

Intro: Good Morning church. This last while the old Bill Murray movie **Groundhog Day** has been running through my head. It is a movie about a Weather Man who is on location at Punxsutawney Pennsylvania for the annual Groundhog day celebration. But every morning as the alarm rings he begins to relive the exact same day over and over again. I am not sure about you but during Covid it almost felt like we were in that movie didn't it. Every day I was on my computer by 8:00 - working on my sermon talking to people by phone or making Zoom calls. And then the next day we would do it all over again. It was as if the record was stuck on "repeat...do it again...repeat."

As I was reading the Easter story again it struck me that in many ways that **"repeat, do it again, repeat until you get it right"** was the apostle's Peter's journey with Jesus. Peter is one of the greatest of our faith. He was the first one to say out loud that "Jesus is the Christ the son of the Living God." He was the first to walk on water, he was among the first to see Jesus glowing in his power at the Mount of Transfiguration, he was the first to speak at Pentecost, he gave the first altar call — where 3000 came forward. He was also the first, to preach to the gentiles, and opened the door - so that you and I could become followers of Jesus. AND he was a person whose public mess ups were so colossal that we are still talking about them today. Because of all of that — Peter is an amazing case study of how Jesus - **steps into the ups and down of our faith journey - and grows our faith.**

SO - let's take some time today and look at Peter's journey - to hopefully discover some insights to help us - walk better with our Jesus.

1. Here is where it all begins — **There is a need to choose to follow.** What I love about the way Peter became a follower of Jesus - is that most of us will recognize Peter's experience with Jesus - because it is our experience as well. It was a gradual choosing to let Jesus have more of his life. For because Andrew Peter's brother (whom he trusted) had heard Jn. the Baptist say that Jesus was "*the son of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" Peter felt he could invite Jesus to his house for supper. And, it was during that evening that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. And so, the next

day when Jesus asked to sit in Pete's boat so he could preach to the crowd. Peter of course said yes. After hearing Jesus speak > when Jesus said, "let's try a little fishing." While Peter wondered what Jesus the Carpenter could teach him about fishing (Peter the expert) - he said, 'why not'. When Jesus said 'let down your nets - at high noon (when no real fisherman would go fishing) - while he probably felt it was a waste of time. But because - so far Jesus had always exceeded Peter's expectations - he went for it. And the **result of obeying Jesus' directions in his life was** — the boat was so full of fish it almost sank. So, when Jesus calls Peter to follow him. it says '*so they pulled up their boat and left everything and followed him*' (Lk. 5:11). They walked past the pile of fish - and the cash it stood for because within them was this tug/pull - that this was right Jesus was real. ill: Do you remember when you chose to follow Jesus {The Journey began - with a need to choose} - That is how you and I began {For me - I knew that I knew it was real}—and along the way you have seen different things in others' lives as you read the scriptures that keeps affirming that this is real it is right it is worth giving your life to.

2. The Aha's that leaves you Excited. A while later after seeing the *hearing impaired* – healed the *blind* - given sight; *demons* - cast out Jesus turns to his disciples and **asks a simple question** "*who do people say that I am*" ? And Peter has this inspiration from God, and says something no one has ever said before. He says, '*you are the Christ the son of the living God*' (Matt. 16:16) - Have you ever heard yourself pray over someone/ have some insight jump into your mind as you read the bible - or in your mind an idea to what to say or have some special **God moment**.

>> ill. {Caste out a demon} They are growth moments because as you follow Jesus, he gives us insight/ words/ hope/ peace/ joy - that are beyond us they are supernatural. Those moments are gifts from God - that we can place in a special spot in our memory - for they are times when we have felt Jesus near and know beyond a shadow of doubt that 'the best decision in the world was to choose to follow Jesus'. Cherish them.

Stop: **But** you will remember, that after Peter's brilliance - he felt cocky enough to 'rebuke Jesus, and then instruct Jesus in what he should do/say'. For when Jesus had finally felt close enough to the disciples to unburden his heart and share how he would be taken/ beaten/ die >> Peter '*took Jesus aside*' - and felt he needed to correct him (Matt. 16:22) - He took the blessings/ insights given to him by God as a sign that **he was brilliant** in all things. He was so caught up in his brilliant ahha —he **missed listening** closely to what God still wanted to say to him he missed the last line of Jesus' comment. When Jesus said '*and on the third day be raised to life*' — If Peter had thought less of his own personal brilliance and listened more humbly to Jesus' words - that little tidbit of information would have saved him so much pain. So — as God gives you insights/ experiences that are wonderful don't miss the need to stay humble for God '*will stand against the proud - but gives grace to those who come in humility* (James 4:6).

