

Simon Peter

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Date: 14 April 2024

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Our scripture reading today is from John 21 verses 1 to 19. Afterward, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee.
- It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Didymus, Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.
- I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said, we'll go with you. So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.
- He called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish? No, they answered. He said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you'll find some.
- When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it is the Lord.
- [1 : 0 5] As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, it is the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.
- When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread. Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish you've just caught.
- So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153. But even with so many, the net was not torn.
- Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.
- This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?
- [2 : 1 4] Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me?
- He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?
- Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.
- Very truly I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you to where you do not want to go.
- Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, follow me. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.
- [3 : 1 4] Will you pray with me, please? Dear God, we ask that your words penetrate our hearts, that our hands be worthy to your service.

In this we ask in your name. Amen. Amen. So what a joy it is to come together today. We're here to take a look at a story of hope and renewal, where we encounter a conversation between the risen Christ and Peter.

But alongside this, we're going to also look at some inspiration from the life of Chris Gardner, as depicted in the film, *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

So today we're reminded that our past mistakes, those darkest moments of our lives, don't define our future. Are you crushed by something that you said?

Or maybe something that you did in the past? Has that regret and shame led you to believe that you've gone too far? Or that somehow what you've done or said is irreparable?

[4 : 26] Does your life feel like sometimes it's defined by your past failures? We tend to take those failures on and wear them like a heavy backpack.

But in John chapter 21, we see Jesus take Peter, who denied him three times, and beautifully restore him, proving that our failures are not the end of our story, that our story is still being written, because that's what the Father does.

So before we look into this conversation between Jesus and Peter, let's take a look and see what Peter's emotional state was during this encounter.

So Peter, who was once a pillar of outspoken support, unwavering loyalty, found himself ensnared by his own actions, denying Jesus not once, but three times in the very hour that Jesus needed him most.

It wasn't just a moment of weakness, it was a profound betrayal that occurred after Peter had boldly proclaimed that he would never, ever abandon Jesus.

[5 : 46] He was the most outspoken disciple in favor of him. It even cost him his life. Imagine the crushing weight of guilt and the tide of shame that must have consumed Peter, especially as that rooster's crow shattered the early morning silence, confirming his failure.

That sound wasn't just a wake-up call to the dawn, it was a stark awakening to his own frailty and the better realization of his betrayal. And I know moments like those can plunge us into a deep existential crisis where we can question our integrity, our courage, our worthiness.

But despite these dark moments, Peter's journey did not end in despair, which is a testament to the narrative of hope that weaves through the gospel. The critical point of failure sets the stage for one of the most profound examples of personal restoration found in the Bible.

It's in these moments that we see the essence of the power of the gospel to confront, to transform, and to redeem each and every one of us.

When Jesus approaches Peter, he does so with an intention not to condemn him, but to heal him and uplift. This encounter on the shores of the sea is a deliberate act of grace from Christ.

[7 : 23] And I don't think that it's any coincidence that he goes to where he first called Peter, if not the very spot on the shore.

And he goes in that memory of the fish and the fishing. And he tells them, have you got any fish? And they say no.

And he said, throw your net out on the right side. And they come with an immense amount of fish, remembering what happened when he first called them.

Jesus sought not only to forgive Peter, but to reinstate and to empower him. His questions to Peter are designed to reaffirm his faith and commitment, reversing those three denials with three affirmations of love and loyalty.

He asks him, do you love me? Then feed my sheep. Take care of my sheep. It's not merely a restoration of status, but it's an expansion of Peter's mission.

[8 : 33] Jesus entrusts him with the responsibility to feed my lambs and shepherd my sheep. Showing Peter's new role as a leader and a caretaker in that early church.

And to go from such a low point to such a high point made a difference. This shows the fundamental truth of our gospels, that redemption and renewal are always within our reach.

No matter the depths of our failures, Jesus has a response. And his response to Peter's betrayal reflects that capacity of God's grace to overcome any sin or setback that we have.

It reminds us that our worst moments can turn in to those turning points that lead to our deeper faith and our greater service. In understanding Peter's plight, we see the depths of despair and disorientation that often follow our shortcomings, but the heights of hope that God's divine grace provides.

Jesus, knowing all Peter's weaknesses, prepares a path not only for his redemption, but his empowerment, his reinstatement as a figure in the early church.

[10 : 01] This invites us to recognize that potential for transformation in our own lives and encourages us to rise above our failures, to drop that backpack and step into the fullness of our calling with renewed purpose and commitment.

Chris Gardner's journey, as shown in the movie, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, serves as a modern-day parable of resilience and redemption that mirrors our biblical truths.

Facing homelessness and the daunting responsibility, single fatherhood, Chris confronts seemingly insurmountable challenges. But through divine grace and perseverance, his story becomes one of transformation and a testament to God's provision in times of need.

