

# 17.06.18am

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you could turn back in your Bibles, please, to John chapter 21. And as we go there, we pray once more for a moment.

Lord, with the psalmist, we are able to say that our hearts and our souls cry out. And we pray this morning that as we come to the Word of God, that the God of the Word would meet with us. And minister to us in our souls. Bring satisfaction, we pray. Bring salvation. Bring us into a closer walk with yourself. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're coming to the end of John's Gospel.

And we're coming to the end of the account in John's Gospel of the way that Jesus is ministering to. And he's dealing with Peter. Now, when we think about books and when we think about films, there's something very unsatisfactory about a sad ending to a story.

[ 1 : 28 ] And the stories that we read and the films that we watch, we like the goodies to win. We like the bodies to be defeated. And we like the characters that we love to live happily ever after.

Possible. It's what we like. That's the longing that's within us. We like happy endings. And the question I want to consider this morning is, is that of a happy ending for Peter?

How does it all end for Peter? We've got to know him and we've got to love him in John's Gospel. We've admired him as he followed Jesus closely, as he had such zeal in his walk with God.

We've grimaced and we've looked away almost, as we saw in the last few chapters, fail Jesus and deny Jesus. And then, as Jesus comes back to him, we've looked on hopefully and then joyfully as we see Jesus going to restore him.

So, Peter, he's on a roller coaster with Jesus. It's very rare that the Christian life is just flat line. It's more like a roller coaster. There's ups and there's downs and there's bends and there's turns and it's turbulent.

[ 2 : 52 ] And we see that in Peter's Christian life and his walk with Jesus. And today's question is, how will it go for Peter from here on in?

He's been up, he's been down. Many times over, but how's it going to go from here on in? How will it end up for Peter in his Christian life?

And the question for us in application is, how will it end up for you? And how will it end up for me in our Christian life?

It's easy to start a risk. It's easy to start to follow. But do we keep on going? He's saying just a few minutes ago, through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.

I used to think in days gone by that all the dangers and toils and snares were really concentrated in the early years.

[ 4 : 05 ] I used to think that in teenage years and maybe early twenties, that's where the danger zone was. That's where we had to be very, very alert in our spiritual lives.

And I used to think that once you go into your late twenties and thirties and forties and fifties and sixties and seventies, you're in a steady place. The dangers, toils, snares, in large measure, they're past.

Life is steady. I used to think that. I don't think that anymore. I don't think that anymore.

Because I've seen more middle-aged Christians here, of course, than young Christians. And the middle years in life, which I'm now in, by observation and experience, they seem to me to be a particularly dangerous period in life.

And we find Peter here in his middle-aged years. As we hear Jesus speak to Peter, Jesus says to him, I tell you the truth.

[ 5 : 27 ] When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But when you're old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you.

This is verse 18. Someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. So Jesus is saying to Peter, you know, in the first instance, he's saying to Peter, you were younger, Peter. You're not now in your young years. And there's going to be more aged years up ahead of you. And I'm going to speak to you about what's up ahead. But you're not yet in the old years. You're in that mid-range. So Jesus says to Peter, I'm going to tell you how to live in that period. So today's message is for everyone.

It's for every age range. It's for every person. But particularly, I think, it's maybe for those who are not young and not old.

[ 6 : 33 ] But in that dangerous mid-period in life. So what was Peter to do? And what are we to do as we listen to Jesus?

Well, the first point is simply that. We have to keep on listening to Jesus. Jesus is making clear to Peter, even by virtue of the conversation, that he must keep on listening to Jesus.

Why? Well, there's many reasons why. We could have a whole sermon just to deal with that question. Why should we listen to Jesus?

Why should we stay alert? Why should we remain tuned in and listening to Jesus? Not just for this hour, but throughout our lives. But one of the reasons that readily emerges from these verses is that Jesus knows what's up ahead.

