

The Twelve: Solidifying the Rock, Part 1

Luke 6:14

February 19, 2017

So this is sort of a character study, kind of a meditative study on Peter, and we'll cover some of the other Apostle as well—not in as much detail as we will Peter, but we will definitely take some time on Peter. I'd like to introduce our study by starting with a monumental moment in Peter's life and to look at that. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the 16th chapter of Matthew. Matthew chapter 16. We'll be starting in verse 13. There have been many portraits painted of the Apostle Peter throughout church history. For those in the Roman Catholic Church—maybe some of you come from that background—he's not Simon Peter, he's Saint Peter. He is the first bishop of the Roman Church, and he has become—through stained glass, enshrined in stain glass and entombed in tradition—he's become somewhat remote in that communion because he is that monumental figure, foundational figure in the Roman Catholic, not just church, but the papacy.

If we look at popular evangelicalism, we have another picture of Peter, don't we? He's been pulled down from lofty heights, and it's his humanness that is emphasized among evangelicals and even his commonness, sometimes even his foolishness at times. We like to comfort ourselves, "Well, at least I wasn't as foolish as Peter." Many see Peter as the Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth. Some people have seen him as so familiar that he is like that buddy we can imagine hanging out with, eating chips and dip and watching sports. Most may refrain from painting too profane of a picture of Peter although I've heard some that I wouldn't want to repeat and talk about, that I wouldn't want to dignify by mentioning too much detail. But there are many who've come to see Peter, as one guy described him, kind of like an energetic puppy. He's well-meaning, tail-wagging, knocking stuff over, but kind of dumb, unwittingly getting himself in all kinds of unintended trouble. We can allow the biblical record to defend the true view of Peter. He wouldn't want us running around defending his image, and this sermon today is not so much about Peter, but about Christ. It's about what Christ did in and through Peter. And that's where Peter would want us to put all the emphasis anyway—on his Lord and Savior.

But we do want to make an initial observation about the various portraits of Peter. And there are many. People tend to see Peter as someone who is rather like themselves. We tend to look at Peter on the pages of Scripture, and it feels somewhat like we're looking in a mirror. More than any other Apostle, Peter is the one who seems most relatable to us. He's the one with whom each of us seems to have the most in common. And there's a reason for that. As an illustration, many today look back in church history to the Protestant Reformation, and they look back to Martin Luther as the Protestant Reformer that they most relate to. He's their favorite. You talk about Ulrich Zwingli, even John Calvin, Martin Bucer, Philip Melancton—not so much. Those are a bit more foreign to us. Why is that? It's because Martin Luther says so much that's memorable, for better and for worse. He says a lot that's quotable. He reveals a lot about himself because, frankly, he's less restrained in his speech. He jumps right out there, even talking quite a bit about himself, not maybe in a prideful way, but maybe just in a revealing way, more than the other Reformers.

So that means we know far more about Martin Luther than the other Reformers, so it makes sense we identify with him, and a lot of people like him as a favorite Reformer. And it's similar

with Peter. In the wisdom of God, we have more of Peter's words and actions recorded in Scripture than the other Apostles, and it's probably because he was maybe more impulsive than the other Apostles. Maybe less restrained. And I want to add a caution that I don't see him as self-centered or profane, as we're going to see. It's just that he's more of an out-with-it kind of a guy than other men, meaning there is more of his humanity on display, more of his heart out there for us to look at. At the end of the day, it's his humanity we can all identify with because it's a humanity that's common to all of us. No matter what kind of personality we have, we can see our humanity reflected in the humanity of Peter on the pages of Scripture. There are times when Peter's words rise to sublime heights. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Or when he says in the face of the apostasy of many of Jesus' disciples—Jesus turns to the Twelve and says, "Do you want to go away as well?" And Peter says, heroically, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." There are times when his actions are nothing short of heroic, demonstrations of great faith. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

We marvel at what seems to be remarkable faith, or at times maybe even reckless faith. Peter made the good confession. He

was spot-on in his theology at that point. Peter took a supernatural walk with the Lord Jesus on the water. What other Apostle could say that? At other times, though, Peter could be shockingly impetuous in his speech. He made promises he couldn't keep. He audaciously rebuked the Lord himself. After calling him "Lord," he rebuked the Lord. In his actions sometimes, Peter could swing wildly from the impulsively courageous—he's ready to take on the entire Roman cohort with his single sword, but we also see on the other side of that the cowardly and vacillating as he is shamed by a slave girl. Or as he plays the hypocrite with Judaizers, or worse, as he boasts about his courage before Christ and the Apostle only to be revealed by the crow of a rooster, and deny Christ just hours later when it counted most.

