

Resurrection in Our Failure

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Happy Easter. It's traditional on Easter morning to say a little refrain. I say Jesus is risen and you say he is risen indeed.

So let's try this. Jesus is risen. That's pretty good. Pretty good. Well done. Welcome. My name is Chris. If you are here for the first time, if you're here for the baptism, you're just really, really welcome.

We're going to be having a great time down at the beach afterwards. Make sure you come and join us. You don't want to miss out on the fun. So that means we're going to be a shorter service this morning, which some of you will be pleased about.

And I'm going to try and do this in 15 minutes. So you can time me if you want to. But we just really want to look at this passage and think a little bit about what Easter really means for us, Resurrection Sunday.

So I don't know this week if you've been watching the news, but it's been a great week for United Airlines. Their CEO had just been announced by PR Week as Communicator of the Year.

[1 : 11] United Airlines' image and profits have been increasing. And then there was that unfortunate incident that happened during the week. And their CEO was taken from praise to ridicule in just a matter of minutes.

You know, he spent the last few days trying to apologize to everybody to try and cover the damage done to his reputation and the reputation of the company. Somebody once said, it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it, right?

And you don't have to be a CEO of a company to realize that. Because this story that we're going to look at today, we're going to be looking at the Easter story through the lens of Peter, is very much a story of failure and resurrection.

Okay? Failure and resurrection. And we see in the story of the cross the ultimate failure, but the ultimate resurrection.

And as the kids showed us, Jesus dying on the cross to every one of his disciples looked like the utter greatest failure they could have been.

[2 : 20] They couldn't have imagined that three days later their whole lives would be changed and turned around. And so this morning, I'm not here to kind of prove to you the literal resurrection of Jesus, even though I think the evidence is strong and that is something that we as a church really believe.

But I want to show you the impact that Jesus' resurrection and death can have on you by looking through Peter. Peter, who's a guy who, like some of the big banks, he thought he was too big to fail. And so Simon Peter, we're going to look at him, he was a rough fisherman. He's been hanging around with Jesus for quite a while, and he's gone through so much with him, and you get to the night where Jesus is about to be arrested and killed, and Jesus says, I'm going to die, and you guys, my friends, you're going to run away and leave me.

And Peter looks around at all the other guys who are with him and says, yeah, they may leave you, but I'm not going to, because you know I'm Peter, and I know how to do this thing.

I'm the special one. You see, even if they fall away, I'm not going to, because you've just got to know what I'm like. And Jesus doesn't say, well, thanks, mate.

[3 : 33] At least I can count on you, Peter. He says, Peter, you don't know yourself. You're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows. And Peter's in denial.

He says, no, Jesus, don't underestimate me here. He says, you're looking at Commando Pete here. He says, I'll die with you. You know, I'm tougher than a seal.

I'm more loyal than a Mac user. He, some of you are Mac users out there. But he's like many of us, even as Christians, we think we can make it ourselves.

Maybe just have a little bit of Jesus help, a bit of religion on the way, but actually basically, fundamentally, I can rely on myself to get through life. 24 hours later, Jesus is arrested.

Peter follows him into enemy territory. The high priest's courtyard. And there's a fire burning. And Peter, great Peter, gets scared.

[4 : 34] And a little servant girl comes up to him and challenges him. And in his fear, he denies Jesus. Not just once, not just twice, but three times.

To somebody who, in Peter's mind, would have been the lowest of the low, a little servant girl. And big Peter can't even defend and stand up for Jesus then.

The rooster crows. And at that moment, I can just imagine how Peter felt. He's like, what have I done? How could I be so stupid?

You complete wombat, Peter. Couldn't even stand up to a little servant girl. And he breaks down and he cries. I don't know if any of you have ever been there.

Like, anyone ever said things which afterwards you think, why on earth did I say that? That was not going to get anywhere. Or have you, anyone ever wanted to be brave and then found yourself a coward in the heat of the moment?

[5 : 37] Anyone ever got angry when you wanted just to hold your tongue and be patient? Anyone like that? Anyone like me like that?

You know, maybe you'd even promised that you'd diet or exercise or read your Bible regularly and suddenly, you had so many great plans and in the moment, you failed. Because you see, this story is not just about Peter.