So we have to listen to him. We don't know what's around the corner. We don't know what's in the years to come. We don't know what to expect.

[ 7 : 43 ] So we're not best placed to know how to cope with this. But Jesus knows what's up ahead. We're always checking the forecast, aren't we?

We're always on XC weather. Checking the wind direction and the rainfall. We like to know what's up ahead. We like to know if it's going to be sunny and bright or if it's going to be stormy and wet. We like to know what's up ahead so we can be prepared and ready. I was on the phone to Amman yesterday for the barbecue trying to figure out, are we going to do this or are we not going to do this?

And Amman's got charts and radar, rainfall things. And he's got more to say than the man fished that used to be on the weather. And that's wise.

It's wise to listen to the experts because they help us to know how to make decisions and to be prepared for what's ahead. And Jesus knows what's up ahead. Jesus knows what's in Peter's past.

[ 8 : 42 ] He's walked with Peter over these last years and he knew Peter ever before that. He knew how impetuous and strong-willed the young Peter was and how he just did what he pleased.

That's why he says to him in verse 18, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and you went where you wanted. That was Peter's past. But Jesus also knows what's in Peter's future.

He knows what's in God's providence for Peter's old age. And Jesus says to him, when you're old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

And what that means precisely, we'll get to in a moment. But the first point to note here is simply to know that Jesus knows what's up ahead.

He knows the number of your days and mine. He knows what's contained within these days. He knows what's ahead of us.

[ 9 : 55 ] So if I'm wise, and if you're wise, we'll listen to him. And we'll keep on listening to him.

In the application here, it's not hard to figure, is it? This is not hard to understand. But this is very, very hard to live out.

We need to keep on listening to Jesus. Do you think that's too simple? Then I don't mind if you do. Because you and I will be back to it time and time again. Having regretted where we've just been. And thinking, I wish I'd listened to Jesus.

We need to keep on listening to Jesus. In our young days, we need to listen to Jesus. We need to remember our creator. And listen to our creator in the days of our youth.

[ 11 : 03 ] In our older years, when we're starting to feel weary in this world. We need to keep on listening to the sustaining, and the strengthening, and the encouraging words of Jesus.

Listen to Isaiah 46 for one example. Verse 4. Even to your old age and grey hairs, I am he, says the Lord. I am he who will sustain you.

I have made you, and I will carry you, and I will sustain you, and I will rescue you. What encouraging words for those who are in their grey hair ages.

It's coming through here. It's how much spread through the whole head, and God speaks to us. Jesus speaks to us. Words of strengthening and encouragement. And in our middle years, where there are pressures, and there are commitments that we have to meet, and there are demands in our time, more so than any other period in life, where there's so many voices, at all places and levels, constantly claiming our attention, we need to keep on, determinedly, listening to Jesus. Day by day. You need your wheat of bricks? Well, you need God's word even more. Keep listening to Jesus. Keep coming to his house.

[12:36] Keep using the opportunities that he's given us, and the freedom that we have in this country, to being with him, and being with his people. Keep on listening to Jesus, because he knows the future.

He holds the future. It's nice to see John Struthers back with us today. We were praying for him last Sunday. This time last week, he was in hospital.

And John was sharing with me, that two weeks prior, was it to that, Roddy McKenzie was preaching here, from Scalpin. And Roddy had spoken, about the fact that, we don't know what's up ahead. We don't know what's just around the corner in life. And so, we need to be trusting in, and listening to Jesus. And John was there, and he heard that. Little did he know that, just a few days later, he would be in hospital.

And he was shaken physically. But he was steady spiritually, because of the word that God had spoken, through Roddy. That was brought back to his mind, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

[13:47] He's kept steady, because of the assurance, of the safety that he had, whatever happened, because he was trusting, in Christ.

See, Jesus knows, what's ahead of us in life. He knows about, these hospital appointments, that are not in our diaries. He knows about, these crises, that hit us, that we never see coming.

