

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 59

The Restoration of Peter

John 21:14-23

Do you have a treasured possession — something that means a *lot* to you? Something that you take especially good care of, so that it doesn't get lost or



stolen? Something that is as precious to you as ... a treasure chest full of silver and gold?

Suppose, now, that you are going to go away for a year or two, and you want to be sure that your treasure is kept safe. Would you, do you think, pick just anyone off the street and ask him to guard your treasure? No, you would be very careful to pick someone you *know*, someone who is *loyal*, someone whom you know you can *trust*. You can then put your treasured possession in his care and be sure that he will keep it safe — for you.

Jesus has such a precious posses-

sion. And, at the time of our story for today, He is planning to go away — for a long time. He will be leaving His precious possession, His *people*, behind. He will go to heaven. They will stay on earth. Who will take care of them?

You know the answer to that question. Jesus had already said to His disciples, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I *you*.” *They* must preach. *They* must be shepherds of His flock. Jesus puts His sheep, His precious possession, in *their* care.

But are the disciples *trustworthy*? Have they proven themselves to be *loyal*?

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

Truth is, every one of the disciples knew his own *weakness*. They all remembered well that in the darkness of Gethsemane they had *forsaken* Jesus and fled into the night.

But the disciples *were* loyal. Three years earlier, when Jesus first called them, they had *left all* and followed Him. When, later, many of Jesus' followers in Galilee *gave up on Him*, His disciples had said, "We're staying with You." So, yes, the disciples were, under God's blessing, *trustworthy*.

Except, maybe, for ... Peter. Three times he had denied His Lord — even with cursing and swearing. True, Jesus had *forgiven* him, but can he be *trusted* to stand *strong* in the face of *danger*? A shepherd must be *brave*. He must be ready to do *battle* with all those who would harm the sheep. Will Peter be ready to give his life for the sheep, Jesus' precious possession, or will he run ... to save himself ... like he did in the courtyard of the palace of the high priest?

Ah, yes, Peter's denials of his Lord were like three big black marks in the record book. For Peter's sake, and for the sake of the other disciples, those black marks must be gotten *out of the way*.

So, after Jesus and His disciples finished eating breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, "Simon (that's *Peter*), son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

That, you will remember, was Peter's proud boast before he denied

Jesus. He said, "Though *all men* shall be offended because of thee, yet will *I* never be offended." Maybe the loyalty of the *others* might fail, but surely not *Peter's*. "Though I should *die* with thee," Peter promised, "yet will *I* not deny thee."

So Jesus' question: "What do you say *now*, Peter? Do you really love me *more* than do the others?"

Notice carefully Peter's answer. He said, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Peter doesn't, now, compare himself at all with *others*. He doesn't say, "But the other disciples all ran away *too*." Nor does he even trust his own heart. He doesn't say, "Why of *course* I love you. You can be sure of *this*, that you can depend on *me*." No, he leaves it all to *Jesus'* knowledge of him. Jesus can see into Peter's heart. He knows Peter's heart better than Peter does himself. "Yea, Lord, *thou knowest*...."

And Jesus answered, "Feed my lambs." Thus did Jesus put Peter back into the office, the position, the work of an apostle. Into *Peter's care too* Jesus puts His lambs, His precious possession.

One black mark has been taken out of the record book.

There are two more.

Jesus therefore asks again, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" You don't compare yourself to others anymore, Peter, but are you sure you really do love me?

No *excuses* does Peter make. He doesn't say, "But I didn't *mean* it." He





doesn't say, "But it was so late at night and I was so cold and tired." No, again he answers simply, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And Jesus answered, "Feed my sheep." One more black mark has been removed from the record.



One more remains. So Jesus asks one more time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Peter was oh so sorry that Jesus asked him *three times*. But he knew why. And he answered again, "Lord, thou knowest *all things*; thou *knowest* that I love thee."

Once more Jesus answers, "Feed my sheep."

All three black marks are *gone* — so completely *erased* are they, that it's as if they were never there. Peter has confessed his sin, before others. And Jesus has, before others, put him back in his place as a disciple. Never may anyone, ever, wonder if maybe *this* disciple is not worthy to be called an apostle. The black marks are *gone*.



How good a "fighter" will Peter be? Will he have the courage to face even *death* for the sake of Jesus, as he once boasted that he would? Yes, he would. We will learn about Peter's courage very soon in the book of Acts. But here already on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus tells Peter that when he dies, it will not be from sickness or old age. He will be *put to death* for the sake of Christ and His church. Indeed, Peter *will be* courageous!

