

One of the endearing characteristics of the Gospel story is the people that became the inner circle of Jesus' ministry. Jesus chose the blue collar people of the day to follow him. These were fishermen for the most part - rough around the edges of life and certainly not your first thought when you think of sending out invitations to drop everything and follow the savior of the world.

But that's why Jesus was the savior of the world and I am not. He knew the risks involved in choosing these men, but he also knew the benefits. This is clearly presented in the Easter story.

Throughout the Easter story, it is the women who followed Jesus that remained loyal and steadfast at his side from his arrest to his resurrection. The twelve men Jesus had chosen to follow him pretty much scattered as soon as they arrested Jesus and were nowhere to be found.

You can't blame them for splitting. These men were there for all the miracles. They were witness to the throngs of followers that would come to hear Jesus when he spoke. They were the ones who were there during all those quiet times and listened to Jesus as he talked about the issues of life.

In what must have seemed like a blink of an eye, this man they had followed was taken away from them by an angry crowd determined to put an end to this radical movement.

I'm thinking I wouldn't stick around either to see how these events would play out. On the one side, you would have all the followers turning to you asking, "What's next?". On the other, you would have all the Jewish and Roman leaders turning to you saying, "You're next!" Clearly, this was not a good time to be Jesus' disciple.

Peter is pure inspiration for a guy like me. When Jesus was walking on water, it was Pete who enthusiastically wanted to join in and after a few steps started sinking as Jesus had to help him back into the boat. I like the spirit of Pete. We don't get a lot, but we get enough to think that Peter must have been a sponge, taking in every word and vision of what Jesus was doing. I'm guessing he probably would have been the one who drove Jesus nuts with the constant questions during those quiet nights around the campfire. He was so loyal to Jesus, even to be outraged at the suggestion that he would ever turn his back on Jesus. I can't imagine the feeling in his heart when he heard the cock crow for the third time.

So when Mary Magdalene came and told Pete that the tomb was empty, it makes sense that he would waste no time in getting out there to check it out. He had to go see for himself, and when he went into the tomb and saw the linen neatly folded and set aside, Peter merely turns and goes back home, leaving most of us thinking that this is odd behavior for one of Jesus' most loyal followers, isn't it?

Maybe not.

Though it is not clear in any of the gospels, we must assume that what Peter saw was clearly the work of Jesus. Had the burial linens been strewn about in haste, there would always be questions of someone else removing the body. Jesus needed to make clear that this was not the case, and though it is not stated, one needs to believe that Jesus left the tomb in a manner that left no doubt as to what was going on.

If so, it makes sense that Pete would turn right around and head back to his hiding place. Jesus' followers were looking for him for guidance. The Jewish and Roman leaders were looking for him in a likely unfriendly manner. And now the risen savior of the world - whom he denied three times during his most dire hour of need - was out there probably looking for him as well. I'm thinking Pete was one very uncomfortable person at this juncture.

It all turns out good however, for Pete and the rest of us. Thankfully, Jesus is a very loving and understanding savior who knew what he was getting when he told Peter to drop the nets and follow him.

We all take comfort in understanding that the Easter story is not just about a savior conquering death for our sins, but a savior of absolute love who has chosen each one of us - as he did Peter - knowing that we are not perfect.

What a wonderful feeling in Peter's heart later on when Jesus appeared and reassured him that the Easter story would always be a story of love and compassion, not of violence and hatred.