

"Go Tell Peter"

Text: Mark 16:7

Is it just me or do you also feel that we have an overload of bad news each day. I wake up to KCBS with the hope that the traffic report will be promising. But it seems most of the times Highway 4 is a parking lot. I pray that there will be no more killings in Iraq only to hear that the death toll is increasing. Even when there's an item of good news such as the unemployment figure is decreasing an analyst says, but it's not the right kind of jobs that are being filled. It's really unhealthy to have a steady diet of bad news.

Good news gives health to the bones. Prov.15:30 Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land. Prov. 25:25

On that first Easter there was no one that needed *good news* more than Simon Peter. Peter's world had collapsed. Over three years before Peter had left the fishing business to follow an itinerant preacher named Jesus. Three days ago his leader was executed by crucifixion. But beyond that when his leader needed a friend Pete bailed out. Not once, not twice, but three times he said, "I *do not know what you're talking about. I do not know that guy.*" Reverting back to his course life he punctuated his denials with oaths and cursings. At the time of his third denial the eye of Jesus like a laser beam sent a message of understanding and love. It broke the heart of Peter. He cried himself to exhaustion, but he could not sleep. He had no appetite. He had been stripped of his integrity.

But on Easter Sunday morning a power angel stood guard at the tomb to keep the evidence from being corrupted. The angel said to the "*would be mourners*" to spread the good news of Easter. "He is not here, He is risen." Wait there's an order to its publication: "go tell his disciples AND PETER, he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Why single out Peter? Why was Peter at the top of the list? Tell Peter because he needs it the most. He is overcome with guilt and shame. He needs to know that "all is well." We don't know where and when the private conversation was held, but we do know why it was so vital. No one had been so public and bold in their words as Peter.

Peter, I am alive and your words were right on. Matthew 16:15-17

What a smile Peter must have put on the face of Jesus the day Jesus preached his heaviest message in the city of Capernaum. It was about total commitment to him and the Bible said "many of his disciples left never to return." So Jesus turned to his twelve and asked, "***You do not want to leave me too, do you?***" Peter looked at Jesus and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:67-68

Romans 1: 4 "who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Peter, I am alive and I will keep my promises to you. Remember, I told you that you that you will not be Simon (meaning pebble), but you are Peter (meaning rock) Rocky Johnson, and ***I will build my church on you. And the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*** Many years later Peter wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and he closes the letter with these words, "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings." Many Bible students believe that the pronoun **she** is a disguised reference to the church since ekklesia is feminine and the church is described as the bride of Christ, and Babylon is a figurative reference to the city of Rome. The disguised language was to protect Peter, Mark and the local community of saints from persecution. But whether it was ancient Babylon or Rome it is obvious that the church was on the move. Its growth was moving it toward the gates of Hades and all the fury of the evil would not be able to withstand it.

I am alive and the next time you face the life or death question you will not fail.

You will have a new appreciation for the enemy, the Devil. You now know the tempter's power. Sure enough Peter warns the people of God, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith." Before Jesus ascended he had a conversation with Peter telling him that in his old age he would be captured and taken where he would not like to go. These words indicated that Peter would be a martyr who would glorify God for his loyalty to Jesus. (J.21: 18-19)

Conclusion: Why tell Peter first? Because Peter will be representative of many my followers, the ones who lapsed, the fallen, those who started and stumbled. Tell them that Easter is good news. I remember their earlier acts of faith and their works of love. Come back to me and I will strengthen them to be all that the Father intended them to be. Phil. 1:6, "being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

This was for my friend David Smith. He is a giant of a man. He was pursued by the Dallas Cowboys when he graduated from Stephen F. Austin University. He chose the pastorate instead. He had good success in a pastorate in South Texas and then moved to East Texas to start a mission in Tyler. To augment his work he built houses. As he was constructing one of those houses the bulldozer toppled over and crushed his brother and he died. That set in motion a downward spiral into depression. He left the ministry. He turned his back on the church. His weekends were filled with fishing on a Lake. He became an agnostic which meant he didn't know and didn't really care

At first his wife Ginger followed his churchless and Christ less life, but later she returned to worship with the people of God. Twenty years past. One day as he and his young grandson were riding in his pickup, his grandson said, "Grandpa, would you come to church next Sunday and see me baptized?" He wanted to say no, but somehow he couldn't. That Sunday night as the congregation sang, "What a friend we have in Jesus." David could hardly contain the emotion that filled his heart. But he held it in. A few weeks later as Ginger left for Sunday worship, David picked up the TV remote and began to surf the channels, Billy Graham was speaking. I wonder what Billy is preaching these days? He was startled to hear the same simple message of Jesus death, burial and resurrection. David found himself crying, uncontrollably sobbing. Not long after that he said to Ginger, "I think I will go to church with you tonight." On their way home David said, "You are going to laugh, but God wants me to preach again."

They began a Bible study in their lake house. It kept growing 100, 200, and two years ago David asked me to come and preach the Easter message in their new 500 seat auditorium. They had 550 attendees that day. He retired last year, but not before he led in the construction of a new auditorium that seats 750. O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee, I give thee back the life I owe, That in Thy ocean depths its flow --May richer, fuller be. George Matheson He will restore the years the locust have eaten. Joel 2:25 He restoreth my soul. Ps. 23