So we feel the shame with Peter. We identify with his sins and his weaknesses because we know that we ourselves would have probably spoken and acted in much the same way many of the times we see there. Or if we're not wired like Peter and tend to be more reserved, we know that we would have at least had the same impulses, the same temptations. We're never repelled by him; we're actually drawn to him the more we see, especially as we admire his humility, his proper sense of reverence in the holy presence of Jesus Christ. He says, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a

sinful man." We rejoice with him, too, whenever he gets it right. Why is that? Because Peter is the Apostle with whom we all most identify. I think that's one of the reasons the Lord chose him to not only be an Apostle, but one of his close, intimate associates because there are qualities about Peter we can all identify with. He's clearly a leader among the Twelve, but he's not a remote or aloof person. He's real. He's transparent, even demonstratively so whether that's good or bad for his overall reputation. We always know what Peter is thinking, don't we? It makes him so easy to portray in the biblical record because he's given the authors of Scripture so much material to work with.

I believe that was God's design, as I said, not just in choosing him for apostleship, but in putting him a prominent place among the Apostles because God wanted all of us to see in Peter lessons about weakness and strength, lessons about courage and cowardice, lessons about relying on self and the end of that versus relying on Christ and the end of that. All these things teach us that at the center of all of it is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Peter we're all able to see something of ourselves. We find encouragement and hope as we live our own

Christian lives. We know that at the end of the day what's best about us is Christ.

As we've said, Peter is a leader among the Twelve, kind of a *primus inter pares*, that Latin phrase that means "first among equals." He's listed at the head of the innermost circle in all four of the lists of the Apostles, as we talked about. He's the one we find leading the other men, speaking out on their behalf, or even taking action before any of them know what's going on. He's always jumping into the fray before anyone else, taking the initiative. He's clearly a leader. That's what we see portrayed in Matthew 16:13 and following. This is really a foundational moment in a foundational time in church history, and particularly so in light of the fact this is the first time in church history that the word "church" is used to refer to the church. Our Lord first used the word "church" here in Matthew 16, one of only three times in all the Gospels. Once here, and then twice in Matthew 18:17, but beyond that, we wait for the Spirit to fall on the believers in the Book of Acts to see this word "church" used again. *Ekklesia*—we see it used routinely to refer to this new body of believers. So this is a foundational text. It's a foundational moment. And Peter, once again, is right at the center. Look what it says in Matthew 16:13: "Now when Jesus

came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'"

Stop there for a second. The scene takes place in Caesarea Philippi. It's a city that was perched atop a rocky plateau, 1,500 feet above sea level. It's at the northern end of the Golan Heights situated at the foothills of Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is this massive rock giant, towering more than 9,000 feet above sea level. The whole region is in the shadow beneath it. The city of Caesarea Philippi is the ancient city of Paneas, which is dedicated to the Greek god Pan, devoted to Pan worship. In Roman times, Philip the Tetrarch built up and beautified this city, renaming it Caesarea Philippi in honor of the emperor Caesar Augustus, who was also viewed by the Romans as a god. So the city and the entire region that they just entered are symbols of pagan worship. And it's interesting that the Lord chose this place and not another to draw the good confession out of his disciples. Why? Because in contrast to the many erroneous opinions of the Jews, and in contrast of the false worship of the Greeks and the Romans, Jesus wants the Apostles to think about him in antithetical black and white terms. He is exclusive and unique. That's what he wants them to see. Notice verse 14: "And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah,

and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' [You see the confusion there.] He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! [Son of John, that is.] For flesh and blood has not revealed this you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ."

So in contrast to the other prophets and great men in Israel's history, Jesus is set apart. He is unique. He is the Christ, the Messiah of God. And there's only one of those. In contrast to the pagan deities, Jesus is not some other dead idol. He's not some other god with a small "g." He's the Son of the living God. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone upon whom the church would be built. Peter's confession identifies that cornerstone truth of the church's foundation that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter himself is one of the twelve foundation stones.