And he's the one, who's able to, guide us through life. Indeed, he's the one, who's able to guide us, through death. Into life, that's everlasting. But we need to be listening to him.

We need to be trusting, in him. We need to be, putting our faith in him, and all that he's done, for us on the cross. So let me ask the question, before I move on to the second point, are you listening, to Jesus?

Is your faith, and mine, in Christ? Have we, seen our sin, and put our faith, in the one, who is able to, save us from sin, and carry us through life, and carry us through death, into life, that's everlasting.

[15:12] There's no other way, to be saved. There's no other way, to walk steady, through life. We won't be, kept from trials, but we'll be kept in trials. But we need, to be listening to, and trusting, in Jesus.

So, keep listening to Jesus. That's the, the first point for Peter. It's the first point for us, especially, those of us, in our middle years. So many voices, so many frequencies, keep on, listening to Jesus. Second point, keep glorifying Jesus. We've got three points today. Second point is, keep glorifying Jesus. verse 19, Jesus, in speaking to Peter, he said this, to indicate the kind of death, Peter would, Jesus said this, to indicate the kind of death, by which Peter, would glorify God.

Peter had, he'd strayed, he'd let Jesus down, for that period, that we've been focusing on, in the last few weeks. But Jesus restores him, comes to him.

And Peter, is now on a track, where he, would glorify God. And even in his death, Jesus says, you're going to glorify me, to your death.

[16:41] And history tells us, how Peter died. He was crucified, upside down. Because he didn't feel, worthy to be crucified, in the same way as his Lord.

That's what history records. Eusebius, the Jewish historian, not a Christian historian, but a secular Jewish historian, he writes this with Peter.

Peter seems to have, preached in Pontius, and Galatia, and Bithynia, and Cappadocia, and Asia, to the Jews, of the dispersion. And at last, having come to Rome, he was crucified, head downward. For so he himself, had asked, to suffer. He, was one, who was, led, in a direction, in which physically, he did not want to go.

That's a, euphemism, for crucifixion. They were led, to be crucified. But through his death, Peter glorified, Jesus.

[17:54] J.C. Ryle, says, it happened exactly, as his master, had predicted. Most, ecclesiastical historians, say that he suffered, martyrdom at Rome, in one of the first, persecutions, and was

crucified, with his head, diamonds.

So, history records, that Peter died, glorifying Jesus. And Jesus knew that, from way back. Think back to John 13. In John 13, Jesus, he's moving purposefully, very close to the cross. And Simon Peter, asks Jesus, Lord, where are you going?

Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. And eventually, Peter did follow, Christ, to, a cross, where he was crucified, because of his, his resolute, faith, in Jesus.

Peter's, chief end, in life, Peter's, chief end, in life, Peter's, chief end, in death, was to, glorify God, and to honour, Jesus.

[19:14] And I want to ask, the question, of you, as I have asked, the question, of myself, going through this week, is that still, your desire, and goal, and determination?

And as I might, to glorify God, first, and foremost, with our lives, to lift up Jesus.

I think in youth, there can be a great, zeal, to glorify God. I was hearing about a conversation, this week, that happened in Krolika, nursery, preschool, and, little Michael, hope you won't mind me saying this, little Michael, was having a conversation, with little Daniel John, and, they were, over in the corner, and one of the teachers, was listening in, Michael, turns to Daniel John, and he says, do you know, Jesus died for me, with the stickle bricks, and all that stuff there, mess all around him, he turns and he says, Jesus died for me, did you know that?

