

LUKE 21: Peter's Restoration

Good morning! I'm so glad you guys are here with us today. My name is John, I'm the worship pastor here, as well as one of the teaching pastors. All summer, we've been in the JESUS section of our Garden to City journey. This is the **third** quarter of our year, wrapping up today actually.

We started back in January with our **TORAH** section, and we spent the first 3 months looking at the **foundations of faith, early glimpses of God's character, learning from people like Moses, Abraham and Sarah.** Then we spent the spring in the rest of the Old Testament, which we called ISRAEL... The story of God's people, learning from Nehemiah, different leaders in those days, as well as the book of Psalms for our series, "Dangerous Prayers."

And this summer, we've spent the last 10 weeks looking at Moments of Truth; where Jesus is face-to-face with people, just like you and me, and creates for them a "*Moment of Truth.*" **A moment where the everything narrows and creates this moment of decision or action...** A fork in the road. A defining moment where everything from that point forward looks entirely different. And here we are in week 10. The last week!

Last week, Mike shared with us, in a really incredible way, the hours that Jesus spent hanging on a cross next to two criminals... And how one of their interactions certainly was a "moment of truth" for them, when the criminal said, "*Jesus, remember me when you enter your Kingdom*" and Jesus replies, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*" **Talk about a game-changing moment!**

One of my favorite authors (and I think every new Christian's obligatory favorite author) is Max Lucado, and he once said that "*Deathbed converts and lifelong saints enter heaven through the same gate.*" I love that. So succinct and so true. That's what we saw last

week in Jesus' promise to the criminal. **A “deathbed conversion” if we've ever seen one.** Beautiful. And more beautiful than what it meant for that criminal, the beauty that it shows in God's character. **The gates of heaven are wide open, and the invitation is extended to absolutely every one of us.**

This week, we're looking at another defining moment in someone's life. A moment that drew this man back from the brink of almost-guaranteed failure in life; a moment that we, today, are still the beneficiaries of. That moment is **Peter's restoration in John 21.** (If you don't have a bible, grab one of the blue ones in the back. That's our gift to you!)

But before we get to John 21, we need to meet Peter.

Who is Peter?

Why does he need to be restored?

Who is he being restored to?

Peter was one of Jesus' **first** disciples, and one of the closest to Him throughout His ministry. **Peter witnessed some absolutely incredible moments in Jesus' life.** But Peter was also quite a mess sometimes.

- Do any of you say things you regret saying sometimes?
- Any of you run at things full-force without asking any questions?
- Any of you so passionate about things that you steamroll over people around you to do that thing?

If so, you're a kindred spirit with Peter. A bull in a china shop. I like to think of Peter as the first-century version of Ryan Lochte. Not very well spoken, does a lot of stupid things, but unmistakably talented and passionate. Like the human version of a golden retriever. That's Peter.

Peter was a fisherman, and fishermen in the first-century were gruff dudes. Their clothes smelled like dead fish, their skin was leathered from years of being out on the water, their vocabulary was limited but boy,

were they creative with their vulgarities! **In fact, first-century fishermen sound a lot like 21st-century fishermen!** At least the ones in my family! I've worked on lobster boats with guys that would **stitch up their own wounds**; guys that would skip making coffee and just **chew up the coffee beans and swallow them**; guys like that would **drink a 6-pack of Budweiser** before lunch, and **smoke 3 packs of cigarettes a day**. And yes, very creative with their colorful language. Peter was one of those men.

For everything that can be said **against** Peter's inherent traits, some of these, when redeemed, are what make him such a shining example of what it means to follow Jesus. In Luke 5, Jesus says, "*Follow me!*" and Peter's like... "*Ok!*" He and his brother Andrew walked away from everything they depended on: their fishing boats, their nets, **their family business**... How many of us today would be willing to leave our family business to follow Someone that we barely knew? A golden retriever would! **Peter exhibited astounding faith at times.**