3. A crash that leaves you Reeling - Good Friday was the time when the man who felt he was '*the one who would stand when everyone else fell away*. Heard a rooster crow and found out he was the chicken (Mk.14:66-72). If we are honest all of us will have an experience like Peter at some time in our lives ... when our faith takes a body blow. It will happen when we are shocked by what we might have said/done > as in Peter's case. Or it may strike us during a loss of a relationship/ the death of someone close/ the loss of a dream or a job. And despite how strongly we believe in Jesus - or how wonderful our past experiences were. There will be a time when we find ourselves asking — how did this happen —how did God allow this to happen —how could those, I felt were friends do that - how could I have let others down like I have? ...And the bottom seems to drop out of our **confidence in ourselves** - and if we are honest our **confidence in GOD is shaken**. And like Peter - our faith seems to crumble inside us at least for a while. I am so thankful that **Mark** (Peter's intern) - placed this true story in scripture. Because I can tell you from experience all of us have/will have something that enters our lives that we may call - a dark night of the soul'. And when that happens it is great to know that even great men, like Peter went through a time when their faith was shaken. That, as we will see in just a minute > actually helped Peter to go deeper in his relationship with Jesus.

4. A visit that gives you guarded hope - I want to remind you that during these make-or-break times - Jesus always wants to move toward us. For, there is a line in the Easter story that most of us have overlooked. For right after John and Peter heard that the tomb empty. Notice that- Peter was so depressed that even an empty tomb didn't encourage him. But then something happened — that most of us have missed **Lk. 24:34** (“*and he appeared to Cephas, and then to the 12*” I Cor. 15:5.) Had you seen this verse before? Jesus made a **personal stop by Peter's house** before he went to the Upper room to let him know that 'he really was alive'. **STOP: #1** - Just think about this - after Jesus died and was buried Peter was so overcome with sadness and disappointed with himself that when he arrived in the Upper Room - and heard Mary say 'I have seen and touched Jesus' him' - **EVEN AFTER PETER HAD PERSONALLY HAD A ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH JESUS** - that he was unable to chime in with the women and celebrate and chance that Jesus was REALLY RISEN. (He was so devastated that - even with a one-on-one meeting - he was still struggling to be convinced that Jesus was actually alive Some of you know exactly what the feels like - when things get so tough - that no matter what you have experienced with Jesus in your life - you still struggle to believe he is really near to you/ enough for you). Please hear you are not alone!

#2 But despite Peter's response, when he 'saw Jesus'. Please, don't miss the fact that > the 'very first person that was on Jesus' mind when he rose from the grave - was the very last person that Peter would have thought - would be thinking of him'. Jesus - in the midst of Peter's despair / disbelief - made the first move toward him. Jesus cared for the Person who - he thought was his best friend who had let him down when he needed him the most. That **means** that no matter how you are feeling *Jesus is already moving toward you* — because he wants to breath hope back into your life. And while **it may take a number of Jesus encounters for us to 'bounce back' after a dark time in our lives.** If we are open to them Jesus always moves toward his followers to bring them back home again. And say —*Dave, I know it is dark and painful right now but know I am alive — and I can/will make a difference in your life.*

5. A chat that leaves you needing to make a Decision

So, let's pick up the story again— It has been over a week since 'Resurrection Sunday'. Jesus has made 2 visits to the Upper Room. The last being the time when Thomas came forward and put his finger in the holes in Jesus hands and side. But there hasn't been a Jesus sighting for a few days so Peter - being Peter - couldn't sit still/ hang around anymore. So, he turns to his friends and says, "*I am going fishing do you want to come?*" And 5 other disciples including Thomas joined him. Now some say Peter is backing away from Jesus here. But if you think about it — Peter's journey with Jesus has come **full circle** (it is like the movie Groundhog Day. Where **Bill Murray** keeps going back to the beginning- until he gets it right). In Peter's case I wonder if he came back to the place where it all began for him> on purpose. You see, He was in the same boat - on the same lake - hoping for a similar encounter. That **just maybe** he could begin again. And just like before > they fished all night — and caught nothing. And RIGHT THEN - (as if scripted with perfect timing) as they were about to make shore someone shouted, '*Catch anything boys?*'. And Peter looked over at John as if to say, '*it couldn't be him?*' And when they replied, '*we caught nothing*'. Across the water came familiar words '*try on the other side of the boat*'. And John shrugged and said, '*what do we have to lose?*' And as they threw the net in - and WAM - the net pulled a taut and almost dragged Peter into the water (153 huge fish). :7-8 - And Peter drops the net — and throws on his coat (??) and dives in and swims to shore. As he climbs out of the water Jesus has a fire going with fish and bread already on it. For again - Jesus is taking care of these tired exhausted fishermen.

