

Good Morning, Last Sunday, which was the first Sunday following Easter there was a sort of strangeness about that day for me. It seems that for some reason I was not experiencing much joy. One would think that following such a joyous occasion as Easter you would be feeling a wonderful sense of joy. But that was not the case for me last Sunday. I felt sort of down and with the knowledge of so many of our church family experiencing struggling times it put me in a kind of blue mood. This mood lasted for a day or two and what I noticed most was that I was worrying about things happening in the future. I was not living in the moment with my thoughts but living in the future wondering if my saddened heart will ever be filled with joy again? But last week I was given a lesson to learn about thinking too much about the future. You see, our apartment complex is next to a large pond and on the edge of the shoreline there is a Canadian goose that is sitting on a nest of eggs. Then one night a large thunderstorm came to our area packing strong winds and periodic torrential rain. What was strange for me was that instead of thinking of the dangerous storm my thoughts were thinking about the goose that was sitting on the nest. I realized that she was there bearing the brunt of the storm, in the open, while protecting her eggs. I began to sense an understanding that she was not worrying about the future as much as being in the moment and calmly sitting on the nest doing what God had intended for her to do. I then remembered a **verse from Matthew 6 about not worrying, 25**"*For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26*"**Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.** Well, who would think that a goose sitting on a nest would bring a sense of calmness to my worries? Something else also came to my thoughts from my experience as I began to think about the disciples and how they must have been so worried about their futures when Jesus was crucified. But among the disciples there was one disciple that really stood out from the others when it came to being

fearful about the future and that was Peter. In our message today, I would like to tell of Peter's journey where he traveled from excitement and joy when first meeting Jesus to the depths of despair during Jesus' death. But Peter's story did not end in despair but ended with him knowing of a relationship with Jesus where Jesus watched and cared for him. I wonder if that goose from our pond already knows of this relationship as she sits patiently on her nest having faith that God is providing for her. And now, on to Peter's journey, which actually begins when Jesus first called Peter to become one of His disciples. Remember when Jesus asked Peter if he wanted to be fishers of men instead of fish. As we look at Peter's relationship with Jesus there are many events that come to mind. We can remember when Jesus changed Peter's name from Simon to reflect that Peter was going to be the rock on which Jesus would build His church. Or that Peter once even took a risk and walked on water; and how about the time as a special privilege Peter was brought to witness Jesus' transfiguration. Jesus even asked Peter to go with John and prepare for the Passover. As we look at the list of the many things that Peter experienced not all of them were positive and when we think of Peter's relationship with Jesus, we need to remember the phrase "that things are not always what they appear to be". You see there were cracks in Peter's relationship with Jesus. There was the time that Peter defiantly told Jesus that he did not want his feet washed. There was even a time when Peter pulled Jesus aside and reprimanded him for speaking of His death to come. But the major crack in Peter's armor was when he denied Jesus three times which was the very opposite of what Peter said he would do when this time came. In the beginning of their relationship, Peter was confident and was self-assured in everything that he did. He believed that he had the strength and courage to stand up to the all trials that would come his way. But then after his three denials of Jesus, something changed in Peter. His confidence and strength were gone when he realized what he had done by his denials he wept and ran away and he knew what he had become and who he was. Peter was now a sinner, a sinner in need of forgiveness. But the one who could forgive him

was no longer available. He was truly alone in his sadness and depression. His faith was gone and there was no hope. Then came that first day of the week following the death of Jesus when Peter was notified that the tomb of Jesus was empty and Jesus was not there. Peter's response was tense as he ran to the tomb to see for himself if Jesus had really risen from the dead. There was a sense of desperation in Peter's actions that went way beyond him just being curious. It was almost like Peter's life depended on knowing that Jesus rose from the dead as Jesus had said He would. For Peter to find that Jesus was not dead, gave Peter a glimmer of hope, that maybe Jesus would forgive him and care for him in spite of all his failings. He did not know how or when Jesus would do these things but he now felt that a relationship with Jesus was possible again. And then it happened; Jesus came to the disciples by suddenly appearing among them and said "Peace be with you!" Jesus went on to show them the wounds in his hands and his side. What joy and excitement Peter and the other disciples must have felt at that moment. Jesus went on to tell them that as the Father had sent Him He was now sending the disciples. Jesus breathed on them to receive the Holy Spirit and instructed them that if they forgive anyone's sins then those sins were truly forgiven. Jesus knew that Peter was suffering with a heart filled of despair and with such despair he would not be able to be the rock on which Jesus would build his church. Jesus knew that Peter needed to be re-commissioned as a disciple so he could carry on the building of His Church. So when Jesus talked to Peter he asked Peter "Simon son of John do you love me more than these?" and Peter responded "Yes, you know I love you". Jesus asked Peter a second time "Simon son of John do you love me?" and Peter again responded "Yes, you know I love you" and then Jesus said to Peter "then go tend to my sheep". And finally Jesus asked Peter for a third time "Simon son of John do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked the question a third time. But Peter did not wait for a later time to bring his hurt to Jesus and took the courage to face Jesus with his pain at that very moment by saying to Jesus, "Lord you know everything. You know that I love you".

Then Jesus re-assured Peter that he had been forgiven by telling him one last time to go and feed His sheep. Jesus had forgiven Peter for each of his three denials by asking him if he loved Jesus three times. And as He forgave Peter, He continued to let Peter know to carry on for him and be the rock, on which Jesus would build his church. And yes, Peter did go and begin to build the Church that Jesus had set before him. You see, it's Peter's journey that is such a wonderful example for us to know of Jesus' love and care for us. So when we find ourselves sliding away from joy and serenity let's think of Peter's Story for us to be guided by. But also we have one more example for us learn from and that is for us to think about a Canadian goose, sitting on a nest, on the edge of a pond being cared for as one of God's creatures. And if God cares for the "birds of the air" then he will surely care for us. Let's close our message with a continuation of the earlier reading from ***Matthew 6; Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. Amen***