

Second Chances

I have a deep love for this congregation, staff and for your pastor.

You guys are blessed with an amazing pastor that is:

- Wise
- Godly
- Extremely hard working
- But most importantly he deeply loves God,
- this church,
- and this community

It is a privilege and honor for me to be here... and fill in for my good friend and mentor Mike.

Today, I want to talk to those of you who feel the weight of some type of a personal failure.

- You let yourself down,
- you let somebody else down,
- you let God down,
- you didn't perform in a way that you thought you were supposed to,
- and you feel the weight of that.

All of us, unfortunately, at one time or another, we fall short of the right standards and let ourselves, God, or other people down!

As I start let me tell you a little about myself:

- Costa Rica
- FL
- USAF
- CA
- Seminary
- Waukegan (plant Journey Church)
- **Moral Failure (expand a bit)**
- Whole world collapsed

I'm sure there are some of you right now...

- that you feel the weight of a decision
- or an action
- that left you in a place
- you never wanted to be.

I don't know what it could be for you but we all have them!

Maybe...

- You made a vow to God and you broke it.
- You made a promise to yourself and you broke it.
- You made a commitment to somebody else and you didn't fulfill that commitment.
- You feel like you failed God miserably.

It could be any number of different things.

- You neglected your marriage when you know you shouldn't have.
- You didn't think it would matter, but now you feel the weight of it because it caught up to you.
- You didn't take care for your body when you should have

- Now years later, you've got health issues and you wish you could go back...but it seems too late.

Regardless of what it is for you....

We all get to place where we say....

- How in the world did I get here?
- I never thought I would be in this place at this moment.
- I always thought life would be different or better.

And you feel the weight of the decisions that you wish you could go back and do over again.

PETER

What we're going to do today is look in Luke 22 and we're going to see a guy (Peter) who, quite honestly, messed up pretty badly.

The reality is that, **Peter**, deserved to be counted out,

- but because of the grace of Jesus,
- we're going to see that God gave him another chance.

I know for some of you, this message will speak to you,

- I pray and have been praying...
- that God will bring the hope that you need to keep going
- and believe that HE will bring a better tomorrow.

CONTEXT

Let me give you the context as we get into Luke 22. It's really an amazing story of humility and brokenness. Jesus actually told his disciples, he said, "Tonight you will fall away on account of me." Peter honestly loved Jesus and said, "No, no, no, no. All these other guys, they may fall away, not me. I've got your back. I'm here. I'll never fall away." Jesus looked at Peter and said, "Peter, tonight before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times." Peter's like, "No, no, no, no. Even if I have to die with you, I will never, ever deny you." If you know how the story goes, Peter denied Jesus not once, not twice, but three times, and we're going to see the story and see what we can learn from God about how we overcome our own failures in this story.

We are going to pick up the story in verse 54 (Luke 22), and I want us to see two of...

PETER'S MISTAKES

- He made more!
- But we are going to focus on these two
- because these are two that I've made
- and chances are you might find yourself in this story as well.

Then seizing [Jesus], they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. (What you need to know at this point when Jesus is in the house, the beating is actually going to start. They're going to start abusing Jesus. He's going to come out of the house looking much different than He went into the house.

Scripture says that...) *Peter followed at a distance.* (That's important so let's remember that. Peter followed at a distance.... Verse 55) *55 And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.* Luke 22:54-55

Peter's following at a distance,

- he's now sitting down in the enemy camp
- with some other people,
- and I want to show you
- two of the several mistakes that Peter made.

The first one is...

1) HE UNDERESTIMATED HIS OWN WEAKNESSES.

This is so important! (He underestimated his own weaknesses!)

We have to understand, every single one of us, that we are all absolutely capable of doing anything wrong at any moment.

We are all capable of sinning...

- messing up,
- falling short,
- letting down God,
- letting ourselves down,
- falling away from the promises that we make.

We are all capable of horrific sin at any moment, and the moment you think you're not - is the moment you're most vulnerable.

In fact, Paul said this, he said...

"If you think you're standing firm, be careful so you don't fall."

In other words, those of you who say,

"I would never do that. I would never cheat in this way. I would never, I would never," be careful!

We have to be aware of our own weaknesses!

Unfortunately, I've learned the hard way that I'm never as strong as I think I am, because I can be very self-disciplined.

- Gym
- Eating
- School
- Goals

And I have learned that in a moment's notice I can be incredibly weak and vulnerable.

I'm not ever going to say for a second I'm above any sin.

- I'm better than that.
- I'm not capable of that because we are all capable of falling short
- in any way....at any time,
- and we have to recognize that.

In fact, if you're taking notes, you may want to jot this down...

Acknowledging weakness is the first step toward true strength.

You are only as strong as you are honest!

Peter did not recognize his own weakness....

**"I'll never leave you. I'm always going to be here.
I promise, I'll die with you,"**
...and then he denied Jesus 3 times.

Number one is Peter didn't understand and embrace his own weaknesses.

Number two is this:

2) HE FOLLOWED JESUS AT A DISTANCE.

For some of you this is the moment that you came for today because God is really going to lovingly convict you on this point.

He followed Jesus at a distance.

The reality is, we can choose how close we are to Jesus.

- Some people want to be very close to Jesus,
- and if I can play with this metaphor for a moment,
- you want to seek Him first every single day.
- You want to be in His word.

- You want His Holy Spirit to guide you.
- You want to be sensitive to what He's leading you to do all day long.
- You want to be serving in His body.
- You want to be close to the action.
- You want to know what His will is.
- You want to follow Jesus closely
- because you value Him above all else

But tragically today...

- Quite honestly,
- perhaps even the majority of people,
- it's more comfortable to follow Jesus from a distance.

