

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Matthew 16:21-28

Romans 12:9-21

“Your steadfast love is before our eyes,
and we walk in faithfulness to you, O God.” AMEN!

(Sing!)

Here come Johnny gonna tell you the story

Hand me down, my walking shoes

Here come Johnny with the power and the glory

Backbeat, the talking blues

He got the action, he got the motion

Oh yeah, the boy can play

Dedication, devotion

He turning all the night-time into the day

And after all the violence and double-talk

There's just a song in all the trouble and the strife

You do the walk, yeah, you do the walk of life

Mmm they do the walk of life.”

That song, *Walk of Life*, was written
by the great Mark Knopfler of the band
“Dire Straits.”

And, I promise, I was not planning on starting
this sermon with a song, until it just hit me.

Knopfler wrote the song in tribute
to gifted street musicians who blast out
stories and blues in song for passerby's.

Sometimes they drop in money as they walk by.

The song is the musician's “walk of life” and
it's performed for those who walk
their lives by them.

And it is this notion of *walking* life
that I wish to focus on today. (Pause)

We've walked a little through Peter's life
these last two weeks.

Last week, recall, was a high point for Peter.

The account when he made that testimony of
who Jesus is to him.

Remember how we discussed that being, perhaps,

the “rock” that the church is built on...

that is who we say Jesus is and our response
to that confession.

Today’s gospel reading comes right on
the heels of last week’s gospel

and we witness Peter going from
the head-of-the-class, A+ student,
to... well, the Bible says, “Satan.”

Poor Peter... I wonder if some of
the other disciples were like,
“Ha Ha,” in the minds when
Peter fouled up. :-)

We can chalk it up to recognizing Peter
still had some learning to do about Jesus, he did,

but we can also commend this disciple
for his stick-to-it-ness.

For it must have hurt Peter deeply to hear
those words come from Jesus.

After all, he was just trying to protect
someone he loved.

The same, or similar, walk of life happens to us too,
when we realize that who we say Jesus is
begins to affect the way we live.

The realization cracks open our heart.

As Peter's heart was cracked open he stuck to Jesus.

And that's a good thing for us to focus on today.

We too stick to Jesus with our cracks, and
our broken hearts.

They are real,
and we carry them
on our walk of life. (Pause)

There's a powerful parable called
"The Cracked Pot" from the Tao Te Ching tradition.

It speaks deeply to us as Jesus followers.

The farmer carried two large clay pots
to fetch water everyday,
each attached to the end of a pole.

One pot was perfect and it always delivered
a full portion of water, and never failed.

The other pot had a crack in its side
that would leak the water it carried.

By the time the farmer got back to his home the
cracked pot was always half full.

This went on for two years.

The perfect pot was proud of its ability to carry
the full load each trip and the cracked pot

was ashamed that it had failed the very thing
it was created to do: hold water.

One day the cracked pot spoke up:

“I’m so ashamed of myself.

My crack makes me lose water all the way home,
and you do not get full value from your
work because of me.”

The farmer, full of compassion, replied:

As we walk back to the house today,
notice the beautiful flowers along the path.

On the way home, the cracked pot noticed
the sun warming the wildflowers on its

side of the path, and was cheered,
but still at the end of it, half its load was gone
and the pot apologized again.

The farmer said, “Did you not notice
there are flowers on your side of the path,
and none on the other pot’s side?”

That’s because I’ve known all along about you
and the advantage you bring.

What you thought was a flaw brought me
to plant seeds along
your side of the path, and everyday
on our walk back you watered
those seeds.

And for two years we’ve had a more beautiful walk.

Without you being just what you are,
we would not have received so much beauty.
(Pause)

This parable teaches us about things
that appear as flaws or failures, may, in
the right hands and the right context,
be the very things that produce
unexpected beauty and

perfect usefulness. (Pause)

Perhaps our concept of Peter may not be
as judgmental if we do some work
to demystify the word “Satan.”

I don’t believe Jesus meant to insinuate
that Peter had grown horns, a pointed tail
and hoisted a pitchfork.

Instead it was Jesus calling out Peter’s desire
to put himself in front of Jesus.

Calling out Peter’s assumption that
he’s the smartest person in the room and
knows more than Jesus.

Jesus had just proclaimed God’s will and
purpose for his life, and Peter’s interjection
went against that proclamation,
something needed to be said...

so Jesus rebuked him even though
it was what Peter thought to be right. (Pause)

The same walk of life happens to us.

Perhaps we can identify the ways the church
tries to get out in front of Jesus.

There will always be different
expressions of Christianity, but

the expressions must never be selfish,
greedy, unforgiving, or bully-ish.

When it does, we get rebuked and cracked open,
yet even in such events, when we remain
close to Jesus, the God who knows us,

takes our flaws and our failures and
creates from them unexpected beauty and
perfect usefulness.

AMEN!