And Daniel John, knew and he says, he died for your sin, he died for your sin, two wee bottocks, four years old, talking theology, and Krolika, not giving, I care who's listening, teachers, are amazed, at what they're hearing, and we see that, in young people, they have this, unashamed, zeal, to speak about the Jesus, they're trusting, and in old days, when, we become more, aware of our own, mortality, we see, sometimes in people, there is, an acute sense, of wanting to glorify, the God, that they will soon meet, but in middle age years, when you and I, are juggling, so many, responsibilities, of work, and life, and home, and leisure, if we're not, intentional, we can lose, that drive, to glorify God, we can, slip into, to neutral, spiritually, and have a faith crash, Peter, has just crashed, but Jesus, comes to him, and he meets with him, and as Peter, is restored to Jesus, Peter, he recommits his life, to Jesus, to glorify Christ, maybe there's, some here, this morning, and that's what we need to do, actually, for Christians, every morning, that's what we need to do, we need to, recommit our lives, day by day, to glorifying Christ, maybe, we've been coasting along, for a while, and our time with God, has been slipping, and slipping, and our attendance, at things that would, encourage us, and give us the opportunity, to worship God, they're going down, and they're going down, and Jesus is slipping down, the priority list, in our lives, and we no longer, wake in the morning, with the desire, to hear, what has the Lord, got to say to me, in his word, and we no longer, have that desire, to get on our knees, and speak to him, we no longer, have the determination, we once had, to serve Christ, and speak to other people, of all that Jesus, has done for them, and then, through the word, of God, and then the power, of the Holy Spirit,

[22:47] Jesus comes to us, as he did to Peter, to challenge us, to repent, of our waywardness, and to recommit, our lives to him, do we need to, recommit, our lives to Christ, today, you know, for Peter, that involved death, ultimately, and for you and I, every day, actually that involves death, dying to self, dying to putting me first, Calvin, describes the Christian life, as the, the continual, mortification, of self, because it's always self, it's always me, that seeks to take Jesus, off the throne, to put me first, my leisure time, my work, my reputation, my career, my family, my ambitions, my comfort, it's always self, that is taking Jesus, down from the throne, remember when John, the Baptist, his ministry, was dwindling, in John chapter 3, and John's disciples, come to him, and say to him, you've heard about, all the people, who are leaving, and have gone over, to listen to what Jesus, is saying,

John, your fellowship, is getting smaller, and smaller, people aren't listening, to you anymore, they're all going over, to Jesus, and John's disciples, are indignant, about this, and it would have been, so easy for John, to rise up, and protest, and say, you know you're right, that's all I've done, and this is all, that's left, but John, has none of that, John knows, that people, are not looking, at him, anymore, John knows, that his sphere, of influence, is now minuscule, John knows, that everybody, is focused on, and going to Jesus, and what does John say, John says, he, Christ, must increase, I, must decrease, John's desire, and his determination, was to glorify, Christ, Peter's calling, and his renewed, desire, and determination, was to glorify,

Jesus, and your, chief end, and mine, is to glorify, Christ, and keep, glorifying, Christ, day by day, Peter, was to keep, listening to Jesus, Peter, was to keep, glorifying Jesus, day by day, for as long as he had, and he did, and finally, Peter, was to keep, focused, on Jesus, Jesus, turned to him, verse 19, and said, follow me, Peter, turned, and saw, that the disciple, whom Jesus loved, was following him, this was the one, who had leaned back, against Jesus, at the supper, and had said, Lord, who is going to betray you, when Peter saw him, he asked, Lord, what about him, and Jesus, tells Peter, follow me, that's how the conversation, begins, that's how the conversation, continues, that's how the conversation, ends,

Jesus says, follow me, and John, is there, just in the distance, and Peter, seems to be distracted, momentarily, he sees John, he says, what about John, what about him, and it was the wrong question, and yet, it's one that we, we commonly ask, it's a question, that very often, takes us off track, because it speaks into, how easily, we can become, distracted, remember one report card, that I got at school, they were never a source, of celebration, in our house, my report cards, but, there was one, that came one year, and in one of the classes, the teacher wrote, David is easily distracted, I got a blasting, for that one, because if you're easily, distracted, you don't follow, you don't follow, you don't make progress, how focused, are we, on Jesus today, this is the Lord's day, one in seven, that has been set aside, deliberately, so that we will focus, on Christ, this is God's gift to us, a day, a day, where, we are called, to be still, and know that, he is God, a day, where we focus on him, so how focused, will we be today, if we're honest,