In other words....

There are so many people today that want all the good stuff Jesus offers.

- I want to be in Heaven.
- I want that kind of stuff,
- And I want the blessings and the comfort He offers
- But I don't want the cost of following Jesus too closely.

I don't want people to make fun of me!

"Oh, he's a Jesus guy, a Bible thumper. She's a Jesus freak"

- yeah...I don't want pay that kind of price.
- I'd rather get the blessings,
- but I want to do it from a distance.

EXAMPLE

I love sporting events...

- Basketball

- Soccer (not Chicago Fire) Copa America / Copa Oro
- UFC
- Baseball (Cubs / Brewers / White Sox)

Nose bleed seating! -- I can't afford good seats but I have a blast...
Got free tickets to see (Bears – 50 yard line 2nd row) WOW!!!!!!

That's how it is with Jesus!

- I don't know about you, but I want to be up front.
- I want to be where the action is.
- I want to be close enough to hear His voice and sense His presence.
- I want His presence leading me every single day.

In fact....

I'm going to argue all day long, all day long, that had Peter been physically close to Jesus, he would have never denied Jesus. Why? Because just a few hours earlier in the garden whenever Jesus was going to be arrested and the Romans soldiers came in and had their servants, what did Peter do? He pulled out his sword and he swung and he took off a guy's ear. Why did Peter cut off the guy's ear? Because he had bad aim. He was going for the head. He's like, "I'll die. I'll fight to the death for you," when he was physically close. Then Jesus, "Peter, we're not going to do it this way. Give me the guy's ear." Plop. Peter would've been willing to die for Jesus when he was close to Him, but when he followed Him from a distance, suddenly he was much more vulnerable.

If I can just say it right now...

- Most likely some of you are following Jesus from a distance,
- you will never experience all the goodness,
- all the blessings,
- and you are much more vulnerable then you realize.

I want to be as close as I can,

- and I hope you do, too,
- because being close to Jesus is where the spiritual action is,
- and I want to be close enough to always hear and know his voice. ∞

Mistake #1, he didn't realize how weak he was.

Mistake #2 is he followed Jesus from a distance....

And here's how it cost him, verse 56....

A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." ⁵⁷ (What did he do?... Peter did what?) But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. ⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. ⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" ... Luke 22:56-60

What's interesting is that Matthew also reported on this story.

Luke told how he saw it.

Matthew told another version.

Matthew said that after Peter denied Jesus the third time, that he said, "**Man, if I'm lying, may a curse fall on my head.**"

What's so crazy is the only person that Peter fooled was himself.

- Everybody else knew!

Some of us are there.... We are only fooling ourselves!

Verse 60 tells us the tragic outcome....

...Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord (Jesus) turned and looked straight at Peter. (I want you to think about this. At this point, it's very likely that Jesus' face was black and blue and bloody. The savior that Peter loved, Jesus, would have been beaten.

In this moment, as Jesus had always been faithful to Peter, He looks at the unfaithful Peter straight in the eyes, and you could only imagine the pain of that moment. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter....) *Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.”* ⁶² *And [Peter] went outside and wept bitterly.*
Luke 22:60-62

I'm curious, when was the last time you've wept bitterly over your sin?

When was the last time the weight of your sinfulness just became so real that you broke down before God?

I'm not talking about **remorse**.

I'm talking about **repentance**.

- **Remorse** is different. Remorse is, I'm sorry I got caught.
- **Repentance** is, I'm sorry, God. I let you down.

When was the last time you've wept over your sin?

- I'm saying that whenever I'm not sensitive to the horror of my sin, that's when I'm following Jesus from a distance.
- Whenever I'm following Him closely, I will repent quickly and deeply because I feel the weight of what I've done.

Peter went outside and he wept bitterly because he knew that he had completely disappointed and broken the heart of Jesus.

Peter, who Jesus called the Rock, Peter the Rock crumbled, not once, not twice, but three times.

I so can identify with this!

Peter made a bold promise (I would never deny you – I would lay down my life for you) and he was not faithful and he absolutely and completely deserved to be counted out.

- **But because of the grace of God, Jesus did not count him out.**

Jesus gave him another chance!

Sometime on your own you might want to read in **John 21**.

It's a beautiful story about the restoration of Peter. It was after Jesus had given His life on the cross and was raised from the dead and He has a beautiful moment, kind of an extended conversation with Peter, and He asked him, Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you really love me? Then feed my sheep. What Jesus does is so amazing. Jesus forgives Peter, He restores Peter, and then Peter, quite honestly, is the one chosen by God to be the keynote speaker on the day of Pentecost.

How'd that happen?

- The guy who failed and denied Jesus is the one who preached on repentance and saw thousands of people come to know Christ.

Why?

- Because there was nobody better qualified to preach on repentance and forgiveness than the one who had repented and been forgiven.

There was no one better!

Peter failed and denied Jesus and yet he was allowed to proclaim the grace of Jesus. Why?

- Wherever you are broken, guess what?
- Jesus will help bring healing!

Broken bone – heals stronger.

(But there needs to be repentance and healing and restoration)

**The very thing right now that you think
is going to take you out
may become the greatest point of strength in your life
as you move forward
because where you are now weak
our God will make you strong
because His strength is made perfect in weakness.**

Therefore you don't internalize the failure!

The same guy that deserved to be counted out

- and was given a second chance
- became so strong
- because of the grace of Jesus
- that years later,
- this is one of the most powerful things that Peter said,
- and this is his words recorded in First Peter 4:16,
- the man who denied Jesus three times
- and deserved to be counted out,
- but because he had another chance,
- here's what Peter said.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 1 Peter 4:16

The one who was weak and vulnerable became stronger at the point of healing.