Every one of us is like Peter because secretly, we all live deep down with a sense that we're not fully the person we should be. And when we rely on ourselves, it's a bit like trying to balance an elephant on an egg.

Sooner or later, you're going to crack. And Bill Gates, Microsoft, we're getting Mac and Microsoft in here, so it's okay for all of you.

Bill Gates said, success is a lousy teacher. It makes smart people think they can't lose. But failure is God's way of putting a mirror before you, showing you yourself, showing you that you're weaker than you thought you were.

[6 : 44] You may be more sinful than you realized. You're more in need of mercy and grace than you could understand. Failure is the gateway to reality, the pathway to humility, and the doorway to receiving grace.

You get that? Failure is the gateway to reality, the pathway to humility, and the doorway to receiving grace. When you see it. You see, what we need in our failure, in the things that we know that we mess up in, we need forgiveness for our guilt, we need honor for our shame.

And I don't know how you try and deal with things. You know, I do a number of different things to deal with my guilt and my shame in different areas. Sometimes it's denial. It wasn't me.

Sometimes I just blame everybody else. You know, you started it. But what Peter does here is another thing that I do, which is he goes into avoidance mode. Really interesting. When Peter's right at the lowest point, do you know what he does?

He goes off fishing. You know why he goes fishing? He goes fishing because that's the one thing he thinks he can do really well. You know, he's a good fisherman.

[8 : 01] And so, that's very much like many of us. You know, when you have failings in your family life or failings in your spiritual life or failings in your relationships, many of us then run into our work or run into our studies to try and excel there, to cover up, to hide from the shame of failure in other areas of our lives.

That's what Peter's doing. And the thing is, for Peter, if Jesus died but didn't resurrect, then Peter was left by himself to deal with all his guilt and shame by himself.

He'd have to prove himself by working hard, trying to remove it, hiding from it. Because if there's no resurrection, your sin against God can never be forgiven.

Because it's just you left by yourself trying to make amends. But the amazing thing of Easter Sunday, of Resurrection Sunday, is that Jesus has risen.

He did rise. On the cross, he was shamed and declared guilty so that you could be to go free. You know, guilt for a crime has a punishment and the punishment for our unkindness was death.

[9 : 16] But Jesus took it for you and for me. You see, he gives you forgiveness for your guilt, which nobody else can give you.

You can't remove it by yourself. You need to have forgiveness from outside and Jesus offers that. But it's not just forgiveness for your guilt, it's also honour for your shame.

Because you know, you can be forgiven by someone, but the shame remains because they just don't quite trust you again with anything. Anyone been there? But at that night, really interesting, Peter's going fishing.

Do you know what happens? Peter can't even catch a fish. The one thing he thought he was good at, he can't even do that. What a loser. And then Jesus turns up at Peter's lowest point and do you know what?

He's by a fire cooking fish, which is really interesting because Peter's failed at fishing and Jesus provides the fish. Peter failed at faith by a fire and Jesus lights another fire.

[10 : 23] And the risen Jesus comes to Peter, puts his arm around him and says, hey, let's go for a chat, shall we? And you know, I don't know if anyone has ever done that with you, but at that moment, knowing what's happened to me, I'd be thinking, okay, what's the lecture that's coming?

Okay. What other words you're going to give me now? Okay. You're going to tell me, I told you so, Peter. Is that what he's going to say? Well, he asks him three questions.

Three devastating questions. He says, Simon, do you love me? Ooh, there's a bit of history to that question.

Do you love me? Now, that kind of question is the kind of question like saying to your son who's playing video games all evening, have you done your homework? It's not asking for the answer, it's exposing you, right?

It's exposing you. And Peter says, you know that I love you. And Jesus asks him again, Peter, do you love me? And Peter replies the same.

[11 : 26] And the third time Jesus asks him, Peter's grieved because Jesus is exposing the fact that Peter actually wasn't as great as he thought he was.

And Jesus brings him to the point of confessing, I want to follow you, I want to love you, but I'm weak. There's no more Mr. Big Guy Peter now.

