

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 30<sup>th</sup> August 2009

## The Apprentice – The Test - John 21: 15 - 25



### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The ultimate test for each one of us is to follow Jesus right to the very end of our mortal lives. Through this poignant story of Peter's encounter with Jesus by the Sea of Galilee, we understand how testing, forgiveness, recommissioning and reinstating Peter enable him to pass the ultimate test. We also see the importance of recognising the presence of Jesus, the need for obedience, and the need to take a leap of faith. Today's notes touch 5 key points which are implied in the passage:

**1. 'a barrier to be removed'**, That Jesus talks with Peter in the presence of the others is important, because what Jesus is doing is publicly reinstating Peter after the public disgrace of his denials. Read v15. Jesus doesn't address him as Peter, the rock, because he had failed to live up to that name. Jesus is facing Peter with his own limitations so that he might entrust himself in a new way to Christ's leadership. Simon on his own will always be Simon. He has no capacity of himself to rise beyond that. But Simon trusting in Jesus is Peter—the-rock from whose witness and leadership the church will receive its foundation. Jesus asks Peter *do you love me?* Jesus asked him the question three times. He commissions Peter with these words *"Feed my lambs;" "Take care of my sheep;" "Feed my sheep"*. The significance of this is that Peter is being called to undo his previous denials. With Peter's response to Jesus questions, the barrier of sin and failure is removed. The barrier of the past is removed and Jesus recommissions and reinstates Peter before his brothers.

**2. 'a responsibility to be accepted'**, The experience of being forgiven clears the way for serving Jesus. Peter restored, is Peter recommissioned. Jesus' concern is not just for Peter's welfare and self confidence; he is also genuinely concerned for the fledgling church which is coming into being. So Peter is directed to his work as we have already seen *"Feed my lambs;" "Take care of my sheep;" "Feed my sheep"*. To pass the test, following Jesus and loving him means accepting responsibility for Jesus' people. Commitment to Christ involves us all in a commitment to his church. Genuine New Testament conversion means not only turning to and accepting Christ. It also means turning to and accepting the body of Christ; to where we are called.

**3. 'a cross to be carried'**, Read verses 18 & 19. Jesus prophetically prepares Peter for his eventual martyrdom. Peter was enabled by Christ to follow Jesus to the ultimate end, knowing suffering and pain but at the same time he knew that Jesus would be waiting for him. Jesus had made clear to his disciples much earlier 'the man who hates, that is views his life in this world as secondary, will keep it for eternal life. 'Whoever serves me must follow me'

**4. 'a partnership to be maintained'** Peter having received the Lord's commission immediately wants to know what the Lord has planned for *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. Jesus in response in effect tells Peter to mind his own business. It's a very human reaction, but as Jesus points out it's also wrong. We are not called to interfere, judge or get involved in any way with another's walk unless we are expressly invited to and then only with great sensitivity and reserve. Their calling and gifts may be different; their instincts and even their convictions may be different but in the end our focus must be on Jesus. We are called to maintain our partnership with Jesus, to whom we must give account

**5. 'a destination to be attained.'** Jesus speaks of our Christian hope for the future by referring to his return. One of the things that Jesus continually stressed, as John records it, is the presence of the Kingdom of God in the here and now. Now by faith in Christ, we enter the kingdom, now we receive eternal life, now we escape the world, now we pass from darkness into light. The King is coming, and that crowning encounter is our ultimate destination. 'He will come again.' When he returns the glories that we now discern by faith will be replaced by the glories opened to sight. Until then we are called to follow him. Will we pass the test when our final judgement comes? Will we *"Feed his lambs;" "Take care of his sheep;" "Feed his sheep"*. We may not do it perfectly, but we can ask him to help us, confident that he has promised that 'all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'



### Witness: questions to discuss

**Guidance:** Before discussion read the Bible passage, ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider one or two questions below – don't feel you have to use them all! Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.

Spend some time in quiet reflection about ways in which you have found your failures have been overcome in Christ.

What would you say to someone who thought they could live a Christian life without being committed to a body of Christian people?

In what ways do we need to regard our own lives as secondary in comparison to eternal life?

Spend some time encouraging each other in discerning our calling and gifts and then pray for one another.

How do we feel when faced with the question; "Will we pass the test when the final judgement comes? "