

Sunday Service ~ April 12th 2026

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Recently we had the roof of our house restored because we had heard that insurance companies were denying damage claims if roofs hadn't been properly maintained, and ours hadn't. So our roof got a thorough cleaning, then had all the broken bits fixed, and then it got covered with a new coat of paint, so it not only looked good, but was also functional.

Last week was Easter, and Stephen preached from John 19 on Good Friday and John 20 on Easter Sunday. Today we are looking at John 21 where we find Peter following his denial of Jesus. Peter, like our roof, needed to be restored so that he not only looked like a disciple of Jesus, but so he would function as one too. He needed a thorough cleansing, he needed to have all the broken bits of his faith fixed, he needed to receive a fresh covering from his Lord and Saviour. But as we'll see in the sermon, he not only needed to be restored by Jesus, he needed to do something to an extent he may never have done before.

Let's pray.

Prayer

Lord God, we come to worship you and to declare our love for you, and we know we can only love you because you first loved us. We declare our repentance for the sins we have committed, and we know we can only do this because of the death and resurrection our Lord, Jesus Christ. We bring our praise and prayers before you, and we know we can only do this because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. We thank you for being with us as we meet here together today and as we go about our daily lives. Amen

Song – O Breath of Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lpCy3Qq3VI>

1 O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and pow'r;

O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit your church to meet this hour.

2 O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore, for this we plead.

3 O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in ev'ry part.

4 O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,
'tis there we find our strength and rest;
our broken, contrite hearts now solace,
and let your waiting church be blest.

5 Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
while harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
equip your church to spread the light.

Bible Reading – John 21:1-8 (NIV)

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"
"No," they answered.

6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

Announcements

What are we trying to do when we talk about people? It is easy to define our church by the buildings we

meet in or the programs we run, but the New Testament describes the church as "living stones" built together. Programs have their place, but they are simply tools; the real work of God happens in the lives and hearts of people. This month, let's look beyond our scheduled gatherings and focus on connecting with our church even when we're home, at work and even in chance encounters. Let's pray that our primary focus would be on growing in love for one another and for our community, regardless of where we are.

Taylor on leave, back next Sunday – Audric will be on study leave but will be contactable if you need anything.

Regular Reno Roundup. (A weekly way of talking about decisions we have made concerning our new renovation) The committee of Management has put together a small group of ladies, including Annette Phyllis and Cheryl Gillard to make some decisions about the new kitchen including the place of benches, storage, accessibility and accessibility. They hope to report back to us in the next month or so. If you have any suggestions please speak to either Annette or Cheryl.

Jobs to be done. The Committee of management has worked out a list of jobs we want to do in the church/gathering space/outside over the next month. That list was sent to everyone this week in their weekly email. If you feel you could do one of these jobs by yourself, please contact Stephen and we will allocate that task to you. The rest of the jobs will be completed on two work days on Friday 1st May and Saturday 2nd May. More details to come.

WHS Paper on Women Elders – In this week's bulletin, a link to a WHS paper that the denomination is thinking carefully through has been released. Please take the time to complete the survey and if you have any questions, please forward those queries to Stephen Taylor.

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for Jordan (Population: ~11.5 million | Christians: ~175,000) While Jordan is often seen as a haven of stability, Christians and particularly those from Muslim backgrounds face intense pressure and legal vulnerability from families and tribal authorities who view conversion as a betrayal. Believers frequently face social exclusion, loss of civil rights, or the threat of violence, forcing many to follow Christ in secret to avoid devastating personal consequences. Pray for supernatural protection and courage for these hidden believers, and ask that the established church would be emboldened to offer them safe and genuine community. May God grant wisdom to those navigating these risks, that His peace would sustain them as they persevere in their faith.

Pray for Global Conflicts As wars continue to displace millions and cause immense suffering across Ukraine, Sudan, the Middle East, and West Africa, we ask for God's powerful intervention to bring an end to violence and injustice. Pray for the protection of vulnerable civilians caught in the crossfire and for the local churches to be strengthened as they provide refuge and hope amidst the rubble. Ask that God would grant profound wisdom to world leaders to pursue paths of reconciliation and that His peace, which surpasses all understanding, would guard the hearts of those living in fear. May the light of the Gospel shine through the darkness of these conflicts, bringing healing and restoration to every broken nation.