And he was outspoken, to say the least. He often spoke on behalf of the disciples—for better or worse. One of the **good** examples was when Peter was the first to call Jesus *the Son of the Living God—the Messiah* (in Mark 8; Luke 9; Matthew 16). He had a special insight concerning Jesus' identity, something that the other disciples hadn't picked up on yet. **His lack of inhibition allowed him to SEE TRUTH when others got hung up.**

Peter's boldness served him well sometimes. And sometimes it didn't. Like the time, **6 verses after he declared Jesus the Messiah**, when he rebukes Jesus. After Jesus gives some foreshadowing of his death and resurrection, Peter literally pulls Jesus aside and gets in his face saying, "*Never, Lord... you'll never be killed. This won't happen to you!*" To which Jesus replies, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.*" (Mt. 16:23)

Needless to say, Peter and Jesus had their moments.

All of this leads up to the most shameful hour of Peter's life. We'll pickup in John 18:

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. 16 Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. 17 The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?"

"No," he said, "I am not."

18 Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

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25 Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

*26 But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off (**that's another story for another time**), asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" 27 **Again Peter denied it.** And immediately a rooster crowed.*

[PETER'S DENIAL IMAGE] Peter, perhaps for fear of losing his own life, denies ever knowing Jesus. **In face of adversity, he betrays the life he had been living for the previous 3 years.** Like taking your wedding ring

off in Vegas... Peter's words became a vehicle for infidelity; Peter's words betrayed the own desires of his heart. His commitment compromised. The fire of his passion was snuffed out. And as soon as the rooster crows, Peter realizes what he's done. **And, you can imagine, he's overcome with grief.** Matthew, Mark & Luke all say that immediately, Peter "*went out and wept bitterly.*" (Luke 22:62)

Rightfully so. He believed himself to be diehard; committed to the death. **He was ready for battle.** (*Hence the cutting someone's ear off when Jesus was arrested*). But he underestimated how difficult it would be to stay true when his life was at stake. **And if this were a test, he certainly failed it.**

But this was different than all of the other times he messed up.

This time he didn't have Jesus to reassure him.

He couldn't run to Jesus and embrace Him and ask for forgiveness. He couldn't find the grace and loving approval he had received from Jesus so many times before.

Because Jesus was arrested, and being sent to trial.

Now, in light of last week's sermon on the Cross, **we don't know where Peter was during Jesus' crucifixion.** None of the gospels state that he was present there. He might've been watching from a distance, in sheer disbelief... He might've been hiding. We don't know where he was physically, but we can only imagine where he was spiritually.

A man as passionate as Peter... when that passion is concentrated on **shame**, can be crippled by it. Like harnessing the **sunlight**; either for solar power to create electricity; or sharpening it through a magnifying glass to bring about destruction (at least if you're an ant)... **The same passion and power, just focused in different ways.** With vastly different results.

I don't know about you, but when I've screwed up, which has been

often, and recent, and sometimes royally... **My mistakes, my failures, my bad decisions often blow up into much larger inner-dialogues.** *“If I could screw up in such a major way, do I actually believe what I’m claiming to believe?”* I begin to draw **everything** in my life into consideration. With my wiring and my personality, there are very few “small” mistakes. Every misstep I take is something that my brain can latch onto, obsess over and over-analyze to the point of unhealth.

There are benefits to this, because I don’t let things slip by. But there are detriments to it as well, because I quite often spend WAY MORE time thinking about something than I need to. Jesus is like, **“John, I saw what you did there and it was pretty dumb. I forgive you. What do you want to get for lunch?”** And I’m like, **“NO!! THERE MUST BE SACRIFICE! I need to start a 40-day fast to repent of my sin of lying to the dentist about how often I floss my teeth. I need to earn your love again, Jesus!”**

Ok... Welcome to my brain.

I think, if we’re honest, a lot of us can identify with that. **At either end of the spectrum, we don’t trust that what Jesus says about us is true.** When Paul tells us in Romans 8 that *“There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus...”* we either question the *“no condemnation”* part or the *“belonging to Jesus”* part.

