

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Encourage Them with Words

that Create Hope in Their Hearts

Title:

Scripture:

John 21:15-19

Text:

Romans 15:1-6

Peter has denied his Lord, the One he so fiercely loves. He has failed Him. So what should he do now? Should Peter try again?

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus calls the disciples away from their nets. From that time on, Jesus says they will "fish for people." (Luke 5:10). They have a new calling. Yet after Jesus' death, after Peter's failure to stand up for His Lord, Peter goes fishing. Maybe he needs a career change. Being a disciple has not gone so well. Maybe he has no idea what to do. Where does he stand with Jesus?

So Peter goes fishing. That night, out on the lake, Peter and the others catch nothing. Experienced fishermen, yet nothing to show for a night's work. Not one fish. Not until Jesus comes in the morning, that is. In the middle of another failure, Jesus appears. Jesus tells them that they are fishing on the wrong side of the boat. Absurd, really. Fish *do* swim. Why should one side of the boat make a difference? Yet they listen. Jesus' instruction gives them hope. Because of Jesus, they catch a net full of fish. And at that moment they know it is Jesus.

Peter immediately jumps out of the boat. There is no walking on the water this time. Peter swims, impatient to reach His Lord. It is also eager Peter that drags the 153 fish off the boat when Jesus asks for some of their fish. Why *those* fish? Jesus already

has fish cooking on the coals. But, like casting a net on the other side of the boat, perhaps it is more about obedience.

When Jesus finally speaks to Peter, He does not use the name He gave to him. He calls him "Simon," the name he was given at birth. Mirroring the 3 times that Peter denied Jesus, Jesus asks if Peter loves Him. At the end of the third time, Jesus calls Peter again, just as He did at the beginning of His ministry: "Follow me."

Peter's joy must have been as spontaneous as jumping out of the boat or walking on the water. What Jesus' words must have meant to him! Jesus has spoken the words of love and healing. There can be no mistake that Jesus' words are intentionally chosen. He starts over with Peter; He gives him hope and purpose once more.

Words are important and have immense power. They can encourage and bring hope. But they can also hurt. As Deacons, our words are important. Romans 15 reminds us that we must build each other up. We must use Jesus' example "to teach us" and use encouragement from the Scriptures to give hope. We are not all good with words. We often do not know what to say in response to hurt and heartache. But be still. Wait for the Spirit to prompt you. Pray together. Listen in love. And then speak what you are given.

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