Now, that is an amazing confession and a quite a special commendation of Peter by our Lord, isn't it? But there is a sense in which Peter, though he is a specially chosen instrument of Christ for a unique task, for an uncommon calling of apostleship, Peter represents a true typical believer. Peter wasn't the only one of the Apostles to come to the right conclusion, he was just the first to speak up, as per usual. In fact, I think Peter's good friend, the Apostle John, who was there, would have come to that very conclusion. Turn just briefly to John 11:25. There, John tells us that the same confession that Peter made at Caesarea Philip was actually the common Christian confession. And not just of all the Apostle, but of all true believers. And he makes the point here by letting us hear the same confession, almost word for word, not from an Apostle, but from the hurried, worried, distracted Martha. You may remember that this scene in John 11 is on the sorrowful occasion of the death of her brother Lazarus. And Jesus is speaking words of comfort to her. He said to Martha in verse 25: "'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She

said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'

Now notice there that Jesus did not stop at that point and say, "Blessed are you, Martha, and I tell you, you are *petra* and on this rock, I will build my church and I'll give you the keys of heaven," and so on and so forth. He doesn't stop and say that, does he? She said exactly what Peter said because that is the common confession of every true disciple.

So again, just to emphasize, Peter's life represents the common life of every true disciple. It's grounded in faith and it's explainable only by God. As Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you." That is, you didn't come up with this on your own, Peter, "but my Father who is in heaven." God is the reason for every true believer, and faith in Christ is what causes us to follow the path of Peter. For weakness is strength. We all share a common life, which comes from God. We all make a common confession, which was revealed to us by God. We all grow in the same direction toward Christlikeness because that is the purpose and intention of God. And Peter would have us understand that

very same thing. He would have us understand that his life, not a special calling to apostleship mind you, but his life—it's the typical experience for every true believer. As he wrote in his first epistle: "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture:

'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious [Who's that? Jesus Christ.], and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'"

So Peter is neither the remote, transcendent saint of the Roman Catholic Church, enshrined in stained glass to be admired as the Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome, the first pope—nor is he merely the Apostle who represents all those who speak and act impetuously, who lack wisdom, who are guilty of inserting foot in mouth all the time. Peter represents every true believer, grounded in faith, instructed in hope, and serving his Savior for his entire lifetime with a heart of an increasing passionate love for Christ. If you've looked at your outline for this morning in your bulletin, that's the general flow: faith, hope and love. Faith, hope and love.

Let's look at the first point. In faith, Peter followed Jesus Christ. In the text that we just read, Matthew 16:18, Jesus told Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." The mention of that nickname "Peter" harkened back to the time when Peter first met Jesus. We looked at this passage last week, but you might want to turn there in John. You're in John right now, so just turn back to John 1 verse 40. John the Baptist had just pointed two of his disciples to Jesus, and they left John to follow Jesus, which was appropriate, and one of them was Andrew. Look at John 1:40. "One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)."

So he translates it from the Aramaic to the Greek for the Greek readers of his Gospel. Jesus gave Simon the name Peter at that very first meeting. It's the word *cephas* in Aramaic, the word *petros* in Greek, and it refers to a detached, but a very

large fragment of rock. And the rock upon which Jesus would build his church is a *petra*. That's the next word he uses in Matthew 16:18. It's a *petra*, a massive, a living rock. Peter is a fragment from that larger rock. Jesus didn't name Peter "rock" because he was so rock-like dependable—not at this point, anyway. He named him Peter because he knew what he planned to do with Simon. He looked ahead. And Jesus intended to make Simon firm like a rock, like a *petros*. He intended to turn his life into the bedrock foundation for the entire church, the entire church age. Jesus could say that even from these early days because he identified in Peter the evidence of the Father's work. He saw in Peter the indispensable quality and virtue of every true disciple. What is it? It's the necessary and foundational virtue of faith.

So when Andrew told Peter, "We have found the Messiah," Peter came. He started following Jesus from that point on. And by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we see that Peter was with Jesus in Cana of Galilee, where the water was turned into wine at the wedding. He watched Jesus there in Jerusalem clear the temple of the buyers and the sellers and the moneychangers. Remember later that it was said, "Zeal for your house has consumed me." He saw that in Jesus. He was around for the

meeting of Nicodemus, maybe in not in the room, but close enough to get the report and find out what happened. Jesus taught him the foundational need for regeneration, for rebirth, for new birth from the Holy Spirit from God. Peter then traveled back to Galilee with Jesus. He witnessed the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman when he came back and found him talking to a Samaritan woman. Then he saw the harvest of the Samaritans who came to Christ. Peter believed and he followed, and he saw all this marvelous, miraculous stuff.

