

“Peter the Perplexed”

by
Patricia Souder

What In a moving monologue, Peter shares the confusion and despair he felt after denying that he knew Jesus the night of His arrest. Peter’s honesty captures many of our questions about God’s perplexing ways of working and leads us to the forgiveness, redemption, and restoration God offers.

Themes: Easter, Failure, Forgiveness, Redemption, Restoration, Resurrection, Cross, Denial, Guilt, Crucifixion, Confusion, Lent, Passion week

Who Peter

When After Jesus’ resurrection

Wear Simple tunic or work clothes, sandals
(Props) Large fishing net
Tall stool stage left (L)
Large cross upstage center (UC)

Why Matthew 26:17-74, 28:1-10; Mark 14:10-72, 16: -8; Luke 22:1-62, 24:1-14, John 13:1-38, 20:1-10, 21:1-23

How Peter speaks with great passion and a variety of emotions. He drags a large fishing net with him as he enters upstage right (UR) and mends the net on a tall stool (L). The net serves as a constant reminder of his former profession. Stage directions are given as suggestions that should be adapted as needed for an effective presentation.

Time Approximately 15 minutes

Peter enters (UR), dragging a large fishing net behind him.

Peter: I'm Peter. Peter the perplexed.

You've probably heard about me. I'm the big, brawny, outspoken fisherman that preachers like to use as an illustration to warn people about the hazards of being brash, jumping to conclusions, or acting impulsively.

Sits on stool (L). Checks and mends the net as he talks.

They're right, of course. I manage to specialize in saying or doing the wrong thing at the wrong moment.

I'm not here to justify myself. *(Shakes head)* No. There's no honest way to do that. I'm guilty as charged. And especially on the most perplexing night of my life when I told a few whoppers at the worst possible time.

Now, I don't really like talking about that night.

Shifts around on the stool uneasily.

But since you've probably already heard the story, maybe it will help you to know that I didn't really know what was happening. *(Stops mending and looks at audience)* I just got caught *(Drapes net around him as if caught in it)* in an unbelievable drama playing out in real time. *(Sighs)*

The morning started out great.

Throws net to floor and walks downstage right.

Jesus sent John and me into Jerusalem to get things ready for Passover. That worked out amazingly well! *(Nods. Smiles. Gestures appropriately)* We found a man carrying a pitcher of water who took us to an upstairs room that was all set up so we could prepare the Passover supper. Just like Jesus said.

That evening, as Jesus broke the matza and poured the wine, he personalized Passover by saying, "This is my body...this is my blood."

I was perplexed by that! *(Returns to stool and sits down)*

But I was even more perplexed when Jesus picked up a basin and towel and started going around the table washing our feet. *(Lifts his feet and shows them to audience)* Our feet, mind you! *(Starts to take off one sandal)* Our dirty, grimy feet! *(Holds nose and refastens sandal)*

Now, that was all wrong! *(Shakes head and gestures helplessly)* That was a servant's job!

But Jesus? *(Stands. Paces. Speaks with indignation)* He shouldn't have to wash feet. Especially *our* feet. Jesus was our Rabbi, our Leader, the One we followed!

So, when he came to me, I protested. *(Raises hands in protest)* "Lord, you will *never* wash my feet!"

I thought he'd thank me. Instead, he said, "Peter, if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me."

"Well, then, Lord," I said. "Wash my hands and head as well as my feet."

Jesus shook his head. "Peter, the rest of you is clean. You just need to have your feet washed."

Takes a deep breath.

Obviously, no matter what I said, it was wrong. So, I let him wash my feet. But I was perplexed.

As Jesus washed our feet, he said we were to follow his example. *(Looks puzzled)* Really? We were to start washing feet? *(Sighs)*

"After all, a servant is not greater than his master..." he said.

Precisely. *(Nods head in frustration)* That's why I had objected to his washing my feet in the first place.

But then, he said something even more disturbing. "One of you is going to betray me." *(Looks troubled and paces)*

One of *us*? *His disciples*? How could that be? We'd traveled with him for three years. We'd heard his teaching and seen his miracles. Surely none of us would betray him!

Stops pacing. Faces audience with troubled expression.

Alarmed, we asked, "Lord, is it I?"

Jesus handed a piece of bread to Judas and said, "What you do, do quickly."

Judas? *(Looks as if he can't believe it)* Judas was our treasurer. Perhaps Jesus was sending Judas to give money to the poor.

Picks up net and sits down on stool. Resumes mending net.

After that, Jesus seemed unusually somber. He told us he was going somewhere we couldn't go.

"Lord," I said, trying to cheer him up, "I'll come with you. I'm even willing to die for you."

Jesus shook his head sadly. "Die for me? No, Peter, you'll deny that you even know me three times before the rooster crows tomorrow morning."

Shakes head and crumples net in his hands.

I was upset. How could Jesus have so little faith in me?

Throws net on floor. Gets up.

Jesus talked to us for a long time. Then we sang a hymn and headed to the Garden of Gethsemane. *(Walks slowly DL)* Jesus seemed strangely distant. He told most of the disciples to wait at the edge of the garden but asked James, John, and me to come with him to pray. *(Walks CL)*

"My soul is crushed with grief... Stay here and watch with me," he said as he ventured farther into the garden.

Sits on rock and looks ULC as if looking at Jesus. Turns back to face audience.

I watched him bow face down on the ground and heard him cry, "Abba, Father! If it's possible, please..."