Pray for Stephen as he takes leave this coming week, that God would grant him a season of deep and restorative rest for both body and mind. Ask that he would return refreshed and encouraged, having found true peace in his time away from daily responsibilities.

Visitors - We give thanks for everyone who joined us for Launch Sunday and for the many visitors who have walked through our doors since the redevelopment. We pray that those who come would truly encounter Jesus, find a place to stay and grow, and that many more would join our community in the weeks ahead.

Bible Reading – John 21:9-19 (NIV)

9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Song – Great is Thy Faithfulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cACgcURyvJA>

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness,
Great is thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hast provided;
Great is thy faithfulness,
Lord unto me.

2. Summer and winter and springtime and
harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.
[Refrain]

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine and ten thousand beside.
[Refrain]

Sermon – Loving Jesus (John Harris)

A long time ago, before I was married, I decided to take my girlfriend fishing. She had just recovered from a bad cold and sore throat, and I thought some fresh air, sitting in the sun on a boat, fishing in the Hawkesbury River, would be a wonderful way to spend Easter Monday. So, we started out early from Sydney and hired a boat in Brooklyn. It was one of those old boats with the engine in the middle and you had to turn a crank wheel to get it started, which I did. We headed out a fair way from the jetty and had a lovely time, catching two 'really big' fish.

All was going well until we noticed some dark clouds approaching, so we decided to pack up and head back in. I began turning over the crank wheel to start the engine just as the first rain drops started to fall. Twenty minutes later I finally got the engine going, but by then we were soaked through to the skin, and we still had a long trip back to the jetty to do in the pouring rain.

We finally got back and into the car and headed up to the freeway only to join with every other Easter long-weekend holidaymaker heading back to Sydney at the same time. The trip home took twice as long as it had done earlier that day, and by the time we arrived at my girlfriend's home, still in our wet clothes, her sniffles and sore throat had returned. On top of that I only remembered the two fish in the boot of my car about a week later and, of course, had to toss them out.

Thankfully, my girlfriend didn't toss me aside and a few years later she became my wife, and we will celebrate our 43rd wedding anniversary this week. We've had many adventures along the way but, not surprisingly, we have never gone fishing in a boat together since. Even though our fishing expedition turned out to be a disaster, true love blossomed.

Some episodes in Peter's journey with Jesus could also be described as disasters. Even after three years together, Peter still failed Jesus a number of times. For example, as Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had to rebuke Peter for using a sword to attack the high priest's servant (John 18:10). Then, after his arrest, Peter and the other disciples abandoned Jesus and fled from the Garden (Matthew 26:56). To his credit, Peter must have had a change of heart and direction because he then followed Jesus and those arresting him to the courtyard of the high priest (John 18:15). But instead of supporting Jesus and admitting that he was one of his disciples, he denied Jesus three times (John 18:17, 25-27). And then to add to Peter's shame, he was not among those gathered at the foot of the cross where Jesus, his friend, was hanging and dying (Matthew 27:55-56; John 19:25-27).

But despite these disasters in Peter's journey with Jesus, true love blossomed. The story starts with Peter and his friends on a fishing expedition.

[John 21:1-2 "After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas \(called the Twin\), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the \(two\) sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together." \(ESV\)](#)

There's a couple of things we should note from these two verses.

Firstly, John refers to the Sea of Tiberias, which is one and the same as the Sea of Galilee. The sea, or lake, was called Tiberias after Herod Antipas built the city of Tiberias, named after the then Roman Emperor, on its western shore between 17-20AD. So it can be referred to as either the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias.

Secondly, only seven of the remaining eleven disciples went fishing. We know that Peter was among them, along with John, one of the sons of Zebedee and the gospel writer and eyewitness to these events. But for some reason, four of the remaining disciples didn't go fishing that morning and missed this encounter with Jesus.