Back in Galilee, as they get back there after the time of Samaritans, Simon Peter felt the need to get back home to Capernaum to attend to his responsibilities. He had a family to think about, his fishing business to get back to. And the Bible is clear he was a married man. Peter had a mother-in-law—Mark 1:30, Matthew 8:14, Luke 4:38. We've seen that already, that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. So he was married. And Paul uses Peter's marriage as an example of the right to be supported in Gospel ministry—1 Corinthians 9:5: "Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other Apostles and the brothers of our Lord and Cephas?" By the time Paul wrote that to the Corinthians, it was around AD 55. It would appear at that point that Peter's children, if he had any, were grown up and

self-supported, so he wasn't dragging a whole family through the Roman Empire; but earlier on when Peter first met Jesus, he was still occupied with his family and his fishing business. It makes sense. He was a hard-working man. He was supporting his wife and his kids and feeding them and taking care of his dear mother-in-law.

Because of Peter's dedication in providing for his family, though, he missed Christ's intent in calling him to full-time discipleship. And so Jesus had to call him not once, but twice. We already covered this, but just turn back really quickly to Luke 5:1-11. We've already been through this text together in our study of Luke's Gospel. I'll resist the temptation to preach that sermon again, but man, it's such a good section of Scripture, isn't it? The first call to full-time discipleship was in Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20—same event. Jesus was in Capernaum, and he was walking by the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, and they were casting their nets into the sea, fishing. He said to them, "Follow me, I will make you fishers of men." And he did the same right after that with the other two brothers, James and John. All of them responded in the same way. They immediately left their nets to follow Christ. But after that, Jesus left Capernaum to travel throughout Galilee for his

itinerant ministry to the towns and villages of Galilee. And again, Peter, Andrew, James, John—they had responsibilities. They had a fishing business to run, workers to manage, families to feed. So at that point, they didn't understand that Jesus' call to discipleship was intended for them to be full-time, to leave everything and come.

So in Luke 5:1-11 Jesus comes back to Capernaum after his itinerant ministry, and he gave those disciples a frustrating night of fishing just so he could make a point. All night—caught nothing. He made a point that his call to discipleship was to be permanent. Jesus orchestrated a special miracle, one that would make an indelible impression upon a fisherman, in particular. And Jesus said to Simon in verse 4, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Remember, it's morning. Fishing's done. They're done fishing. They're washing it and mending nets. They're getting ready to rest. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Peter protested. Then he obeyed. And then he witnessed an incredible miracle, which revealed to him that Jesus is no ordinary man. And how do you respond to that? Look at verse 8. "Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" That gives us some insight into Peter's nature, doesn't it? He's spiritually

sensitive, endearingly so. Yes, he dared to talk back to Jesus, but he didn't realize who Jesus was. When he discovered his error, he was quick to repent, to admit his fault. He was very self-reflective about that. I mean, he didn't stop and say, "Whoa, Jesus, you can understand my error, I mean, I, as an expert fisherman with vast fishing experience on these waters, and you, Rabbi, I mean, how was I to know you had super powers? You didn't announce it." The heart of every believer is to not make excuses, but to see and to admit sin and to repent. And Peter is stricken with the thought that he had dared to contradict the Holy.

Look at Jesus. He's so gracious, isn't he? "And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him." All that illustrates is that when Jesus called, Peter followed. After the initial, early introduction found in John's Gospel, Peter believed in Jesus. He trusted in him. And then he followed him in faith. When Jesus called Peter to discipleship on the shores of Galilee, again Peter believed, and he trusted and again he followed. Now, with Jesus' call to full time discipleship, it's clear, it's unambiguous, it's permanent, it's exclusive. Peter is required to

turn away from his life, from his business, from all that he had established—and once again we see that Peter trusted Jesus. He followed Jesus Christ immediately in repentant, humble, faith. What about us? Is that the character of our faith? Are we self-reflective and humble? Or do we stiffen our necks in pride and make excuses for our bad behavior? Are we quick to obey the Lord in faith? Or do we resist, failing to trust him, to follow the Lord no matter where he leads? The New Testament would have us see that Peter would exemplify a typical faith. It's not a perfect faith, and neither is ours, but it's one that is common to every true believer. And in that sense, we're the same as Peter. We come to Jesus by faith. We trust in him as God's chosen Messiah, the Son of the Living God. And it's by faith, and it's because of faith that we learn from Christ, too. Right?