:15 Jesus has come for a reason./ He breaks the silence of the meal - by looking across the fire and asking a simple question > 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these'. Did you notice he calls him Simon — Simon means '**listener**'- where Peter means '**Rock**'. It is obvious that Simon was no longer the strong rock. So, Jesus was saying, let's start with who you used to be you need to 'listen' before we can move on from your denial of me. **Jesus** uses the word *Agapao* (*the word for deep love*)- and he asks, '*do you love me more than these*'. And I think he swung his arm around - do you love me more than your friends love me/ do you love me more your fishing buddies/ do you love me more than fishing/ your boat/

your business? Do you love me enough to walk away from your business for me? As **Peter** responds > he brings the 'love' talk - down a notch. For Peter uses the Greek word *Phileo* - '*I have a deep brotherly friendship/love for you Jesus*'. I think he did that because he remembered what he had just done back in Jerusalem — he was just being honest — he knew his love wasn't what it should be. Look at **Jesus'** response, :15 "*take care of (pastor) my lambs*'. Did you see whose lambs they are? MY lambs - (we shepherd/ care for His sheep - not ours > this isn't my church/ our Small group - they are Jesus'). And that fact, makes it even more amazing -that Peter (not yet 'whole') is being ask to 'pastor' them. {You don't have to have everything together- before Jesus asks you to care for others. Because Jesus knows that in the 'job' of caring/ in the act of serving - something life giving (growing) can happen. But it is so gracious that Jesus 'still calls us to serve' when we are still 'stumbling heavenward' ourselves.

But Jesus won't let Peter fudge his answer so he takes a **2nd** run at it :16 '*Simon, son of John do you love me?*' Peter do you Agapao me - have the kind of love that causes one to sacrifice for others [it is the idea- that what you love the most you sacrifice the most for > [some of you will do anything for your kids- even put yourself in financial peril for them/ some of you will do anything to help your brother who is in trouble] - Pete are you willing to sacrifice things you love for me >> so far your actions don't seem to indicate it? And Peter responds with *Phileo* again > '*we have a pretty good friendship.*' And yet Jesus says— keep working with my sheep > again, DON'T miss, there is something about **servi**ng others in Jesus' name which will bring back the joy/growth in your Christian walk. {The Serve in the Mission Statement}

:17 This time Jesus changes his word and says, 'Peter, are we just buddies?' (Jesus used the term *Phileo*). And Peter groans within/ for he knows he has been asked the question 3 times because he denied knowing Jesus 3 times. And yet he is honest enough that he doesn't trust himself > that the 'next time' he wouldn't deny Jesus again, He wants to say '*Jesus I am not the same person I was but I am so shaken by what I have just gone through/ just done*. So, he answer '*you know all things, you know my heart, you know that with all I have I want to love you at the deepest level.*' :18,19

Did you catch what Jesus just did? He says, *“let me look into your future, there will be a time when you will be a prisoner and you will be crucified”* [Jn Maxwell says the stretching out of the hands is what happens at a crucifixion and vs. 19 says they *“this indicated the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God”*]. Now I am not sure about you - but if that was my future fate - I don't think I would want to know it. But, for Pete it was a life changing gift because - he needed to know that NEXT time- he got in a life and death situation - he would not deny his Lord. **Next time** he would do the right thing. So, Peter feed my sheep!! :19 NOW comes the question: **Will you follow me?** So, at the same place on the same Lake - almost 3 years after leaving all to follow Jesus — he has to decide again if he would follow Jesus. And HE CHOOSES TO FOLLOW- again.

:20 Peter is still a project — ‘Peter turned - slows his step and asks, *“what about John?”* Let's be fair here - what about him [Peter makes it almost 10 seconds without stepping in it] Jesus' response is :22 *‘if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you: YOU must follow me’*

When Jesus asks us to commit to him it has nothing to do with anyone else - **it is personal, just between him and us**. From experience I can tell you that every so often - it is easy to turn and compare our lives/ our sacrifice to someone else and Jesus says, *‘this is between us will you choose to follow me?’*

And, we need to stop and choose to follow AGAIN. IIL; **I chose to follow** Jesus when I was 5 — in Grade 12 I needed to choose again at the end of my first year of BS - when I felt called to Pastoral ministry - I had to choose again when I was 25 and wrestling with letting the HS gift me as he desired - I had to choose again 4 1/2 years ago during a very tough time at Brentview I had to choose again 1 year ago when I met Rene/Curtis and they asked me to come and join you I had to choose again (and I am so glad I did) **Jesus always asks the same question** So do you really love me/ are you all in' — because deep love> is the place deep service and passion for Jesus flows from.

And the marvelous thing about Peter's walk with Jesus is that there is a pattern that keeps being repeated.

> Out of love Jesus graciously called Peter - the first time at the lake of Galilee to Follow him.> Then he cheered him on during his great ahhas.

> Jesus didn't forsake him when he messed up — he made a personal visit to him. > And when he was in the midst of despair - Jesus met him AGAIN at the Lake to ask him to follow again ...

Each step along Peter's journey each step in our Journey

i) Jesus promises to walk with us and

ii) he will ask will you choose to follow me?

Question: So today — Jesus is asking:

Will you choose to Follow Him again today? How would you answer?