What an honor! Not only would Peter have the great privilege of being an apostle in Jesus' church, but in the end he would be counted worthy to *die* for the sake of the one whom he truly *did* love ... more than life.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What is Jesus' treasured possession?
2. Whom did Jesus appoint to take care of that possession?
3. Which one of the eleven disciples had once been *unfaithful*?
4. Why did Jesus ask Peter *three* times, "Do you love me?"
5. What did Jesus tell Peter about Peter's death?

Go Ye Into All the World

*Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20;
Luke 24:50-53; John 21:25*

When Jesus awoke from death on Easter Sunday morning, He arose with a body that was fit for heaven. But He was still on this old earth. What do you think, did Jesus, then, look forward eagerly to being *in* heaven? Surely He *did*. Maybe He even thought, "I can hardly wait!"

But He did wait. He waited for *40 days* before He finally ascended. Why did He do that? Why didn't He come out of the grave and go straight to heaven?

There are at least two reasons.

Listen.

The first was that His disciples

still needed to be *taught*. And the lessons they had to learn were *hard*. They would need some *time* to learn them. And Jesus would take that time to teach them slowly, letting His instruction *sink into their minds*. Gradually they would come to understand *why* He had died, *how* He had risen, *where* He was going, and what *their work* would be. For that, 40 days were not too many.

But there was another reason why Jesus stayed for awhile on this old earth. He did it to give what the Bible calls “many infallible proofs” that He had really risen. Let’s try to understand what that means.

Suppose that Jesus, on resurrection Sunday, had appeared early in the day just to His eleven disciples, and that He quickly explained to them everything they needed to know, and then ascended to heaven. Then suppose that the disciples would go out and preach that Jesus was the Christ, that He died, and that He arose. Who would *believe* them? Who would believe the disciples — if they were the *only ones* who saw the risen Savior? How easy it would be for the chief priests to say, “You can’t believe the disciples. If their dead Master really *did* arise from the dead, surely there would be *other people* who would also have seen Him alive. The disciples have *invented* this story of a resurrection. They have in fact *stolen the body* — just as the guards have reported.”

Yes, who would believe a *resurrection* — which is an *amazing*, an *as-*

tounding miracle — unless others could say, “We saw Jesus *too*”? Others — like the women. And like the travelers to Emmaus. And like ... *five hundred* people at one time. Then, you see, there is *proof*. *Infallible* proof. Not only an *empty grave* ... but hundreds of people who can say, “We saw Him *alive* — with our own *eyes*.”

Will there still be people who say, “We don’t believe it”? Yes. But when they face Jesus in the great day of judgment, they will not be able to say, “But we didn’t *know*. We didn’t have *proof*.” Jesus stayed on earth 40 days — *to give them proof*.

Most of Jesus’ appearances during those 40 days were to individuals (like Mary, alone) or to small groups (like to the disciples). But one was to a *large* group. Jesus *planned* that.

He told His disciples, ahead of time, that He would appear to them in Galilee. He told them *where*, and *when*. This news spread — just as Jesus wanted it to. For when the time came, there were more than 500 people gathered at that place, waiting eagerly for the appearance of their Lord.

Exactly how Jesus showed Himself to the 500 we do not know. Most likely it was *sudden* — that is, He was just suddenly *there*, appearing as if out of nowhere. And it may be, too, that there was something of the brightness of heavenly glory in His face. For, as soon as the people saw Him, they *worshipped* Him. He was the very same Jesus. They could



see that. But truly the *Son of God*. They could see *that* too.

Jesus had come to them, however, not just so that they could *see* Him. He had something to *tell* them. They have *work* to do. Jesus will tell them what that work is.

“Go ye into all the world,” Jesus said, “and preach the gospel.”

No, Jesus wasn’t looking at the *apostles*. He was looking at the *500*. They knew that He was talking to *them* when He said, “Go ye into all the world.” But who are *they*? Who are the *500*? They are the *church*. Jesus’ command here is to the *church* — the church till the end of time.

Think of that. The command of Jesus to His church, to believers, to us, is this — “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.” My sheep, Jesus says, must be gathered — from every nation. Go out and do it. You have a story to tell. Tell it. Tell it to your children, yes. But tell it, too, to others. Teach men to be preachers. Send out missionaries. Pay for the work of missions. Pray for the spread of the gospel. Do not hide your light under a bushel basket. Put it on the top of a hill!

