

Easter
Second Chances
Mark 16:1-7
4-20-2025

It wasn't a very auspicious beginning. 3 years of teaching. 3 years of training. 3 years of preparation. 3 years of pouring his life into 12 men so they would be ready to continue the work he began.

Yet up till the end they continued to jockey for position, arguing among themselves over which one of them was the greatest and who would get to sit in the seats of honor next to Jesus in his kingdom.

But on that good Friday 2000 years ago it sure appeared that it was 3 years down the drain. For when the time of testing came and he needed them most, none were to be found. One had betrayed him. One had denied him. Only 1 is recorded to have stayed around long enough to watch him die. And all went into hiding.

It sure didn't look very promising for the future church which hadn't even been birthed yet. What could God possibly do with such unreliable men who had failed time after time?

Jesus had given them second chances before, but as soon as his body was laid in the tomb and the stone rolled in front, it sure seemed like time had run out along with any hope for second chances this time. They would all have to live with their failures, especially Peter.

One of Jesus' three closest friends who just the night before had boasted in front of everyone that he was different.

Insisting that even if everyone else ran away, he never would.

Yet within just a matter of hours he ate his words and three times denied he even knew Jesus.

What hope was there for someone like that?

Someone who would deny his friend repeatedly?

Peter realized this for scripture says that when the rooster crowed, Peter not only wept, but wept bitterly. His was the cry of utter despair and hopelessness.

What could God do with such a failure?

Then came Easter morning and a report from some of the women that they had gone to the tomb and their master's body wasn't there.

But even more, they said Jesus was alive and had appeared to them.

For Peter and the others, hope was reborn.

And when he stood before them, alive with arms wide open, he held out the hope and the promise that no matter what they had done, what they had become, how badly they had failed, he didn't give up on them.

They had another chance.

And that is just what he does for each of us.

No matter what you have done in your life.

No matter what you may have become.

Where you have been or how badly you may have failed, Jesus stands with arms wide open, not just ready but eager for you to come back home.

He is the Lord of second chances.

Like the father in Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son, He stands watching and waiting for his lost child to return, and when he sees us coming, he runs to meet us.

As Peter discovered and wrote from his own personal experiences in 1 Peter 4:8, love covers a multitude of sins

That is exactly what the cross did.

A love which did not spare his own son stands more than ready to forgive those who fall.

The passage I want to read on this easter morning is found in Mark 16:1-7

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.''" (Mark 16:1-7)

William Barclay said that the most precious thing in this whole passage is not the stone rolled away. Nor is it the words of the angel He is risen. Rather it is the two words which are so easy to miss. Words found only in the gospel of Mark, the gospel most scholars believe is based on Peter's own memories.

It's the words found in verse 7, Go tell his disciples AND PETER

How these words must have made Peter's heart race

John's gospel says when he heard those words, Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves.

Perhaps some of us need to hear this message also.

Beset by feelings of defeat and failure.

Sin and guilt eating away at our insides, reminding us of our failures and leaving us with the feeling that after all we have done there is nothing more God can use us for.

All of us have failed him at one point or another, done things we swore we would never do, sinned and fallen.

Perhaps under the pressure of the moment we denied our lord when we failed to speak up for him, wandered away from him, entangled in some sin, or caught up in the pursuit of the idols of materialism and comfort, ease and selfishness.

the message of Easter and victory of the empty tomb remains the same

No matter what you have done. No matter what you have become. How far you have fallen, through Jesus God calls you to come home.

As Jonah learned, there is no distance too far from God, no cave too dark, no hole too deep that his loving arm cannot reach and pull you back to himself.

He is the God of second chances.

At the cross we were given a second chance.

I. Go tell Peter, His failure was not fatal!

The glorious message of easter is the tomb is empty. Our Lord is risen!

Death and sin are defeated. His victory is complete

What an exciting message we get to proclaim

Our Lord is alive and victorious

And though we, like the apostles may have failed, the cross was not defeat but a victory what man and Satan meant for evil, God intended for good

hope is resurrected!

Forgiveness, mercy, and grace are found at Calvary

hope and second chances are renewed at the empty tomb

how this message must have burned through the fog of fear and defeat caused by his failures that had kept Peter bound

our sin may seem great and failures overwhelming but our God is always greater

On a cold December night in New jersey in 1914, Thomas Edison's factory was humming with activity when the plant, made of concrete and steel, a plant which had been deemed as fireproof, went up in flames. Witnesses all testified what a spectacular fire it was.

Edisons 24-year-old son Charles, desperately searched for his father to make sure he was alright. When he finally found him, Edison was just standing there staring at the fire, his white hair blowing in the wind, face illuminated by the flames.

Charles later recounted; my heart ached for him. Here he was, 67 years old, and everything he had worked for was going up in flames. When he saw me, he shouted, Charles, where's your mother? When I told him I didn't know, he said go find her! Bring her here! She'll never see anything like this as long as she lives.

The next morning Edison looked over the ruins of his company and said, there's value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew.

No matter what we have done, what we have become, God calls us to come home and gives us a second chance.

Our sins and mistakes have been nailed to the cross and salvation is available

That's what resurrection is all about, new life, new hope, and a new start

If any person is in Christ, they are a new creation. Old things pass away and all things become new.

At the cross we were given a second chance.