That's a second point, that in hope, Peter learned from Jesus Christ. When Peter trusted Christ with everything, he left behind him an old life, a familiar life. He left behind him all that he had built, all his built-up credibility, all of his old friendships, all the familiar places. And he embarked on an entirely new life. He set a course into the unknown, uncharted waters of apostleship. He could have had no idea at this point in his life, early on that following Christ would take him into

the very heart of the Roman Empire, to the city of Rome itself and ultimately to martyrdom. But the call of Christ was nonetheless disruptive. So what caused Simon to set aside all that was familiar, all that was comfortable? Simply stated, it's the transforming power, the life-changing power of hope.

In Hebrews 11:1, we learn about the character of faith, right? It's the definitional verse there. We learn that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That means faith is focused on an object. Faith isn't self-focused; it's focused on an object. And the power of faith is the power of the object that we trust. So if your faith is in your career, you've got a pretty shaky foundation for your faith. If your faith is in your own strength, wisdom, power, money-making ability, whatever it is—your charm, your good looks, whatever it is—if that's where your faith is focused, the object of your faith cannot stand. If your hope and faith is pressed on, focused on the living God, who created heaven and earth and everything that's in it, who says, "I am God and there is no other"—well, then you've got a rock-solid foundation for your faith because your faith is focused on the right object—God himself. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It's the conviction of things not seen. Faith is focused on an object.

The thing that is hoped for, the thing which is hoped for is something that is not seen. Peter writes about this virtue of hope immediately after the greeting in his first letter. He says in 1 Peter 1:3 to 5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [that's where we see that power manifest—to raise dead people to life], to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Peter is describing what happened to him and what has happened to every Christian since him. It is a living hope because it is a life-giving, life-producing hope. God causes his people to be born again. And the life of that newborn creation in Christ is fixed upon and aimed toward this new and living hope. And when we pursue that hope throughout our lives, looking toward it with the eyes of faith, God changes us. As we trust God, as we put our faith in Christ, we learn from him, his teaching, his ways. Our mind is renewed, our life is transformed, we obey him. And that's exactly what we see in Peter's life, right? Faith in Christ taught Peter to hope in

Christ, and the more he learned from Jesus' teaching, the more consistently he followed in obedience. The more he observed the Lord's life, the more certain he was, the deeper his conviction, assured of his own foundation of his own faith.

Now, in a survey like this, we don't have the time, nor is it fitting to survey all of Jesus' doctrine. Don't worry. We are, after all, working our way through Luke's Gospel, so we'll have the privilege of learning directly from the Lord's teaching and hearing what Peter heard for himself. You should be in Luke 5 right now. So if you'll look just at Luke 6, the section immediately following where we are right now, what comes next is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. So we have the calling of the Twelve, the naming of the Twelve—that's where we are. And then right after this is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. Now, notice that sermon was not primarily for the crowds, though the crowds were there. It wasn't primarily evangelistic in nature. Notice what Luke tells us in verse 20 when Jesus started preaching; it says that he "lifted up his eyes on" whom? Not all the crowds, but "on his disciples." And in fact, much of Jesus' best-known public teaching—the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet discourse, which is all about the end times, even the kingdom

parables—his teaching wasn't primarily aimed at a wide audience. He was using most concern to teach his disciples, satisfied to instruct those who trusted him, who followed him. It's actually a very small group.

Some of his most beloved, best remembered teachings are in the parables. And Jesus was very clear about his strategy for teaching in parables. Matthew 13:10 says, "[His] disciples came to him and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?'" Do you know what Jesus said? "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." And after quoting a judgment prophecy of Isaiah, Jesus blessed his disciples in verses 16 and 17 of Matthew 13. He said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see and did not see, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." So here's Peter, an early beneficiary of this exclusive privileged teaching. All the Apostles were. And not only that, but Peter and the Apostles—they were privy to the private teaching ministry of Jesus, his more intimate teaching that the larger crowds never hear. We already mentioned the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi. None of the crowds were there for that.

