

Trinity 12; Proper 17

30/08/20

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Licensed Lay Minister

*Lord, Take my words and make them yours,
so that each of us would hear from you. Amen.*

Oh, poor Peter!

And I'm not referring to my long-suffering
husband ...

No, I'm referring to the Peter who today's
Gospel reading is this the object of Jesus's
Great Rebuke

If you were here last Sunday, or joined me
at the online Wednesday service, you would
have heard how Peter, inspired by God the
Father, had correctly identified Jesus as 'the
Messiah, the Son of the living God'.

In response, Jesus had told Peter that he
would be the rock on which he would build
his church.

That passage ended with Peter riding high.

And now...

From getting it so right, Peter gets it so wrong.

Let's set the scene...,

The secret is out...

The disciples now know that Jesus is the longed for Messiah

But

Do they understand what that means?

No...they are still thinking in terms of a conquering Messiah, a warrior king who would lead an uprising against the Romans.

Jesus tell them that this is not his way; not God's way.

Jesus tells them that he must go to Jerusalem; that he must suffer; that he must be killed ...and that he will be raised on the third day.

This is so far removed from what they expected that it's perhaps not surprising that they couldn't take it in and Peter, their spokesperson takes Jesus aside and says

"God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you"

His reaction, his words, are totally understandable.

What isn't at first sight so understandable is Jesus's response.

Jesus turns round and says to Peter

"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me"

Wow...poor Peter...

one moment Jesus is congratulating him and the next moment Jesus is chillingly addressing him as Satan

within a few minutes Peter crumbles from being a rock to a stumbling block

how dejected he must have felt

Lets face it, he had acted from the best of intentions; he had wanted to protect Jesus

And to be referred to as Satan; the tempter; the accuser

That must have been hard to take

And yet, the reality, which of course Peter couldn't see at the time, was that his words, his actions were a temptation...a temptation for Jesus to take the way of human power, to compromise his mission; to deviate from his divine path and calling.

Poor Peter...he only wanted to protect his friend

What had he done so wrong?

Well its been suggested that the clue lies in the first three words which Jesus says to Peter

If you remember, they were ...

They were 'get behind me'

"Get behind me, Satan"

“Get behind me...”

Peter’s role was behind Jesus not in front of him.

Peter’s role was to follow Jesus

not to try to influence him,

to try to lead him

And all credit to Peter, he does continue to follow Jesus.

Although he has done the wrong thing; said the wrong the wrong words...heard Jesus rebuke him with those hard words...he continues to be Jesus’s disciple

And Jesus continues to love him

Peter has messed it up; said the wrong thing at the wrong time

And Jesus continues to love him

It won’t be the last time Peter messes things up

If we continue reading Matthews Gospel we will find Peter messing it up big time when he denies that he knows Jesus

But Jesus continues to love him

And Jesus's promise that Peter would be the foundation on which his church would be built does prove to be true...but that is for another day.

Now I suspect that I'm not the only person here this morning who messes things up from time to time

Who does the wrong thing...once again with the best of intentions, but its still the wrong thing

Who says the wrong words...maybe with the best of intentions, but its still the wrong words

And That's why I'm so encouraged by today's Gospel reading

It reminds us that the Gospel is Good News

It reminds that Jesus loves us even when we mess up

It reminds us that we don't have to get it right all the time

It reminds us that all we have to do is do what Peter did and continue to follow Jesus.

Amen