II. Go tell Peter, his failure was not fatal.

The tomb is empty. Our Lord is Risen. Sin and death are defeated.

Of all the things he could have said. He could have scolded him for his failure, lectured him for his arrogance in claiming he would never fail Jesus, complained about how much time he had wasted on Peter

Instead in those two simple words, tell Peter, he offers comfort not condemnation, restoration not punishment, love not anger.

Tell Peter I'm thinking about him. His failure was not fatal.

Assuring him that no matter what he had done, what he had become, Jesus hadn't given up on him but calls for them to come back home.

And a short time later when Jesus does appear to Peter, his first words are peace be with you Words of comfort not alienation or judgement

We don't need to try to make people feel guilty, they already are

We need to help them see that at the cross they have a second chance

In his short story titled, Capital of the World, Ernest Hemmingway tells of a father and son who had a terrible fight. The son says some very hurtful things he later regrets,

but the words were already spoken and couldn't be taken back. Now feeling alienated from his father, the son leaves home and sets out for Madrid. It doesn't take long however for the father to grow concerned for his son so he sets out to find him. When he reaches Madrid, he realized that there was no way he would ever be able to locate his son in a city of such size. So, he took out an ad in the newspaper. It read, Paco, meet me at the hotel Montana on Tuesday at noon. All is forgiven. Then he waited for Tuesday to come, anxiously wondering if his son would even read the ad and if he did, would he respond. Finally, when Tuesday arrived and he waited to see if his son would show up. At noon, 800 men named Paco entered the Hotel Montana looking and hoping to find a forgiving father.

Our heavenly father has put out an ad for each one of us which reads simply, all is forgiven, meet me at the cross.

The son came not to condemn but to seek and to save all who are lost

Assuring us that no matter what we have done or what we have become, He hasn't given up on us. He still cares calls us to come back home

Like our savior, his love is alive, not buried in some tomb of past remembrances and failures.

At the cross we were given a second chance.

III. Go tell Peter, his failure was not fatal.

The tomb is empty. Our Lord is risen. Sin and Death are defeated.

Go tell Peter, the angel said, I'm going ahead of you to Galilee where you will see me

And when he saw him, Jesus gave both he and the others the great commission to show he wasn't done with any of them

Their failures were not fatal and they had a second chance

If we are ever tempted to give up on ourselves, to write off someone who has let us down, thinking they can no longer be trusted, that they were beyond hope, we need to look at Peter

After this when danger came, he faced it square on, going to prison, facing opposition, openly declaring we must obey God rather than men.

And years later when he was arrested in Rome and preparing to be crucified, he simply asked that he not die in the same manner as his Lord because he wasn't worthy.

So instead, tradition says, they crucified him upside down.

In fact, tradition has it that with the exception of John, all of the apostles died violent deaths for their faith.

He is the God of second chances!

The small house was simple but adequate. It consisted of one large room on a dusty street. Its red tiled roof was one of many in this poor neighborhood on the outskirts of the Brazilian village. Though small, it was a comfortable home. Maria and her daughter Christina had done what they could to add color to the grey walls and warmth to the hard dirt floor; an old calendar, a faded photograph of a relative, a wooden crucifix. The furnishings were modest: a pallet on either side of the room, a washbasin, and a wood burning stove.

Maria's husband had died when Christina was an infant. The young mother stubbornly refusing opportunities to remarry, got a job and set out to raise her young daughter. And now, fifteen years later, the worst years were over. Though Maria's salary as a maid afforded few luxuries, it was reliable and it did provide food and clothing. And now Christina was old enough to get a job and help out.

Some said Christina got her independence from her mother. She recoiled at the traditional idea of marrying young and raising a family. Not that should couldn't have had her pick of husbands. Her olive skin and brown eyes kept a steady stream of prospects at her door. She had an infectious way of throwing her head back and filling the room with laughter. She also had that rare magic some women have that makes every man feel like a king just by being near them. But it was her spirit of curiosity that made her keep all men at arm's length.

She spoke often of going to the city. She dreamed of trading her dusty neighborhood for exciting avenues and city life. Just the thought of this horrified her mother. Maria was always quick to remind Christina of the harshness of the streets. People don't know you there. Jobs are scarce and the life is cruel. And besides, if you went there, what would you do for a living?

Maria knew exactly what Christina would do, or would have to do for a living. That's why her heart broke when she awoke one morning to find her daughters bed empty. Maria knew immediately where her daughter had gone. She also knew immediately what she must do to find her. She quickly threw some clothes into a bag, gathered up all her money, and ran out of the house.

On her way to the bus stop she entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black and white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro.

Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human will do things that before were unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with a reputation for street walkers and prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place she left her picture—taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked

on a hotel bulletin board, fastened to the corner of a phone booth. And on the back of each photo, she wrote a note. It wasn't too long before both her money and her pictures ran out and Maria had to return home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village.

It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her daughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she longed to trade those countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back, was the compelling invitation.

Whatever you have done. Whatever you have become. It doesn't matter. please come home.

And she did.

It's Easter.

The cross of Good Friday is a vivid picture of God's love.

The empty tomb of resurrection day is God's writing on the back to each of us.

Whatever we have done. Whatever we have become. It doesn't matter

The tomb is empty. Our Lord is Alive! Sin and Death are defeated. In Christ you have a second chance.

Jesus invites us to come home