In fact, in Matthew 16:20 Jesus strictly charged the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. Look at his teaching on the childlikeness of the believer in Matthew 18 or forgiveness in Matthew 18, also, the Upper Room discourse, the vine and the branches—all that doctrine. Peter and the Apostles learned all of that from Jesus apart from the crowds, and even for them, apart from the larger group of disciples. And in those intimate settings, one man stands out—Peter. It was the curiosity and the interest of Simon Peter that drew even more out of Jesus. He's the guy in the classroom who's always got his hand up. He's always wanting further explanation and elaboration, and I love that about him because he's bold. He's unafraid to ask a question, even that question. You know every teacher tells you, "Look, the only stupid question is the one not asked." That's not true. There are stupid questions. But look, good on you for asking the question even if it is a stupid question. That was Peter. He's unafraid to ask the question even if it might make him look foolish, even if others are quick to upbraid him for it.

Listen, if it weren't for Peter asking follow-up questions, think about how much we would have missed. In Matthew 15:15, if Peter hadn't asked, "Explain that parable to us," we wouldn't hear Jesus explain the source of defiling sin, that evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander—all those would defile a person. Where do they come from? They come from the heart. It's not what goes into you, but what comes out of you that's the issue. Or this: having heard how believers must forgive those who seek forgiveness, every time they seek it, in Matthew 18:21, Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often?" I mean let's be real here. How often when my brother has sinned against me will I forgive him—as many as seven times. We tend to laugh at Peter, right? Because he thought his shallow view of forgiveness was rather magnanimous. But without that question, we'd all tend to think the same exact thing, wouldn't we? We would want limits. We all tend to be more interested in defining the limits of our own responsibility toward God and other people—we're more interested in that than we are in mimicking the character of our forgiving God. We're like that. It's sad, isn't it? So when Jesus answered Peter's question, telling him a parable of the unmerciful servant, thanks to Peter, we now understand in no uncertain terms that God wants us

to follow his pattern of forgiveness, which is, thankfully, without limit.

So Peter kept reinforcing his hope in Jesus Christ by learning as much he could in Christ's presence. He was an eager learner, and he cultivated a heart of spiritual curiosity. He was one of the most teachable men in the bunch because he trusted Jesus implicitly; he loved him deeply, and he kept reaching out in hope to understand. By observing Peter's hunger for learning from Jesus, his desire to solidify his hope in Jesus Christ, we see in him a principle that Jesus taught come to pass in Peter's life. Also, his two friends in that innermost circle—the brothers James and John—Jesus told them in Luke 8:18, "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away." Look, that's the godly principle of learning, of being a careful listener.

Some people are content with just a Sunday morning. But here's the deal, those who cultivate a heart of listening, of hearing the Word, of responding to it in obedience, you know what they receive from the Lord? More light, more truth. But to

those who are lazy about the truth or distracted with so many other things, those who are satisfied with superficiality, with mediocrity, satisfied with other things the world has to offer, you know what they're going to suffer? They're going to suffer the judgment of remaining in that ignorance. Those who are satisfied with superficial understanding of God, those who are satisfied and comfortable with mediocrity, that is a frightening place to be because it could indicate there's a much deeper problem.

Look, God is under no obligation whatsoever to give more truth, to give more understanding, to give more light to those who are flippant about learning, to those who are indifferent, to those who are uninterested in change. Are you resistant to change? Look, every single one of us is resistant to change to some degree, aren't we? But Christ—he did not save us to leave us the same. He saved us to change us. To those who love the Word, those who draw near to the truth, those who cultivate spiritual curiosity and cultivate a teachable heart, God is joyful, and he is eager to give them more light, more truth, more understanding. He wants to lavish it on people like that. I believe that Jesus demonstrated that very principle with Peter and James and John, bringing these three men closer, blessing

them with more intimate access to him to teach them more and more.

Do you remember Mary and Martha? We just mentioned Martha. Sisters. Polar opposites, too, weren't they? I mentioned Martha earlier; she's always bustling around, fretting about all the issues of serving the guests, cooking the meals. In all her serving, she was starting on one occasion to get irritated with her dreamy-eyed sister, right? Mary. Remember that? Where was Mary? Luke 10:39 says, "She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." Martha had had about enough of that. So she stomped right up to the Lord, dead-set on enlisting him to set her sister straight: "Lord, do you not care?" Well, that's a charge isn't it? "Do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" And then she continues because she thinks, "Of course he would never admit to that." So "Tell her then to help me." Pretty bold, right? I mean you address him as "Lord" and then you dare to command him? The Lord is so gracious in his response. What does he say? "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." So tender toward the anxious and troubled heart, even though he's not in any way affirming it, is he? Instead, he affirms and

commends Mary because she is focused on his teaching. The same attitude as Peter. Always eager to learn, always intently listening to the Lord's teaching, so the Lord drew him in even nearer. Peter's drawn in and very close at times to a most privileged position. He was there to see the Lord do and teach things that the other Apostles even didn't see and experience.