When Paul continues in Romans 8:2, *“And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit **has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death...**”* The PAST-TENSE of us already being FREED is **lost on us.** Because, more times than not, it doesn’t line up with what **we actually experience.** We don’t feel completely free because we don’t experience complete freedom in our minds, hearts and souls. *(We’ll actually talk about this in-depth next week when we talk about LIVING FULLY).*

My friend says this, and I love it, that “We’re not punished **for** our sins, we’re punished **by** our sins.” The truth is often **counter**-experiential. (At first.)

- **Though we are forgiven**, we live as though we are condemned.
- **Though we are loved with an everlasting love**, we live as though we are constantly searching for acceptance.
- **Though we have more power available to us through the Holy Spirit than we could ever need**, we live as though we are powerless against temptation and the things of the world consuming us.

When Peter denied knowing Jesus, he outright betrayed his relationship with God. **Wrong thought, wrong decision, wrong action.** And yet, at that very moment, Jesus was in the process of righting every **wrong** in the history of humanity... **Peter's included.**

But for the time between Jesus’ death, resurrection and the restoration that we’re looking at here today, **Peter is living with a massive weight on his shoulders. A thousand pounds of shame.** And nothing anyone can say will help relieve it. He’s living in the belly of the fish. Walking alone in the valley. **Standing face-to-face, each of these long, agonizing days, with his failure.**

Have you ever been there?

And then we come to John 21.

1 Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. 2 Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter (that’s our guy, Peter!), Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

3 Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

4 At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. 5 He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

6 Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

7 Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. 8 The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. 9 When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

10 "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn. (No one knows the significance of that number or why they even counted them, but that's beside the point.)

12 "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. 14 This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had

been raised from the dead.

15 After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

17 A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

*Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. **He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."***

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

18 "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others[f] will dress you and take you where you don't want to go."

*19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "**Follow me.**"*

Now, there are five hundred layers of why this story is so beautiful, and I'll probably only have time to share one or two. But the most prominent to me is this: **This story mirrors, almost exactly, how Jesus first**

called Peter in Luke 5.

[PETER'S CALL IMAGE] In Luke 5, Jesus is teaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and the crowds were so large that he had to get in a small boat and push off shore to speak from there... And it just so happened to be Peter's boat that He used. Afterwards, perhaps as a way of thanking him for using his boat, Jesus says to Peter, *"Go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."* Peter replies, *"Master, we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing... But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."*

And of course, their catch was so large that the nets began to tear, and the boat was on the verge of sinking. Peter falls to his knees, awestruck by what just happened, in conjunction with whatever teaching Jesus had just shared with the crowds... And Jesus says, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." **The first invitation to follow Him.**

Why is that significant? I think what Jesus was doing for Peter, knowing exactly how he's wired and all of the shame he was carrying, **was bringing him back to his first love.** By re-creating the exact same scenario, some three years later, Jesus was inviting Peter back into "Faith 101: Follow me." The basics. The ground-floor of spirituality. *"Follow my ways."* It's almost as if Jesus was saying to Peter, *"Remember when we first met? Remember how excited you were as you pulled up those nets? I remember seeing you 'get it', Peter. I remember seeing your lights turn on. Don't you remember that? You left everything on the beach and followed me... And we've walked together for the past 36 months. Let's keep doing that..."*

Back to basics. Back to the first flame of passion. **The beginning of it all.** A message of FORGIVENESS & GRACE wrapped up in a simple invitation. Jesus saying to Peter, *"Are you ready to forget about that night of massive screw-ups? Are you ready to move forward with me?"*
How many of us need to hear that?

Do you remember when you first believed? When you let your skepticism melt away for a moment and you actually considered... *“Could this be true?”* Maybe that moment is more recent for some of you, (maybe it hasn't happened yet for some of you). For those of us that have been walking with Jesus for years, or even decades, it's frighteningly easy to forget. Isn't it?

Do you remember when you first believed?

You see, over the years, as we walk with Jesus, we have more and more times that we screw up...

- Times that we make poor choices.
- Times that we hurt people we love.
- Times that we turn our backs on Him.

