. He is the leader of the church that was now forming. He has been transformed.

Dramatic Reading: *The Transformation*

---First, I want to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for Jerusalem People Magazine. You're a friend of this man Peter, as well as a witness to the recent events involving Jesus of Nazareth. Is this correct?

---That's correct. Peter's a good friend, and although his fame is spreading, he's very human. A real down-to-earth kind of guy.

---One thing I'd like to clear up is the matter of his being chosen as a disciple. Are you aware of any reason why Jesus selected him to be the one?

---I don't believe so. I'm not saying his choice was random. I believe that Peter, like the others, was chosen to be a disciple because of what was in his heart, and for his potential to truly live out his faith.

---Okay, but he had some setbacks along the way, didn't he? I mean, he wasn't always the go-to guy he is now. I hear he even denied Jesus when things got tough. How did he overcome a big mistake like that? How did he then become such a strong leader for the followers of Jesus?

---Well, as you know, no one is perfect. Except of course Jesus. Anyone else is flawed and makes mistakes, including Peter. He made mistakes and they tore him up inside, but he learned from them and prayed for guidance to do better.

---Yeah, okay. I know that. So just why is Peter the head honcho? Why is he the one in the corner office? The rock of the church and all that?

---Oh, you mean the rock on which the church is built? On earth, Jesus trusted Peter and tested him as well. Earlier, I said that Jesus chose Peter as a disciple for what was in his heart, and for his potential to live out his faith. Peter's relationship with Jesus stirred up that potential and that faith, and eventually transformed him. But first he was tested and he made that mistake of denying Jesus that we've already talked about. But after that night, Peter came through stronger than ever. He was definitely the one who was just right to become the leader of the followers of Jesus the Christ.

---Let me see if we're on the same wavelength here. You're saying that Peter had faith in Jesus, but that was only after he totally failed Jesus that he became strong enough to use the potential that he'd seen in him all along?

---Exactly. He was transformed by his faith, and even his failure, to be strong enough to lead our early church and spread God's love and Christianity to others.

---Too bad that transformation stuff is only for the original disciples, huh!

---But it isn't. Because of what Jesus did for all of us, believers everywhere are constantly being transformed and shaped to God's purpose. Faith and testing and change any of us.

---You mean, we can all be transformed as well? I mean, even after making some big mistakes?

---Exactly.

---That's good news. Thanks a lot for explaining this to me. It's going to be a great article.

---Thank you. Your article will help to continue Peter's work. We're all called through faith to transformation and new beginnings, and to spread the good news about Jesus to everyone else.

---Thanks be to God. Amen.

(Rev.) The youth choir's going to do their anthem, and I just want to say that I was so excited when I was asked to help the youth with their music. Getting to be part of the youth band when you're as old as I am is something of a treat. I wanted to find an anthem that would be appropriate for the kids and one that they would like, and this one we're going to do next, the words touched me because it made me think of the youth group because our youth program was struggling a little bit, earlier this year, and if anyone went to the youth dinner theater that happened earlier, I think you might agree with me that it was an amazing miracle that happened because of faith. People came together and put that together and it became a collection of something that was greater than any individual that was in it. This song talks about the power of faith, and that's why I think it's a great anthem for our kids today, and I think this Youth Sunday is another miracle that's happening because of the people in it and their leaders.