

Easter 2019

The Resurrection through Peter's Eyes

This morning as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, I wanted to ask you, have you ever been stunned in life? Has something come into your life, a tragedy, an event, a person, that so stunned you that you were a walking zombie for days and sometimes longer. I know some of you have.

I am blessed this morning to be surrounded by family. Michal and I are so pleased to be here in Colorado, close to family but it wasn't also so for me. I wasn't always surrounded by those I love and who love me.

25 years ago I was struggling in life. After being raised in a home where there was constantly fighting among my parents and then as a teen, seeing them divorce, I was left in shambles. For several years I struggled through life, trying to find my way but unable to.

Although I was raised in church what I heard from the preacher and what I experienced with my parents was so different. I didn't see the love, peace, joy and the fulfillment God had to offer.

As an adult I would drift in and out of church, looking for God, looking for something but I just couldn't seem to connect. I think it was my inability to receive love from God. I had never really received love before and was unable to receive it from God.

I continued on through life and finally, in my early 30s found myself in the wrong crowd. I started drinking heavily, mostly beer, but one drunken night someone brought in something they said would make drinking a little more fun. They introduced me to meth. I was drunk enough that I tried it and unfortunately I liked it.

For the next year things in my life went down hill until I came to a place where I cried out enough.

I put all my belongings in storage, moved up to northern Kansas where I had some friends and I sought Jesus intensely. I started attending church, met and married Michal my wife and after a couple of years began studying for ministry. We are in our 18th year of ministry and we have been blessed every step of the way.

But there was one night before Michal and I were married that stunned me so severely that I remember walking along the river thinking, my life is over. The advances I had made in my relationship with Jesus were for nothing.

When I moved to northern Kansas from Oklahoma, I left but I didn't tell anyone where I was going. I didn't say goodbye to anyone I just put my stuff in storage and went on a journey to where I did not know.

After six months of being gone my parents filed a missing person's report and one day, for some reason, God probably, a cop ran the license number on my car and saw there was a missing person report filed on me. The cop came to my door and informed me of the missing person report. He said he did not have to do anything about it, he did not need to tell anyone where I was but he suggested I allow him to tell my parents that I was alive and okay which I did.

The reason I was so stunned to be found is that in that year of stupidity I was in a lot of really tough places doing some really stupid things and I feared some of it might have been recorded in some way or another. And I lived in fear that the life that I now knew and experienced with Jesus was over.

Again, I was so stunned that I couldn't move, I couldn't think, I couldn't even breathe. All I could do was wander down along that river wondering why Lord. Why bring me to this place and then let my life slip away.

I wonder if this is the place where Peter was when Jesus died? Peter was just a fisherman but he was hand picked by the Son of God to be His disciple.

During the last few days of Jesus' life Jesus did a lot of teaching and encouraging. One of the interactions Jesus had was with Peter and He had some very unique things to tell him. Look with me.

Luke 22:31-43, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail’ and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. But he said to Him, ‘Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!’ And Jesus said, ‘I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

There are several unique things happening here.

Think for a moment what Jesus said about Satan, that Satan demanded permission to sift Peter. We need to know that Satan cannot hurt any of God's children without permission. But that is quite a statement isn't it? Satan asked permission, permission of God I would guess, permission to sift Peter and apparently Satan gets it.

After Jesus is arrested we are told that Peter followed Jesus and his captors to the temple where Jesus was put on a mock trial before the religious leaders.

At this point all four gospels give an account of Peter's denial of Christ but let's look at the account found in Matthew 26.

Matthew 26:69-75, “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, ‘You too were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are talking about.’

When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again Peter denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’ A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.’ The he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know the man!’ And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, ‘Before a rooster crows three times you will deny Me three times.’” And he went out and wept bitterly.”

Much has been written about Peter’s denial of Jesus. Pretty amazing story, to think that just a few hours early Peter was swearing he was ready to go to prison with Jesus and even die with him. But when the time came, Peter not only denied he knew Jesus but he denied Him vehemently by cursing and swearing.

