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Weekly Letter –23 August 2026
Matthew 16.13-20

St Peter, a great example to follow closely

I'm making the assumption that most people are naturally drawn to Peter, who after Jesus is one of the best known people in the gospels.

Simon, Son of John/Jonah who is named by Jesus as Peter was from Bethsaida, a little town to the east of the Sea of Galilee. Peter spoke with a Galilean accent, and like his brother Andrew, he too ran a small fishing business on Lake Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). So Peter was reasonably well off.

Peter was clearly motivated by a sincere interest in the future of Israel. The desire that God (Yahweh) may reign impelled him and his brother to go to Judea to hear John the Baptist preach. Therefore as a committed Jew, Peter would also have a deep longing for God to intervene in the world, for like so many Jews Peter was deeply grieved that the Romans controlled so much of 'their promised land'. (Do watch 'The Chosen' on Amazon Prime – exceptionally good).

Simon appears in the gospels as a determined and impulsive character. He has the courage to assert his own thoughts, and you can also see he is ingenuous and fearful. Yet, he is also wonderfully honest, to the point of being utterly open about his sinfulness and therefore he has a genuine desire to repent.

So, not only do the gospels follow Jesus step by step, they also reveal Peter's spiritual journey, with his highs and lows, ignorance and insightfulness, failure and joy and so on.

Why does Peter receive this insight? Is he lucky, chosen by God, or is it providence or what?

We will recall that Mary opens her heart by saying "Yes" to God's calling, and reinforces this by saying, "Let it be according to your word". Through Mary's choice God acts. God cannot force you into a corner for love cannot do this. In the same way as Mary, Peter gives his consent, and he receives God's grace. Yes, we will see Peter opening and closing his heart to God, and as time progresses he sees the growing evidence for putting his faith in Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 12.1-11)

Opening up our lives is an unpredictable journey involving trust, courage and ultimately discovering how to love Christ's way. To be a disciple means making a choice to go towards a future that Christ inaugurated, a future in which sometimes you will say, "maybe", "not at the moment", "No" and "Yes".

Stephen

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Stephen Baker
Bible Reading: Matthew 16.30-20.

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Tabernacle, Mumbles

Prayers for every household – we will pray for Manor Road no. 37-71 (even and odd)

PRAYER OF SELF-GIVING

(Lectionary Readings: Exodus 1-8-2.10: Psalm 124: Isaiah 51.1-6: Psalm 138: Romans 12.1-8: **Matthew 16.13-20**)

Take this, my body, as a living sacrifice.

My mind, ever opening,
to be transformed and renewed,

My eyes, vision clarified,
to see the world as you see it.

My mouth,
to sing your song and speak your truth.

My hands, veined and knuckled,
to be stilled from busyness, to extend to kindness.

My heart, bruised yet beating,
to be overflowing with your love and courage.

My back, weary but willing,
to be strengthened to bear necessary burdens

My legs, steadfast and ready,
to stand strong and to walk in your way.

Take this, my life,
and make me a clear word, spoken and lived,
a testimony to your grace and power. **Amen.**

Carla Grosch-Miller (URC Prayer Handbook 2026)