I want to show you two examples of that, but we only have enough time today for one. So I'm going to show you one today, and then when we come back next time, we'll look at the next one. But turn over, for a second—you're in Luke, so just turn over in Luke to Chapter 8 and verse 40. All three synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—contain this story, but it's Mark and Luke who note that this exclusive privilege was reserved for Peter, James and John and by order of Jesus himself. The account that begins in Luke 8:40 is really two stories for the price of one because while traveling to do one miraculous act, Jesus performs another. And it's seemingly incidental and coincidental—but wait! Nothing is coincidental in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, right? Everything is on purpose, just like everything in life. Look at Luke 8:40. We'll just read a couple of verses there to introduce it. "Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. [There is this cheering,

massive crowd. They're excited. He's back in Capernaum.] And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying."

The synagogue ruler, this is the guy who is responsible for the logistics, the administration of the weekly services, the instruction, the activities. And knowing what we know about the Jewish religious establishment, this man is one of the least likely of people to welcome Jesus back into Capernaum. So the ESV text doesn't translate an important word in the Greek text for some reason, but Luke put a clue in verse 41 to prepare us to see something surprising. Luke inserts the word *idou*, which means "behold." And that's because the presence of a synagogue official in this welcoming crowd is a total surprise based on what we've read. The synagogue officials were typically sympathetic to the scribes and pharisees. So they would have shared the same outrage at Jesus' repeated violations of long-standing Sabbath Day traditions of all the rabbis. This man Jairus—he's not just a synagogue official, he's also a parent. He's a father. And he's got an only daughter, one that is dear to him—very tender moment here. Every father can understand this

looking at his daughters. It just pulls the heart strings, doesn't it? She's dying. Amazing how trials in life can soften a hard heart, open up a person—even an enemy in this case—and cause him or her to view Christ through different eyes.

Peter's there. He's learning and observing how Jesus responds to this request from a generally antagonistic synagogue official, and Jesus, rather than responding coldly to this synagogue ruler, the text says, "As Jesus went." There's the request and then there's "As Jesus went." We see his heart in his action, right? Jesus had no thought whatsoever of withholding his compassion. His immediate desire is to help, to heal the girl, to restore life, to bring joy back into this family. So they set off immediately to Jairus' home. Look at verse 42 in the middle of the verse. "As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. That's an interesting note from Luke, isn't it? He probably didn't like writing that as a physician, a doctor himself. "She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, 'Who was it that touched me?' And when all denied it, Peter said,

'Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!' [I guess to say, "I mean everyone touched you. What are you talking about? One person? What are you talking about?"] But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.' And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.'

Peter and the Twelve—you get the scene, right? They're moving along through this massive throng of people gathered in Capernaum, and unbeknownst to any of them, there is this poor woman in the crowd. She's endured this twelve-year-long trial—this chronic blood flow—and I believe the nature of this trial is something that only a woman can truly understand. So all of us men, we don't get this fully, but suffice it to say, being in public, smashed in this crowd—this is the last place this lady wants to be. But she pushes through anyway, and she's hoping she can reach out in anonymity and just touch Jesus' garment. She believes he has the power to heal her. She was able to touch his garment, and incredibly, her hemorrhage stopped immediately, and she knew it. More incredible, at least to all of us, is the fact

that Jesus knew it, too. And Jesus intended to expose her, not to embarrass her, but to elicit from her this confession of true faith, to draw it out. Because what is he doing? Teaching. Teaching. Teaching. Training. Training. Training.

Jesus had more to tell her at that moment. He's intending to give her an even greater assurance than mere physical healing. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." Peter had not understood the nature of Jesus' power—that it wasn't just some impersonal force of power flowing through Jesus. Jesus isn't tapped into some flow of cosmic energy and knows how to channel, how to tap into the energy stream, the life force of the universe and direct it toward positive healing ends. No! Turn off your TBN and don't listen to that garbage. Jesus is God. He possesses a divine nature in addition to a human nature. So when power flows from him because as the doctrine of divine simplicity states, the being of God is identical with the attributes of God. God is not composed of parts. The essence of his being is not complex, but simple. And in some way, by virtue of the hypostatic union, his divine nature communicated the knowledge of the flow of that power to his human nature, so Jesus knew.

