



Exploring Easter – Peter’s Story

Jesus eats with his disciples – Matthew 26:17-30

Peter looked around the group of friends, relaxing now after the ceremonial eating of the Passover meal was done, and they continued to feast together. He watched his brother throwing olives in to his mouth and remembered the hours they had practised that as children. James and James were sat together, as they often were, with John sat quietly next to them. Philip and Bartholemew were opposite, engaged in what sounded like a very heavy conversation about the Romans. Peter was surprised that Judas Iscariot wasn’t joining in - he normally had a thing or two to say about the Romans – but he was sat with his back against the wall not looking too well. Perhaps, he had already eaten too many of these delicious figs thought Peter as he grabbed one from the bowl. As he chewed, Peter looked across at Matthew. Who’d have thought! There was a time when he wouldn’t even say hello to a tax collector let alone eat with him and love him like a brother. But that’s the kind of thing that Jesus did – he changed people’s lives – sometimes in big ways and sometimes in ways you don’t even notice until later.

There was a lull in the conversation and Peter looked at Jesus as he heard him take in one of the those deep breaths that mean you are going to say something important. ‘I tell you the truth’ Jesus started ‘one of you is going to betray me’. There were gasps from around the room and cries of ‘Not me!’ But Jesus held up his hand to quieten them ‘Just as the messengers from God said would happen – God’s Son will be put to death and one of you eating with me now will be the one who betrays me’. Peter’s eyes darted around the table, taking in the shocked faces and the shaking heads. He saw Jesus looking at Judas who seemed to be shrinking further back into the wall. Judas? Why? It didn’t make sense. Peter’s hands started to sweat. What was going on? Why was Jesus talking about death when only this week he had been welcomed in to Jerusalem by crowds waving branches and shouting his praises?

Jesus was speaking again, and this time he was holding up one of the flatbreads they had been eating as part of their Passover meal. He ripped it in half and gave the pieces to the disciples either side of him 'take it, eat some - this is my body'. They looked confused but tore a bit off and put it in their mouths as they passed it on to the person next to them. When it got to Peter, he could barely chew his mouth was so dry. What did Jesus mean? What was he talking about? Then Jesus took a cup of wine saying 'Drink some of this. It represents my blood which will be poured out so that everyone can know God's forgiveness'. A shiver went up Peter's spine - Jesus was frightening him now. They all took a sip from the cup, and taking a deep breath Jesus started to sing a song of praise to God. Quietly they all joined in getting louder as they were reminded of God's awesomeness. Surely everything was going to be ok. When the song ended Jesus suggested they took a walk up to the Mount of Olives, and so they left and followed him up the hill.

Peter caught Jesus up and put his arm around him - he wanted to reassure him that despite what he said he would always be there for him. Jesus spoke 'you know tonight all of you will let me down but after I have risen I will see you all again in Galilee'. Peter shook his head. 'Not me Lord, even if they all run away, I won't'. Jesus looked at him with those eyes - the ones that held all the oceans and love of the world. Tonight they looked like they held all the pain too. His voice cracked 'No Peter, you too. Tonight, before the cockerell crows you will have disowned me three times'.

Peter stood still. How could he get Jesus to understand? 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you' he shouted to Jesus's back as he continued to walk up the path. 'Never'