## SERMON FOR ST JAMES' CHURCH BUXWORTH10.4.16LAST WORDSJOHN 21:1-19

The last words that people speak before they die are often very special. So here are some 'Famous last words':

Captain Oates, the Polar explorer: *Í'm going outside, I may be some time'* who sacrificed himself because he knew the rest of the team couldn't all survive on the small food rations

Guess this next one: 'That's all folks!' - voice of Bugs Bunny, Mel Blanc.

And how about one more from Rudyard Kipling: 'I have just read that I am dead. don't forget to delete me from your list of subscribers' He was still very much alive when he read his own death notice.

Famous last words. But what would **you** say if you had one last chance to speak to someone you loved who came back to you briefly after you thought they were dead? What would you say?

Jesus had died. His collection of friends was a bit like the collection of friends most of us will have- a real mixture. Talents, good hearts, humour, passion, loyalty, interesting – and also flawed, at times impatient, annoying, selfish, dull, stupid and thoughtless.

But they were lost without him. They didn't quite know what to do with themselves. You've probably felt that after the person you loved died.

They don't want to go out and face people, but it's getting to them, so eventually Peter announces he's going fishing, something practical to take his mind off things.

Well, the fishing expedition was amazing in itself. But it's what happens next that is the really crucial bit of the story.

Peter realizes that the man who was his best friend, who was dead, is standing there in front of him alive. He rushes towards Jesus. It's another chance to be with him and he won't miss a second of it.

What would you talk about?Lots of people caught up in the 9/11 attacks made hurried phonecalls to their families. Some messages just said '*I love you*'. That's more or less what Jesus talks with Peter about.

*'I love you'* covers everything, doesn't it, if it's truly meant? Peter had been a friend who had had a genuine insight about Jesus being God's chosen Messiah. He was going to proclaim it to the world, whatever others said. Peter had boasted about a commitment to Jesus by saying that if everyone else deserted him, Peter never would; Peter had talked about his loyalty, whatever happened. Yet when the going got tough, Peter told people that he didn't even know Jesus and he ran away.

Now he even gets hurt when Jesus asks him over again if he loves him- as if he had done nothing wrong.

So it's the most important question: 'Do you love me' and the most important answer to think about: 'Yes, I love you'. It takes three times before he really admits that although he did what wsn't consistent with loving someone, he really does love and that's when it gets real. It's not pretending, it's honest - Sometimes we can't get on beyond a death properly if we've got regrets – things not forgiven, either about others or about ourselves. (and notice, Jesus doesn't ask 'So why did you deny me?' as we might.

When that honest conversation happens, you can move on. Peter gets a new job, new responsibilities. Now he'll never *forget* Jesus but he can manage when he's not there.

Perhaps some of you have seen the film '*Truly, madly, deeply*'. it's about a young woman whose husband has died. She can hardly function without him. Then one day, he appears, as a ghost, in her house, but very real to her. He brings his ghost friends to stay. He puts the heating up high because he's cold. They enjoy being together. She can hardly believe it. Another chance. But then he begins to irritate her. She gets fed up of his friends. She gets annoyed when he moves things around in the house. And she meets someone else who she begins to fall in love with. Little by little she decides she can change the furniture, or put away the pictures that her husband had liked but she never did. Eventually she realizes that she can leave the house, and as she walks down the path, the ghosts at the window realize she has moved on emotionally too.

None of us wants to forget the person we've loved. But Jesus and this little incident with Peter speaks about the possibility of resurrection – new beginning. It's not forgetting, it's transforming what's here now. It's about being honest, letting go and being forgiven the things we might have been wrong about, perhaps forgiving the other one too. A truning away from what was past and towards Jesus who has the future.