[John 21:3-8 "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 as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on 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 of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off."](#)

Notice that they caught nothing, no fish – it was another fishing disaster, similar to the one described in Luke 5:1-11. On both occasions (in Luke & this one in John) it was Jesus who told them where to find fish. It makes me wonder whether Jesus was using this as an analogy on how they were to become the 'fishers

of men' he called them to be in Matthew 4:19, when he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

It's a reminder that to be a follower of Jesus and a fisher of men and women for him, means we have to look to him for guidance, we have to keep our eyes on Jesus, our ears open to his word, and to do things his way. And maybe that's why he called them 'children' (not friends as in the NIV), and maybe he called them children to emphasise that they were still young in their faith and that they needed to continue to look and listen to Jesus in order to learn and grow and accomplish what God had willed for their lives.

Also notice how enthusiastic Peter was to jump overboard as soon as he was told that it was Jesus on the shore. Peter couldn't wait to go to Jesus. And when he got there, he saw Jesus standing near a charcoal fire.

John 21:9-14 "When they got out on land, they saw a **charcoal fire** in place, with fish laid out 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, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead."

The last time Peter had been near a fire with Jesus was in the courtyard of the high priest, before Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

Luke 22 tells it this way, "Then they seized him [*Jesus*] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a **fire** in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. **And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.** And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:54-62)

Luke wrote that, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter" in the high priest's courtyard, and here again, in John 21, Jesus was looking at Peter across a charcoal fire. The outcome last time was Peter's denial of Jesus, and Jesus' death on a cross. What would be the outcome of the encounter between Jesus and Peter around a charcoal fire this time? Would it be any different?

We know that it does turn out different, but what's interesting here is that Jesus uses a fire, burning on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, as a meeting point to engage with Peter.

It would have not been lost on Peter that a fire was part of the scene of his denial of Jesus and his worst failure and sin. In a way, Jesus used the image of the fire to force Peter to confront his sin and decide where his true loyalty and faith and future lay.

And Jesus does the same with us. He brings us to places and into situations that force us to confront our sin and decide where our true loyalty and faith and future lay.

John 21:15-17 "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

And as much as this passage is about Jesus instructing Peter to be a shepherd for his sheep and lambs, it is also about something even more important, something that must be in place before Peter could even hope to shepherd Jesus' sheep and lambs.

Three times Jesus asked Peter the same question, "do you love me", except the first time he added a few extra words, "more than these".

Commentators are divided about what Jesus meant when he asked Peter, "do you love me more than these?" For example, was he asking Peter whether:

1. Peter loved Jesus more than the other disciples loved Jesus, i.e. "do you, Peter, love me more than these others love me?" or whether,
2. Peter loved Jesus more than Peter loved the other disciples, i.e. "do you love me more than you love these other people, including your brother, Andrew?" or whether,
3. Peter loved Jesus more than his boats and fishing business, i.e. "do you love me more than you love these material and worldly things?"

So how can we interpret what Jesus meant when he asked Peter if he loved Jesus more than 'these'? What are the 'these' that Peter had to love **less** than he loved Jesus?

Anne Lotz is the daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham and in her book 'Just Give Me Jesus' she asks her readers to think about how they would answer that question from Jesus, "do you love me more than these" by asking them to consider every aspect of their lives. "Do you love me more? Do you love me more than your: friends, family, church, ministry, profession, job, colleagues, leisure, hobbies, holidays, hopes, desires, plans, dreams, possessions, income, investments, reputation, popularity, safety, comfort, security, appearance, body, diet, exercise, health, even your life. In fact, do you love me more than anything and everything?"

I think Anne has it right. I think Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Jesus more than all, more than anyone, more than anything, more than everything, even more than his own life. And it's a question we all need to ask ourselves. Do we love Jesus more than anyone, more than anything, more than everything, even more than our own lives?

That's what Jesus meant when he said, in Luke 9:23-26, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Peter needed to learn to deny himself and not deny Jesus, to be bold for Jesus and not ashamed of Jesus or his words. And of course, we need to learn that too.

It's important to note that, as far as we know from the other gospels and this one, up to this point, this conversation in John 21 is the first direct, personal, intimate interaction between Jesus and Peter following Jesus' resurrection, and maybe that's why John includes this beautiful story of Peter's restoration in the 21st chapter of his gospel.