I think we have to, to say, we struggle with it, we struggle, not to be, distracted, as our phones, beep and ping, and buzz, with messages, all through the day, our time with, the Lord is, so often interrupted, as we say, well, what about him, he just emailed me, I need to respond to, what about her, and the message, that she just sent, what about him, says Peter, Jesus is with him, and yet, Peter's looked away, you say, what about him, and the Lord, says to Peter, verse 22, if I want him, to remain alive, until I return, what is that to you, you must follow me, no distractions Peter, my plans for John, Peter are not your business, keep focused on me, says Jesus, to Peter, and keep focused on me, says Jesus, to us, keep focused, on me, don't you find, that every time, you try to read the Bible, and pray, your mind, is in overdrive, mine certainly is,

[ 29 : 48 ] Jesus, I think about, I think about this person, I didn't visit, I think about that person, that I did, and how it went, I think about, this job, that's half done, and the prayer meeting, that's not yet prepared, and the meeting, that's coming up next week, and my mind, is saying to me, what about, all these people, and all these things, things, and Jesus says to me, through this passage, what is that to you, you, follow me, you focus on me, so busy middle aged people, are we doing this, if we have so much work, and study, and kids clubs, to run around between, that we are too busy, to take time, to listen to, and focus on, Jesus, then we're simply too busy, things have to change, we're just too, constantly, distracted, and maybe Jesus, is saying to some of us, what he said to Peter, ultimately,

Macleod, in the eternal, scheme of things, what are, some of these things, that are, congesting your mind, what are they to you, some of these things, can be dropped, but you must, follow, me, I'm conscious, this is challenging, we're finishing now, I'm conscious, this is challenging, I'm conscious, that we may, think in our minds, this is just, too overbearing, this bites, too hard, this is too demanding, this is too costly, and if that's the way I feel, and if that's the way, we feel, then let's consider, again, how costly it was, for Jesus, to follow, the father's will, as he came, from heaven to earth, from the cradle, to the carpenters shed, to the cruel cross, for us, if we, find ourselves, inwardly, rebelling, against the call, of Christ, to die to self, to make him, priority, to follow him, we need to get back, to Calvary, we need to survey, the wondrous cross, on which the prince, of glory died, we need to see his head, and his hands, and his feet, and the sorrow, and the love, that flows mingled, down for us, if we're struggling, with us, we need to keep, on looking, at Jesus, as he, dies for us, and keep, on looking, until we say, with the hymn writer, where the whole, realm, of nature, mine, that with an offering, far too small, love, so amazing, so divine, demands, my soul, my life, my all, not my sliver, of what I have, left over, but my whole life, my all, that's what he deserves, so keep listening, to Jesus, keep glorifying,

Jesus, keep focused, on Jesus, keep following, Jesus, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, let's pray, heavenly father, we thank you, for your word, and thank you, for Jesus, all that he, has done for us, all, that we survey, as we look, to the cross, we thank you, for the ministry, of Jesus, to Peter, and for the ministry, of Jesus, through the word, by the spirit, to us,

we thank you, for the tenderness, and the gentleness, and the love, of Jesus, as he goes, to Peter, having failed, so terribly, and restores, him so tenderly, and we thank you, also, for a love, that does, not gloss over, the issues, that Peter, had to deal with, but comes, to the very heart, of them, and challenges,

Peter, to follow him, resolutely, and we thank you, that we have, the record, and scripture, of how Peter did, we thank you, that we know, how this all ends, for Peter, we don't know, how it will all end, for us, but we pray, that we would be, found, recommitting, our lives to you, today, and every day, and following, Jesus, closely, and we ask this, in Jesus name, Amen.  
Amen.