

Thursday May 7th – Reflection on Peter – Sarah Penfold

This week's reflection is about Peter. Peter who met with the risen Jesus after a fishing trip on the Sea of Galilee. Peter who was asked by Jesus to lead his church.

But how did he feel about that?

Why me?

Yes, I know that I had been there from the beginning. But so had James and John, and my brother Andrew – the Galilee lads they called us. All recruited together. We just left our families and followed.

And what an extraordinary time we had. For some reason James and John and I were often singled out. I could see why they might be – pushy mother. They are confident and exuberant. But why me and not Andrew. I'm not quick-witted or educated. I only know fishing.

Why me?

The things we saw, and did. He sent us out to preach and to heal. We were there when a great storm hit the lake and He calmed it with a word. When He fed thousands of people. Then on the mountain when Moses and Elijah appeared. O shame on me. I put my big mouth in it as usual. Shall we build some tents I said, when any sensible person would have stayed silent. I'm blushing now just at the thought of it.

Why did it have to be me?

And then at the end. It had started so well. That parade into Jerusalem. He was sitting on a donkey. People were shouting 'Hosanna', they were waving palm branches, welcoming Him. I really thought that this was the moment. This was the start of a new world.

But how mistaken was I? As we met for the Passover meal something was wrong. Our Lord seemed distracted but somehow resolute. He insisted on washing our feet. I tried to reason with Him, but no, He would do it.

He talked a lot as we ate and then it began to fall apart. He told us that Judas would betray Him. That He would only be with us a little while longer. I said I would follow Him, lay down my life for Him. And He turned and told me, told them all that before the cock crows I would deny I knew Him.

Why me? Why would I do that?

He took us to a garden and went aside to pray. I didn't even manage to stay awake, too much food and Passover wine I suppose, but as He prayed, we dozed.

Why couldn't I even keep watch with Him?

As the soldiers led Him away, I followed. Followed to the high Priest's house. And it was there that it happened. I managed to get into the courtyard but people wouldn't leave me alone. 'You were with him' they said. 'We can tell by your voice, you were with him'. 'No', I said, 'No, I don't know Him', and the cock crowed. Three times I denied knowing Him, three times and He knew it, knew that it would happen. I fled, weeping.

Why? Why could I not even be honest about this marvellous man? Why do I always get it wrong?

They found Him guilty. That was always the plan. But He had no-one to speak up for Him. I should have done but in my cowardice I had denied knowing Him and fled. Three times I denied Him, not just the once. They crucified Him like a common criminal. It was my fault. At least I could have tried.

Why do I never get things right?

I avoided the others. I could hardly bear to be with myself. Let alone anyone else. What would they say to me? Jesus had singled me out but when it mattered, I had let Him down – badly.

In the end I had to go back to them, risk their recriminations, face up to my failings. But they were all wrapped up in their own grief, they had no time for my sensitivity.

Mary brought the message – ‘Go to Galilee. He will meet you there.’ So we went but not knowing what to do while we waited we did what we knew. We went fishing. All night we tried. Caught nothing. Didn’t really care. We were about to give up when this stranger shouted from the shore to, ‘try putting the net the other side of the boat’. It seemed a cheek really a stranger thinking he knew better, but I had no heart for an argument and there was nothing to lose. We tried. The net came back bulging with fish.

It was John who noticed first. ‘It’s Jesus’. And what did this old fool do? I was overjoyed and jumped into the sea to reach Him quickly.

Why is it always me? Peter the impetuous.

He had cooked fish and while the others ate He took me along the shore. ‘Do you love me?’ He asked. All the guilt flooded back. Where had I been when He needed me? Why had I denied that I knew Him?

Why?

I wanted to say so much, to apologise, to tell him that I really did care but all I managed was a fumbled, ‘Yes, you know that I do’. He told me, ‘Feed my lambs’. Three times he asked as if to remind me that I had denied Him three times. Three times I told Him, ‘Yes’. Finally I understood that he wanted me to carry on when he had gone - to teach and to heal.

Why me?

I’m not educated. I get things wrong. When it mattered I got scared and ran away, like I did that night. I say the wrong things at the wrong time. I’m no leader. I only know fishing. Why not ask one of the others? But I’ve promised now. I’ve said I’ll do it. I must do it.

O Lord. Why me?

Loving God. There are times when we feel like Peter, asked to do a task for which we feel inadequate, confident that others would do it better. Help us to understand that we do not always know our own strengths, and to take up the challenge confident in your guidance and support. Amen