I heard agony in his voice...but I have no idea how long he prayed because...I...I fell asleep. *(Hangs his head in shame)*

Three times, he left us to pray. Three times, he came back to find us sleeping. *(Closes his eyes and shakes his head in despair)* I'll never forget how worn he looked. It looked like he'd cried bloody tears. His voice drooped with deep disappointment. "Still sleeping? Look, the time has come. Let's go. My betrayer is here."

Sighs and takes a deep breath.

We had no idea what was ahead.

Walks DL as if rejoining the other disciples. Stops as if facing a mob.

Soldiers and religious leaders marched toward us with lanterns, clubs, and swords. Judas stepped out, walked to Jesus, and kissed him on the cheek.

Jesus asked them, "Who is it you want?"

They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus said, "I am he."

Shakes his head in disbelief.

They were so shocked; they fell to the ground. He could have run away...but instead, Jesus repeated that he was the one they wanted and told them to let the rest of us go.

(Agitated) As they came forward to arrest Jesus, I grabbed my sword and slashed off the ear of the high priest's servant.

Jesus shook his head. "Peter! Put away your sword. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" Then he restored the servant's ear.

The soldiers bound Jesus and took him away.

Sighs deeply, shakes his head sadly, and paces.

I was stunned! Why did Jesus let them do that? Surely, God could have delivered him. But no. He rebuked me for trying to help.

I felt confused. Perplexed. Scared.

Yes, scared. A big, brawny fisherman like me!

Returns to stool to mend his net.

All right, you know the end of the story. But remember, I didn't. It looked like it was all over. For Jesus. And for his followers. *(Shakes his head)*

You know, I was a good fisherman. And that night, I wondered why I'd left something I enjoyed to end up like this. *(Sighs and walks to stool)*

I followed John to the courtyard. *(Walks DR)* John asked the gatekeeper to let me in. She asked, "Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?"

"No," I said, "I'm not." *(Moves back)*

Hoping to blend in, I joined the guards and servants huddled around a fire. *(Squats down)* I hoped to hear what was going on while I warmed up. *(Rubs hands)* But they accused me of being with Jesus, the Nazarene.

"No!" I said, shaking my head. "I don't even know what you're talking about."

A relative of the man whose ear I'd cut off asked "Didn't I see you in the olive grove with Jesus?"

"No, no, not me!" I said vehemently. *(Stands up and walks away)*

In the distance, a rooster crowed.

My soul shattered. *(Buries face in hands as if crying)*

I'd denied knowing my Lord! Three times! And in the hour of his greatest need.

Anguish ambushed me so that I was only faintly aware of the evening's events that spiraled into a kangaroo court with an illegal trial in the middle of the night. *(Shakes head; walks to stool)*

When they crucified Jesus the next day, I felt like the biggest failure who'd ever lived. *(Looks at cross)* I wallowed in a pit of despair, essentially useless to everyone. *(Sits on stool and buries face in his hands)*

Sunday morning when Mary Magdalene told me Jesus was alive, I couldn't believe it. *(Stands. Runs SL. Gestures appropriately)* I ran to the tomb to see for myself. It was empty! But what did that mean?

I was perplexed. But I wasn't the only one. That evening, the disciples gathered in a locked room to discuss the strange events. Suddenly, Jesus stood among us, saying, "Peace be with you."

We had no idea how he got in, but we knew it was Jesus. Even before he showed us the fresh wounds in his hands and side and said, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you."

It was great that Jesus was alive. But I'd denied him. He'd never send me anywhere again.

Guilt ate me alive. One evening I grabbed my net and went fishing." *(Grabs net)* Six friends joined me.

We fished all night on the Sea of Galilee. *(Shakes head and grimaces)*

At day dawned, we saw a man on the beach with a small fire. He asked if we'd caught any fish.

"No," we admitted.

"Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you'll get plenty of fish," he told us.

Now I was more than perplexed. I was annoyed. We were professional fishermen. We knew this lake. We knew fishing was better at night. As for throwing the net on the right side of the boat? How could that make a difference?

Nevertheless, we did what he said. And suddenly, there were so many fish flopping around in the net we couldn't get it into the boat!

John nudged me and said, "It's the Lord!"

I jumped into the water and swam to shore while the others pulled the net to shore.

Jesus called, "Bring some fish with you."

Oh, what a breakfast! Nobody ever fried fish over a fire better than Jesus!

After we finished eating, Jesus asked me if I really loved him. Not once, but three times! Just like the night I denied knowing him. I was deeply grieved. "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you."

Oh, he knew my heart better than I did. He knew my pain and despair. He knew I needed to be forgiven and recommissioned. "Peter," he said gently. "Follow me and feed my sheep."

What an outrageous act of grace and restoration! *(Smiles. Raises hands in praise)* I didn't deserve it. But Jesus loved me and called me back to himself, despite all my blunders.

Stands and points to the cross.

Somehow, on that cross, he paid the debt for all my sin so that I could be forgiven and released to know and serve God in a whole new way. Talk about miracles!

Faces audience and speaks sincerely.

You know, I'm just as perplexed about the miracle of redemption as I am about the unexpected events in life.

But this is a pleasant perplexity. And it's one God wants you to experience, too.

After all, why would Jesus have died on the cross to bear the penalty of sin unless he was passionate about setting us free?

And why would God have raised Jesus from the dead if he wasn't satisfied with that sacrifice?

"Peter the Perplexed"

Oh, friend, if God was willing to forgive me for my many blunderings,
don't you think he'd do the same for you?

Picks up net and lays it at the foot of the cross.

There's room...lots of room...for all of us at the foot of the cross. *(Exits
SR)*

Possible ending: "Come to Jesus" by Chris Rice or a similar song.

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