I think Satan positioned the people who called Peter out and it was in this way Peter was sifted. I think Peter was sifted so he could see just what his commitment to Jesus was and apparently it wasn’t as deep as Peter thought it was.

I think at this point Peter began to do into that dark and lonely place. Then when Jesus is crucified I bet Peter was stunned, rattled to the core. He had failed, Jesus was gone and all he was left with was his guilt and shame. It was a dark three days for Peter. He had failed his friend Jesus who he had said was the Son of the God.

Many things occurred after Jesus arose from the dead. There was a sighting of angels, of an empty tomb, of Jesus Himself. And then we read **John 20:19**, **“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ And when He had said this He showed them both His hands and his side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”**

Here we find the disciples, including Peter I would suspect, hiding in the room for fear that they too were going to be arrested and maybe even crucified. Look again at what occurred when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane.

Mark 15:50, (Jesus is arrested) “And they all left Him and fled.”
Every one of the disciples took off when the soldiers arrested Jesus.

In the account of Jesus’ crucifixion and death, we read of only one of the disciples being near the cross. He is described as being the one Jesus loved and most scholars would say this was the apostle John.

It’s hard to believe that these same eleven men were used by God to bring the salvation Jesus wrought upon the cross.

What happened? What occurred to these men? What occurred to Peter who denied he knew Jesus. What happened to them that they became so powerful in word and deed that they changed the course of the world? They had an experience with the risen Lord didn’t they?

Think about Peter and what he must have been feeling. Even after it was reported that Jesus had come back to life I bet Peter did not look forward to the time when he came face to face with Jesus. The guilt and the shame was too strong.

We are not told what occurred between Peter and Jesus when they met but I bet it went something like when the prodigal son came back home to his father.

After leaving home, disrespecting his father and his family, after squandering half of the family wealth on wild living, the son decides it is better to come home. Look with me.

Luke 15:17, 20-24, “But when he (the prodigal son) came to his senses... he got up and went home to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

This father was full of compassion and restored his son without hesitation. His love for his son was so strong that what he had done didn’t matter. What mattered was that he was safe, he was home and they now could renew and enjoy their relationship as father and son.

I bet this is the same reception that Peter received from Jesus. There was no condemnation, there was no guilt, no shame. There was only love and a desire to renew and continue the relationship that had been built over the last three and a half years.

This is the same reception I received when I came back to Jesus. The fear I had of my life being over was unfounded. My life was just beginning. My past was finally over. I was set free, free to move on into that glorious relationship with my risen Lord.

This is the same reception that you can have every time you come back to Jesus. It doesn’t matter how many times you have started in a relationship with Him and failed. Every time, every time you come back to Him the relationship is restored. He is so full of love and compassion and so filled with joy that He gets to continue His relationship with you.

The event God allows to come into your life might not be a time when you deny Jesus like Peter did. It might be something as severe as what I went through but it might feel just as devastating. It might put you in that place of limbo, of complete devastation where you have no other place to turn but to Jesus.

People, there is no better place to be. I wish I didn't have to go through the tough stuff I did to meet Jesus. Peter wished he didn't have to be the one who denied Jesus three times and then it was written about for all to see. But if we allow it, if we see the tough times as being allowed by God to happen so we will reach out to His Son Jesus, then the aftermath of that hard event is so glorious, so wonderful, so tremendous, well, in the end you will thank God for allowing you to go through it.

I share Peter's story to give you hope. I share my story to give you hope. If you have a loved one, a son or a daughter, grandchild, or if you are struggling in some way with those things that are so devastating that you don't know if you will ever get through them, there is hope and His name is Jesus.

God reached down from heaven and gave life to His Son, brought Him out of the tomb so that He could give life to you, a life that is full. Full of love, full of joy, full of peace.

This morning we celebrate the risen Lord. I hope and pray that each of you is celebrating, in the fullest way possible the risen Lord in your life.

Let's pray.

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKxD8WnSYqQ>