He's like, you know everything. You know what's happened over these last 24 hours. You know what's happened. You know everything. You know the stuff I've done. There's no hiding.

And you know, that's an unpleasant place to be. But Jesus says, he says three times, feed my sheep, tend my sheep, feed my lambs.

What he's saying is Jesus saying, okay, you've seen my need of me and now I can use you. Now I can use you. Because if you think you can be okay with God by trying hard, by being good, by helping grannies across the road occasionally just to make yourself feel good about yourself, Jesus knows everything.

[12 : 35] He knows everything. You know, it's like a giant TV screen plastered across the wall of heaven. He's watching your every thought, your every action, your every word, every time you interact with your parents, every time you interact with your kids, with your spouse, with your colleagues, what you actually think about them, not what you really say to them.

It's all taped. And at the end of time, he'll play back that tape on the screen with the whole of heaven watching. And I wonder how you'll feel at that point.

I know how I'd feel. I'd be going, I hope this doesn't go onto Netflix. because there's no hiding. But in that shame of exposure, the only way out of shame is if someone with greater honor gives you honor to remove your shame.

You know, if in your work you make a mistake and the boss shows your mistakes in front of all your colleagues and you feel about that big, you can work really hard to try and make up for the mistake, to try and prove that you're not as bad as that.

But nothing can actually remove your shame until your boss comes and honors you and praises you in front of everybody else and entrusts the most valuable task to you. Right?

[13 : 55] Jesus doesn't just forgive Peter. He entrusts him. He honors him by entrusting him with the most important task that he had, which was the task of looking after his followers, his sheep.

You see, what Peter feared from God, from Jesus, was rejection and condemnation. What Jesus gave him was forgiveness and honor. In the resurrection, in the resurrection, Jesus is honored as the victor over death, as the name above every other name, the one before whom every knee will

bow in the whole world.

God, and yet that one with great honor comes to you and comes to me and says, if you recognize your need, like Peter, say, I can't rely on myself.

I need to turn to you. He not only forgives your guilt, he not only removes your shame, and he honors you and says, now you're in the place I can use you.

Now I can entrust you with my mission. The Bible says he gives you a new name, he gives you a new identity, and he calls you his child. And that's what the baptism is going to be about.

[15 : 15] That's what baptism is about, people with a new identity and a new name. So let me just finish with asking a couple of questions. words, where does your honor come from?

Where does your honor come from? Does it come from your job? From your achievements? From what other people think about you? Because if it's anything other than a risen Jesus who is honored, sooner or later, in five minutes, your honor could be destroyed by one foolish action that you do.

And you'll be left trying to prove yourself again and again. But the amazing message of Easter is that Jesus not only died for your sin, he rose again to give you a new hope, a new future, and your failure is the beginning of victory.

If you face it honestly, if you turn to Christ and say, I need you. Forgive me. And receive grace in your time of need.

Many people say that Christianity is a crutch. It's true. Christianity is a crutch. But if you've got a broken leg, having a crutch is a pretty good idea.

[16 : 33] The problem is if you have a broken leg and say, I don't need a crutch, you're going to have to lean on something and you're going to look pretty stupid just hopping around everywhere by yourself. Because you're not going to be able to get on in life.

Because guilt and shame will hold you. But the celebration of Easter is no guilt, no shame. There is a resurrected Lord who honors us.

And when you come and see your utter need of him, he says, I'm going to use you. Your failure is not defeat. I will turn it into victory. I am the one who is risen.

Let me pray. Father, I pray for those of us here who don't know you.

Who don't know how amazing it is to be honored and given a new identity, a new start with you. I pray that they would see that relying on ourselves really is just such an empty way to live.

[17 : 45] I pray for those of us who are Christians. So often we think we have to be so strong to try and do everything by ourselves and we forget that you work in our weakness.

I pray that you'd help us to see the beauty of your honor, to see that a resurrected Jesus has the power to change all of our failures into joy and into new life.

Lord, thank you that you took Peter from the pit and you then used him so powerfully and he knew that it was nothing to do with himself. Help us to be people who realize that you want to use us and it's not to do with how great we are but it's how great our risen saviour is.

In Jesus' name. Amen.