And we, subconsciously; if it goes unchecked, view all of this “JUNK” as **barnacles** that inhibit us from getting close with Jesus. We feel as though we've been unfaithful. **We can't have intimacy and affection and purity of love...**

So Jesus takes us back. Sometimes He draws us forward by bringing us backwards... And for Peter, it was back to **Day 1**. Peter needed to be reminded that it doesn't need to be complicated; it doesn't need to carry baggage; it doesn't need to require a Doctorate in Theology... That he just, daily, needs to respond to Jesus' invitation, *“Follow me.”*

I can identify with that. I think we, as a culture, have a tendency to COMPLICATE everything. Even specifically in our church: **Jed and Jeff leave**, guys who are *“professional Christians”* and we're immediately searching for exact replacements: People wired the same; same gifts; same abilities. **Trust me, I knew those guys better than most anyone in the church, and I love them...** But when we believe the work of the Church should be carried out by only a few ordained ministers; we miss

the point. The reality is that we're called to be a "**priesthood of believers**"... Where we all play a role, because we all have direct access to God, and God works specifically and uniquely through each of us. (That said, we **ARE** searching for additional teaching pastors, so don't worry...)

So back to Peter... **Jesus says, "Follow me" and he does.** As soon as Jesus ascends in Acts 1, 40 days after the resurrection, Peter takes a prominent role of leadership. Throughout the book of Acts, Peter shows incredible **leadership**, miraculous **healings**, powerful **teaching**... In fact, it seems as though Peter walks in faith right up until his death.

Manuscripts dating back to 200 AD say that Peter was crucified for his faith, but... Considering himself unworthy to be killed in the same manner that Jesus was, he requested to have the cross placed upside down. [**PETER'S CRUCIFIXION IMAGE**]

>>> **Our passionate Peter... from rugged, vulgar fisherman to iconic, martyred saint.**

Peter could've very easily let his betrayal of Jesus define the rest of his life. He could've given in to the voices in his head telling him that he was unworthy of a second chance. (Or third or fourth or fifth chance). **But he didn't.** He allowed Jesus to speak truth into his life, and he spent the remaining 30 years of his life in passionate pursuit; doing meaningful (and eternal) work.

Something really beautiful that Jesus does for Peter during this breakfast by the sea: **He takes Peter's shameful memory and repackages it.** He re-presents Peter's memory of the betrayal so that Peter has a **new** memory to meditate on. One that is life-giving and not damning.

- **So where does this moment with Jesus take place?** By a charcoal fire. The Bible is very specific about this detail. John 21:9

– *“When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.”*

- **And where did Peter betray Jesus?** Standing around a charcoal fire. John 18:18 – *“Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.”*
- **How many times did Peter deny following Jesus?** Three. Three similar questions, three similar responses. “Are you one of his followers?” **I am not.** “You’re not one of his disciples, are you?” **I am not.**
- **How many times does Jesus ask Peter if he loves Him?** Three. *“Do you love me?” “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”* Three times. And on the third time, it grieves Peter to answer that three times.

What we might look at, on the surface, as Jesus being a little rough with Peter, asking him repeatedly if he loves Him, is actually Jesus being wonderfully kind. **Jesus was giving Peter a new moment, seared into his memory.** So whenever a seed of doubt or shame would creep in over Peter betraying Jesus three times, he would be able to say, *“Yes, but a few weeks afterwards I told him I loved him three times.”* **And he would know that his relationship with Jesus was completely restored.**

A life free of shame. Sounds good, doesn’t it? Living free from any shame.

That’s what Jesus wants for us today, Harbor. He wants us to come back out from hiding, and to sit with Him and allow Him to give us new memories to meditate on. New experiences. New life to remind us that we’re not dead. New joy to draw us back from the dread.

PSALM 119:39-40

39 Help me abandon my shameful ways; ... Renew my life with Your goodness.

“Renew my life with Your goodness.” Let’s all say that together... **“Renew my life with Your goodness.”**

- Doesn’t that feel right to say out loud?
- Isn’t that what our souls are begging for?
- To be renewed?
- To be made ‘right’ with God?

And what a joy it is to realize that it’s already ours in Jesus... Here he is, at the break of day, waiting for us on the shore, with a meal prepared, ready to bring us back into His family, **fully restored.**

All we must do is receive it.

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PRAYER