You see, up to this point, Peter was probably still feeling the shame of his denial of Jesus, the shame of being ashamed of Jesus. He was in a state of limbo, at a crossroad, uncertain of where he stood with Jesus.

Would he go back into the business of fishing for fish, or would Jesus still commission him to fish for men and women? Was Jesus still his friend and did Jesus still love him? Could Jesus ever forgive him for what he had done?

Surely these were some of the questions on Peter's mind. Surely Peter was waiting for Jesus to reassure him that all was not lost, that Peter was not lost. So, what did Peter need to hear from Jesus after all he had done and not done during Jesus' trial and execution? Maybe he would have liked to hear that Jesus did still love him, and also that Jesus forgave him. Peter would have wanted to know that Jesus was still his friend, despite Peter's treachery. Peter needed to hear words of love and forgiveness and encouragement from Jesus. Isn't that what we want to hear from Jesus when we have messed up? To hear that Jesus still loves us and forgives us.

And while Peter may have been waiting to hear what words of love and forgiveness and encouragement Jesus would speak to him, instead, Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved him. Why? Why did Jesus choose to ask Peter this question instead of telling Peter that he was loved and forgiven?

I believe Jesus did it because he knew exactly what Peter really needed. Jesus did it because he knew that this was the question Peter needed to confront and answer. Did - he - really - love - Jesus, and if so, what difference would this make in his life?

Later in this chapter (John 21:18-19), Jesus told Peter how Peter would die and bring glory to God. Yet Peter wasn't perturbed by this prophecy, rather he allowed Jesus' love for him, and his love for Jesus, to blossom, and to change and define his life.

In his first letter, Peter encouraged people to love Jesus, with these words: "[Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.](#)" (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Around a charcoal fire on the Sea of Galilee, Peter finally understood what he needed to do. Yes, Jesus wanted him to fish for men and women, and to feed and care for Jesus' lambs and sheep, and even to bring glory to God through his death. But to do these things, to do God's will for his life, Peter needed to love Jesus more than anyone and anything and everything else. Jesus knew exactly what Peter needed – to love Jesus, to say he loved Jesus, and to mean it.

What really makes the difference in a disciple's life is not constantly hearing that Jesus loves us, as important as that is. And a footnote to this is: one of the churches Miranda and I have been part of focused almost exclusively on God's love for us. Nearly 100% of all sermons, regardless of the passage being preached, had the theme of God's love for you. Now while God's love for us is true, and to hear it all the time is comforting and encouraging, without adding the challenging biblical mandates of our response to God's love, including obedience, sanctification, discipleship, holiness and the fruit of the Spirit, a Christian's life can become quite self-focused, and one's spiritual growth and maturity stunted and stale.

You see, what makes a difference in our lives, given that God does love us, is us loving him, loving Jesus, and telling Jesus that we love him, and meaning it; and that there is evidence in our lives of our love for Jesus, so we can be certain that Jesus knows we love him.

- ▶ Evidence of our love for Jesus in the way we pray, and worship, and fellowship.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we read and believe his Word, the Bible.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we obey Jesus in the face of temptation.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we bear fruit for his kingdom.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we serve and love other people, feed and care for his lambs and sheep.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we speak about Jesus and his church, and tell others about grace, faith, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.
- ▶ Evidence in the way we have faith and trust in him for today and for the future.

The question we all need to answer from this passage is – do I love Jesus, really love Jesus, and if I say I love Jesus, is there evidence and fruit of this love for Jesus in my life?

Can I, can you, say, like Peter, "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you"? Amen.

Song – Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-apRYE_Zog

What gift of grace is Jesus, my Redeemer
There is no more for Heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless Peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh, how strange and divine, I can sing, "All
is mine"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark, but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Savior, He will stay
I labor on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley, He will lead
Oh, the night has been won, and I shall overcome

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future's sure, the price, it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus, now and ever is my plea
Oh, the chains are released, I can sing, "I am free"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath, I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day, I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
"Yet not I, but through Christ in me"

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
"Yet not I, but through Christ in me"

When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
"Yet not I, but through Christ in me"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Benediction

Lord, help us to be like Peter and say, "Lord, you know everything, you know that we love you. Though we have not seen you, we love you. Though we do not now see you, we believe in you and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls." Amen