

# Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, February 18, 2024

“Wandering Heart: Jesus Sought Me”

## *Young at Heart Message*

Like many of us, Peter has a Wandering Heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God.

When you look closely at Peter's story, you find Jesus at each step along the way—offering him abundance, catching him when he begins to sink, challenging him when he stands in the way, washing his feet, predicting his betrayal, and offering him agapē love.

This Lent, we're joining Peter in figuring out faith.

We're not idolizing or vilifying him. Instead, we're hoping to wander alongside him, open to what we might learn about Jesus (and ourselves) by stepping into Peter's shoes.

I don't know if you have ever literally stepped into someone else's shoes, but it can be a rather unpleasant (and sometimes smelly!) experience!



Often, trying to figuratively step into someone else's shoes can be quite difficult, because we can only approach life by looking through our own lens.

Of course, we try to look through the lens of someone else, but it isn't always easy.

So, let's look at today's scripture and try to put ourselves in Peter's shoes for a moment.

I'll re-tell the scripture reading and insert some questions we can ask as we ponder the story again.

Let's look at the story in a bit better detail:

One day as Jesus was by the Sea of Galilee, people began to crowd around him, trying to hear what he had to say.

On the shore, Jesus saw two boats where the fishermen were washing their nets after a long night of fishing.

*Imagine how it might have felt to come back from a long, unsuccessful night of back-aching labor trying to catch fish for a living.*



Jesus climbed into the boat that belonged to Simon Peter and asked him to take it out into the water so he could teach the people who had come to hear him speak.

*Now, imagine that this fishing boat is your only means of feeding your family and earning a living, and Jesus is asking to borrow the boat.*



After he was done teaching the people, Jesus told Simon Peter, "Take the boat into deeper water and let out your nets so you can catch some fish."

Simon Peter told Jesus, “Sir, we've been out here all night trying to catch fish but our nets have come up empty.”

*How might Peter have felt? He does this for a living, he was out all night with no luck, and now someone who knows nothing about his trade is telling him to go back out again.*



“But if you say so, we’ll try again.” So Simon Peter and the other fishermen on the boat let out their nets. Soon they caught so many fish that their nets began to break! They called to their friends in the other boat to come help them with their enormous catch.

*Imagine the trust and faith these men must have had to go out again despite an entire night not catching any fish! And, how well their faith was solidified by catching more fish than they could ever imagine.*



Both boats were overflowing with fish, and they were all amazed. When he saw this miracle, Simon Peter bowed down before Jesus and said, “Go away from me, sir. I am not worthy to be in your presence.”

*How difficult might it have been to humble himself like this? He initially questioned Jesus, and now he had foot-in-mouth syndrome.*



But Jesus said to Simon Peter, “There’s nothing to be afraid of. From now on you will catch people instead of fish.” When the boats arrived on the shore, Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen left their boats behind and followed Jesus.

*What level of commitment and trust in Jesus did these men have to have to give up their entire livelihood – the only way they have ever known to earn a living and feed their families – in order to follow Jesus? Would this be easy for us to do?*



Hopefully, we can acknowledge that stepping into someone else’s shoes – especially someone who lived thousands of years ago – might not be easy.

And hopefully, we have also learned to ask ourselves some deeper questions as we read the stories in the Bible.

It can be a valuable lesson to try to ask how we might feel if we were in the shoes of someone else!

***The Message***

As I mentioned earlier, our sermon series for Lent and Easter is going to be following Peter as he interacts with Jesus throughout Jesus' ministry.

For those of you who are familiar with Peter – also known in the Gospels as Simon Peter and Cephas - you may know that he goes through several ups and downs.

One moment, he's a hero, and the next, he's a goat.

In today's scripture, it is important to note that Jesus doesn't seek out trained rabbis and priests to be his disciples.

Instead, he calls a few Galilean fishermen to follow him and join his ministry.

The men Jesus called to be his first disciples were accustomed to hard physical labor.

They owned their businesses, which had been handed down from their fathers.

Leaving the trade would not have been an easy transition for these men.

And yet, after they do as Jesus told them and drop their nets once more, they can't help but be convinced of their call.

They haul in more fish than they could have ever imagined, especially after an unsuccessful night of fishing.

When Jesus tells Simon "Don't be afraid! From now on you will bring in people instead of fish," no one really knows what to expect.

And yet, the scripture tells us "they left everything and went with Jesus."

Jesus sought these men specifically.

He did not seek out powerful, influential people who were knowledgeable about theology or people who were good at evangelizing.

Jesus sought out imperfect, flawed people to become his first disciples.

People like Simon Peter, who would question him and feel fear and uncertainty.

Jesus sought people who would struggle to understand the work they were called to do, and who would struggle to understand the reason Jesus would have to suffer and die on the cross.

Jesus knew these disciples would struggle.

He knew one of them would betray him.

And yet, he sought them anyway.

And the Good News for us is that Jesus seeks us, too.

And if Peter teaches us anything throughout this sermon series, it will be that we don't need to be perfect in order for Jesus to call us and seek us.

We don't need to be perfect, and he doesn't expect us to.

He didn't expect perfection from Simon Peter or his other disciples, and he doesn't expect it from us either.

We can follow Jesus with Wandering Hearts, just like Peter, and Jesus will love us, guide us, teach us, and not let us stray too far despite our Wandering Hearts.

I am looking forward to Wandering with Peter through this Lenten journey, and I hope you are too.

As we follow Peter and his interactions with Jesus, we are invited to look deeper into our own hearts and recognize ourselves in Peter's journey.

May we journey together, engage in conversation, and learn together this Lenten season. Amen.

Let us pray:

God of goodness and love, we are so grateful you sent your Son Jesus Christ as a teacher and guide. We are grateful that He sought Wandering Hearts like Peter because it helps us feel more at ease with our own Wandering Hearts. Jesus allows us to settle our hearts, to be exactly who You created us to be, and to do what we are called to do without guilt or shame about those things that make us imperfectly, beautifully human.

For all of this, we are eternally grateful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.