I know what you're thinking at this point, "Divine simplicity, Peter. I mean, hypostatic union. I mean, come on, Peter. I mean, obviously! How could you ask such an ignorant question, Peter?" No, you're not thinking that because, like Peter, the essence of the divine nature is as incomprehensible to you as it was to him. How the divine nature interacted with the human nature within the God-man Jesus Christ—all of that is fundamentally incomprehensible to us. Look, we wouldn't stop and think about that had not Luke recorded Peter's question. But listen, we make distinctions between God's attributes so that we can make some kind of attempt to apprehend his truth and understand him, his essence, the nature of his being, like his holiness and his mercy and his justice and his love, his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. But you don't piece those attributes together to make God. He's not the sum of all his attributes. As it says in the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology—all you theologians out there will love this statement—"It is futile to argue to the superiority of one attribute over another. Every attribute is essential. One cannot be more essential than another in a simple, non-extended being." God is not made up of parts. No special parts, no temporal parts, no metaphysical parts or attributes; God is one. And that means

that you cannot separate his omniscience from his omnipotence. His power and his knowledge are one. And in the mysterious operation and communication of the two natures in Jesus Christ—one divine, one human—there is no way, verse 46, that power could go out from Jesus apart from him knowing it.

So back to Peter. He's witnessing the doctrine of divine simplicity in real time. He's beholding the very essence of deity, the profound mystery of the incarnation and not just in the healing of the woman, but in the response of Jesus. Jesus knows that power has gone out from him, and in the midst of his knowledge of that fact, what's amazingly profound, what's fundamentally incomprehensible to us—for Jesus, it's just a matter of course. And he stops to take time, not to note that, but to minister to this dear woman's spiritual need, to teach the people around him. So all of you are just going to have to forgive Peter for not immediately recognizing all of that at the moment.

We have the advantage of hindsight, of reading it on the pages of Scripture. Check out verse 49 because he's about to learn even more. "While he was still speaking, someone from the

ruler's house came and said, 'Your daughter is dead.'" Oh man. The pathos just increased tenfold, didn't it? "Do not trouble the teacher anymore.' But Jesus on hearing this answered him, 'Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.' And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, 'Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.'"

And look at that. Not comprehending the divine, they laughed at him. "And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead." Oh really? You know? This is the first time Jesus separated Peter, James, and John from the rest of the disciples. Here and in Mark 5:37 the grammar is very clear that these three disciples are marked out from all the others. The little girl's parents and no one else but those three. In Mark's account, when the professional mourners erupted into a mocking laughter at Jesus' diagnosis, Mark 5:40 says, "He put them all outside and he took the child's father and mother and those who were with him [that is Peter, James and John] and went into where the child was." Jesus is intentional here to single out these three men and to bestow upon them a special privilege. Keep reading. Look at verse 54. "But taking her by the hand he called, saying,

'Child, arise.' And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened."

Again, he is putting a circle around some knowledge and keeping it from other people. So the little girl, the parents, Peter, James and John, and Jesus, until now written in Scripture—they're the ones who know. That's resurrection power displayed there, which only God possesses. And it's great power, but in the tender hands of such a gentle Shepherd. Watching Jesus is what taught Peter everything he knew. First, about fishing for men; and second, about shepherding people. Jesus is so tender not just to raise her up, but to give her a snack. He's thinking of everything.

Remember where we started this morning with Peter's good confession? It identified Jesus for who he really is. He is the Christ, the chosen Messiah of God. He is the Son of the living God, with all of the attributes of deity, the very essence of divinity in his fully divine nature but robed in human flesh with the fullness of humanity as well. So in faith Peter

followed Jesus. Why wouldn't he? He left everything to follow him and it was worth it. He did it in hope. Peter learned from Jesus Christ. His spiritual curiosity was not only awakened, but it was fanned into a flame that would never ever be quenched. And Peter cultivated a heart of learning. He set aside every distraction in his life and just gave himself to be teachable at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. The more Peter learned, the more deeply he admired, worshipped and loved him. That love is what drove him to serve Jesus Christ faithfully to the very end, which was a bitter and yet a joyful end with martyrdom. That's where we're going to pick it up next time when we return to our study of Peter, Part 2 in a couple weeks.