

6. Restoring Love (Part 2)

In part 1 we looked at how Jesus' restoring love redeems us when we are at our worst, even when our love fails him. This week we look at Christ's restoring love for us in him redeeming our identity and mission.

Text: John 20:30-31 & 21:1-19

Restoring love redeems our identity

Jesus confronted Peter's sin, firstly by calling him 'Simon', which was the name he used to go by before Jesus gave him a new identity. Peter had sinned so gravely by denying Jesus, that instead of being with Jesus every day after the resurrection, Peter went back to fishing. The idea of him being a "rock" was no longer.

In addition to this painful reality, Jesus then asked Peter three times, if he really loved him. Jesus did this as a reminder of the three times Peter had clearly and absolutely denied even knowing Jesus, so that he would own up to, and confess his sin.

Sin usually tries to take us right back to the person we were before we encountered Christ. It lures us away from worship and service of God and it tries to remove us from experiencing our true identity in Christ.

But Jesus wanted to lead Peter to repentance, so that he could forgive and restore him. In the process of being confronted, Peter was able to acknowledge his absolute dependence on Jesus, even in his ability to love him. He had to realise, once and for all, that his identity and ability to do anything lay in Christ alone.

When Christ's love redeems us, he gives us a new identity as child of God. In Christ, our identity is secure and it doesn't change. When we are loved by Christ, we no longer need to seek the approval of people. We are no longer enslaved to who others think we should be, or even of our own expectations of ourselves. Being a son/daughter of God is the highest identity any human being can have, which is why it frees us from all the others.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jesus call Peter, "Simon" in this confrontation?
2. Why did Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loved him, and what was it supposed to evoke in Peter?
3. What is our new identity in Christ, and why does that change how we view ourselves?
4. Why should our identity in Christ also free us from the need for approval from others?
5. ♥ Personal Reflection: How has your identity in Christ changed your life practically?



NO GREATER LOVE

Restoring love redeems our mission

Jesus was always going to restore Peter. He had called him “the rock” knowing he was going to use him mightily in his plan to establish the early church. Jesus knew the journey he would need to take Peter on, and he knew about the deep sin and failure Peter would experience before being used.

Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life on our behalf. In taking our sin to the cross, and conquering sin and death once and for all, he was able to gift us his righteousness. This means that his obedience is now given to us. So, although we sin and fail, even as believers, God does not choose us or use us based on our performance, but based on Christ's. This means that we can never fall too far for God to redeem or use us.

In redeeming Peter, Jesus gave him:

1. **A responsibility to be accepted** – Peter was going to be set aside to be an apostle to the early church, which was unique, but the principle of being part of God's family, is the same for all Christians. When we are saved, we are saved into the family of God, which means we are given responsibility for that family. We are all called to love and serve one another in the church.
2. **A glory to be pursued** – the fact that Jesus restored Peter, after so much failure is evidence of his great redeeming love for humanity. It shows us that we have no right to hold on to our past sin and failures, as an excuse not to serve God. God can and will redeem and use the worst of sinners for his glory. Even after Peter was given the Spirit, and empowered mightily to do the work of an apostle, he still failed God along the way. He was never perfect, but he was given a new identity to love and serve God until he was an old man. The same man who denied Jesus in his youth, was crucified upside down for Christ, as an old man. God restored and redeemed Peter, and enabled him to serve him for the rest of his life. Will we be willing to do the same?

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is Peter's sin and failure such a helpful example for us to look at when we consider our own?
2. Why does God choose to use people, like Peter, who have failed him miserably?
3. ♥ Personal Reflection: As children of God we are given the responsibility to love and serve the body of Christ. In what way do you feel “disqualified” to serve God because of past sin, and how does this story challenge this?

