

SERMON NOTES Sunday 12th July 2026

sunnysidechurch

Theme: **God's Love and Ours**

Passages: **1 John 4, John 21.15-19**

Some of the main themes from the sermon

What can we learn from Peter?

Peter thought he loved Jesus and would willingly lay down his life for Jesus (John 13.37) and that even if everyone else fell away he would not (Mark 14.29). Jesus knew better and told Peter so. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter looked as good as his word but when Jesus was on trial for his life, Peter did indeed claim he didn't even know Jesus on three separate occasions. And then the cock crowed (John 18.27). And Jesus went to his death of the Roman cross.

Pure gift

After Jesus' resurrection, when the disciples were still taking in what it all meant, Jesus appeared to them all on the lakeside in Galilee. After they had recognised the risen Jesus and eaten a meal together, Jesus took Peter aside and asked him three times, 'Do you love me?'. I think this may be the single greatest show of love between one human being and another. It was pure gift. It gave Peter just what he needed in a way that simply saying, 'I forgive you' couldn't. It broke down Peter's self-loathing and his doubt about whether he did, in fact, love his Lord. It restored him and empowered him. Jesus made no mention of why he asked the same question three times but Peter would have known and with each time the spell of his denial was lifted.

Real suffering, real restoration (1 John 4.1-6)

The early verses on 1 John 4 make a lot of the importance of humanity of Jesus. His exchange with Peter only makes sense if Peter's denial really hurt if Jesus was real flesh and blood, not a 'spiritual being' who visited our planet to impart wisdom.

Pure gratitude

Peter's response to this wonderful second chance was to be the driving force behind the fledgling early church. We can see the power of what Jesus did writ large in the pages of Acts. A transformed life born out of pure gratitude.

God's love and ours (1 John 4.7-19)

Our Bible reading from 1 John talks a lot about love. I've always found making sense of my motives quite difficult. I think there are things I do that I ascribe to being loving when my motives are more cloudy. It is possible to be kind to

someone in the hope that they are grateful or that God will in some way reward us. We buy the first round of drinks and hope and expect that someone else will stand their round. We feel aggrieved if they don't. In all our relationships, love can be tinged with power and trade as deep lying motives. That's not what Jesus wants, nor what he taught nor how he lived Nor is it what John is urging us to do.

Not letting your left hand...

During the sermon on the mount (in Matthew 6.3), Jesus tells his followers not to let their left hand know what their right hand is doing when they give to the needy. I think this means our response to need should be instinctive, without ulterior motives. We act with love because it's ingrained in us. Like Peter, we have been met in our need by Jesus and in gratitude we want to do what Jesus calls us to (1 John 4.9-11).

'By this shall everyone know that you are my disciples...

...if you love one another'. Remember our vision: To be recognised as a Christ-centred community of living faith which seeks to make Jesus known to others. If we know that we are loved by God, as we are and respond in gratitude, we will increasingly find that we are drawn into loving service for each other and be the community of our vision.

Some questions for thought and discussion this week:

1. *Reflect on the things in your own life that you are particularly grateful to God for. Be as specific as you can. If you are in a group, share these insights as far as you feel comfortable.*
2. *It can be difficult to know what the most loving thing to do is in some circumstances. Can you think of examples when this has been true for you and how you've worked towards a solution?*
3. *Our actions can stem from love but also be tinged with a desire to exercise power of gain a bargaining position. Can you think of examples of this from your own experience?*
4. *How, in practice, can we 'not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing'?*
5. *Reflect on the actions of Peter and Judas. Do you feel that there is any truth in the quote below?*

Quote of the week

*'Yet each man kills the thing he loves, By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look, Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss, The brave man with a sword!'
From 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' by Oscar Wilde*