That’s an awesome calling, isn’t it? Even *fearful*! Can *I* be a witness of *Christ*? Will anyone believe *me*? Won’t I be *hated* and *persecuted*? Ah, Jesus knew those questions would come to our minds. He told the *500* why they need not fear. They must remember who it is that commanded them.

“All power,” Jesus said, “is given unto me in heaven and on earth.” Isn’t that astounding? Here is Jesus, who was born in a stable, worked in a carpenter shop, was a traveling preacher who had no place to call home, and was hounded to death by His enemies. This man is about to go to heaven and be seated at *God’s right hand*. And what power will be His? *All* power! All of it in heaven, and all of it on earth. Whatever happens in the whole of God’s universe happens because *Jesus does it*. And, most amazing of all, He is our *Brother*, our *Friend*, our *Savior*, who has proved that He loves us more than His own *life*. It’s *His* hand that holds the scepter. *He* rules. What, then, do we have to fear? Will we someday be persecuted? Will we someday be put in prison, or even killed? Yes, that may happen. But our enemies are only *men*. They are under Jesus’ power. They cannot so much as touch us unless *He wills it*. And He is the one who said, “Ye are My witnesses.”

And there’s more. “Lo,” Jesus said, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” But ... but ... how can that *be*? If Jesus *ascends to heaven*, how can He still be *with His people*, to the end of the world? Jesus’ followers would learn soon enough what He meant. For the great day of Pentecost was just a couple of weeks away. Then they will learn what it means to have Jesus live, not *next* to them, but *inside* them — by His *Spirit*, in their *hearts*.

What do you think, were the dis-

ciples of Jesus sad when they heard Him talk about *going away*? Were they disappointed to learn that He would never be king in Jerusalem, and they would never be able to serve Him in an earthly kingdom? No, they weren't. More and more clearly they were seeing how *wrong* they had always been. Jesus' *real* kingship, and His *real* kingdom, were so much greater than what they had imagined for Him, and for themselves. "How," they must have wondered, "could we have been so *blind*?"

How Well Did You Listen?

1. For how many days did Jesus stay on the earth after His resurrection?
2. How many people came together to see the risen Lord in Galilee?
3. How could Jesus protect His church, if the church is on earth and He is in heaven?
4. What will happen on the day of Pentecost?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. How had the disciples showed for three years that they were *trustworthy*?
2. How did Peter show that maybe he could *not* be trusted?
3. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" How

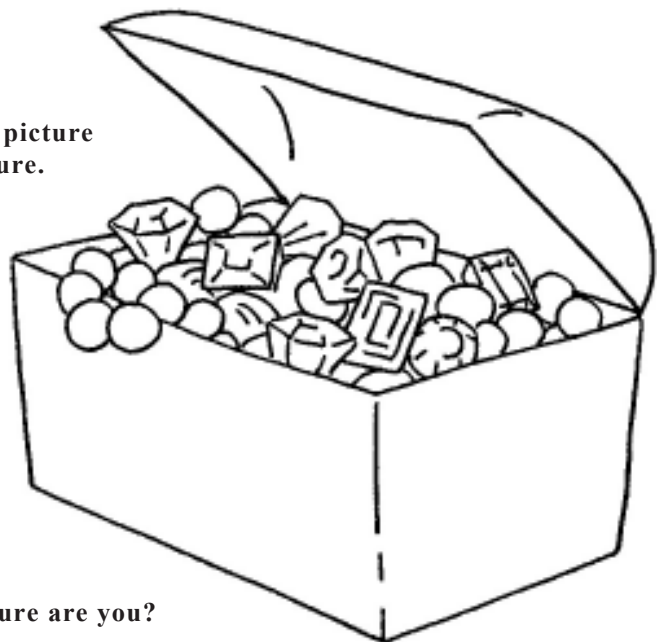
does Peter's answer show that he was truly sorry for his sin?

4. Why would Peter not be *sad*, but be *glad*, that someday he would be *killed*?
5. Why did Jesus, after His resurrection, appear not only to His few disciples, but also to a *large number* of people?
6. Jesus said to the 500 people in Galilee, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." Who must do that?
7. How is Jesus today *with* His people if He is in heaven and they are on earth?

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:18 "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Color the picture
of a treasure.



Whose
real treasure are you?