Go ahead. Here it is. Here's the cave. Come on. Right here. Right here. Go, go, go. Get in. Get in. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry. Are we safe?

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Wolf.

[11 : 41] Hurry. Yes. Noah. Yes. Yes. Yes. That's all. And I think so. Flug. Yes. Yes. Yes.

So initially, we see Chris struggling to sell medical devices while he's juggling bills and trying to carry for his son.

That situation spirals downward, and we see that scene after they've been evicted. And they've been kicked out of shelters, and they're stuck in a subway bathroom for refuge.

And it is the lowest point of Chris's life. But despite these hardships, his unwavering faith, his determination, reflect a Job-like perseverance against all of his despair.

[13 : 02] His journey highlights the principle that with God, all things are possible. The turning point in Chris's life arrives when he decides to try and get a competitive internship at a prestigious brokerage firm.

And though unpaid, this opportunity presents a beacon of hope in his life, a potential gateway to a stable and prosperous future for him and his son.

Chris's faith in God's plan manifests a relentless pursuit of a vision that only God could have set in his heart. His narrative shows the theme of second chances, a cornerstone of our Christian faith.

Just as Jesus forgave and restored Peter, offering him new purpose after his betrayal, Chris experiences multiple resurrections from his failures.

Each of those setbacks, while painful, teaches Chris's lesson, teaches Chris lessons in humility, resilience, and that power of Christ's redemption.

[14 : 18] His story teaches us that God's grace is sufficient for us, that his power is made perfect in our weakness, that this spirit of forgiveness is essential, and that's what allows us to embrace God's grace, to seize new opportunity, and inspire those around us with our testimony.

Chris Gardner's life story powerfully illustrates that biblical truth that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. His journey from that despair to success not only showcases his resilience, but reflects God's unyielding faithfulness in our life.

His experience shows the importance of faith and perseverance, and it reminds us that when we are grounded in God, we can overcome the toughest challenges, no matter how low we are.

Just as Jesus redefined Peter's role and mission, leading him to feed his sheep, Chris Gardner's journey is a testament to finding and fulfilling God's purpose under our most trying circumstances.

Chris's transformation from a struggling salesman to a successful financial analyst shows how recognizing and embracing our calling as guided by the Holy Spirit can lead us to significant growth and impact.

[16 : 00] We see this theme in Jeremiah 29, 11, where God promises plans to prosper us, not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future.

In both Peter and Chris's story, it's a real-life saga. We see a central message of hope, God's transformative power, resilience, grace, and love.

They inspire us to examine our own lives through the lens of faith, asking us to trust in God's plan, to rise above our past failures, and embrace our potential for renewal and growth.

It's through their examples that we are reminded that no setback is too great to overcome with God on our side, that there's nothing that we can do that will stop God from loving us.

Peter denied Christ three times. There's nothing that we could do that wouldn't stop God from coming to us. And we need to realize that sometimes our most challenging moments lead to our greatest victories in Christ.

[17 : 28] Jesus continues to write our stories. Each day offers us a new opportunity for grace, to transform our past defeats into future successes.

We are all works in progress, and our stories are still being written, vibrant with the promise of redemption and purpose.

So I ask you, what are you carrying? What is in your backpack this week? What do you need to lay down and give to God?

I invite you this week to take a journey, to take a journey of self-reflection, to take a journey to see where God is planning for you in your life, and to see what it is that you can lay down and give to God, and give it to God, and don't take it back.

Because too often we take it, and we say, here, and the next day it's back on our backs like that backpack. So take it, and give it to God, and leave it there, knowing that you are loved, and that you have the power to become wonderful in Christ.

[18 : 58] Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this boundless joy and lessons of forgiveness and resilience that you have given us.

As you continue to write our story, empower us to embrace each new chapter with courage and love and joy.

Help us to support and inspire our community, recognizing the growth and renewal possible in each challenge that we face.

With your love and your grace, guide us as we transform our trials into powerful testimonies of your enduring love and strength.

And let us remember that those darkest nights, that those worst moments of our life are not the end of our story. Amen.

[19 : 57] It is indeed a time of us to come out of the darkness into the light of Christ. We have announcements this week. We have quite a few things going out, in, around.

They're all in your bulletin. One of the things I want to highlight is our inside-out ministry, that we are looking for someone to help with that. So all of that information is in your bulletin.

So take a look. So may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to his disciples by the sea, fill your hearts with hope and courage.

May his presence, like the breaking dawn, dispel all darkness from your lives, illuminating your path with his divine light. May you hear his voice calling to you, guiding you in times of uncertainty and darkness, empowering you to cast your nets with faith.

May his love warm your soul like a fire on the shore and ignite a passion to serve and follow him faithfully. And as he did with Peter by the charcoal fire, may he rest and restore and affirm you.

[21 : 10] commissioning you to go out and feed his sheep with love and compassion. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, go in love and peace.

Amen.