

25 Tell the Disciples and Peter

“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 16:7)

Harold Sherman wrote a book, “How to Turn Failure into Success.” In it, he offers a “Code of Persistence,” listing eight principles for success. These principles may be helpful in some of life’s challenges. The problem I see in them, however, is what happens if you cannot get beyond the first one— # 1: “I will never give up so long as I know I am right.” What happens when you know you are not right? What happens when your sense of personal failure overwhelms you to the point that you cannot move forward? What would this code mean to Peter in light of the events of Good Friday?

Have you ever wondered what it was like for Peter waking up on that Saturday following the crucifixion? Hours earlier he had been so self-assured, so confident, never believing that he could do such a thing: “*Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you’” (Matthew 26:35).*

Then hours later, he would deny His best friend, his Master, not once but three times. How could he get out of his mind that moment when the eyes of Jesus and his met in the judgment hall?

“Peter replied, ‘Man, I don’t know what your’re talking about!’ Just as he was speaking the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:60-62).

How does one stop the tears? Jesus had warned him. He was too full of himself to listen. Now, how does he undo the damage done? Jesus lies in a grave, dead. What is Peter to do with his guilt? Then comes the news:

“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 16:7).

The women report that they have seen Jesus. He is alive! He wants to meet with the disciples. Is this good news for Peter and the rest? Or does it add to their terror and fear? If the news is true, how will they face the One they have betrayed and denied?

Two words, however, offer comfort and hope: “. . . and Peter.” “Tell His disciples and Peter.” In those two words, the angel of God is signaling Peter that he is loved. The message of the empty tomb is nothing less than that of forgiveness.

God does not want our sins of the past or our lack of loyalty and love toward Him to keep us distant from Him. “Tell His disciples and Peter.” The compassion and gentle grace of those words are not only for Peter, they are for you and me. Take a pencil and write your name just beneath Peter’s in that verse in your Bible. If you are troubled by past sins or if your heart has wept and wept and nothing undoes the wrong and failure of the past, write your name just below Peter’s. Not all the tears we cry or the good intentions we offer will bridge the gap that our sins have

created between us and Jesus. The Good News, however, is that they don't have to. He bridges that gap. Through His death and resurrection, our sins have been paid for in full.

That is hard to believe, isn't it? It was for Peter as well. Even with these words, Peter did not know what to do with them. Following an appearance by Jesus with the disciples, Peter announces, "*I'm going out to fish*" (John 21:3). It is hard to know what is going through his mind at this moment. What follows is pretty clear, however. Jesus appears on the beach, asking the age-old question that is asked of every fisherman: "Catch anything?" When they tell him "No," He tells them to cast on the other side of the boat. When their nets become so full that they cannot haul in the net, it dawns on them that the guy on the shore is Jesus. Peter can stand back no longer. He dives in and swims to shore. There on the shore is a fire burning with some fish cooking for breakfast.

Only twice in the Gospels is there mention of people gathering around a fire—once here on the beach, and the other time in the courtyard where Peter stood denying Jesus. There is no way of knowing the intent of this fire, but I do know that smells have a powerful way of invoking memories of things from the past. Near the crackling fire, Jesus pulls Peter aside and three times asks, "Peter, do you love me?"

What I find interesting is that in the first two questions, Jesus uses the Greek word "Agape" for his question. He is in essence asking, "Do you love me with the love of God? Do you love me unconditionally?" Peter, knowing his actions of the past have not reflected his love, reaffirms his love for Jesus: "*Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you*" (John 21:15).

The third time Jesus asks the question, however, He uses the word, "phileo," which is a lower form of love. It is a word that stands for *friendship*. When Jesus asks this question, Peter cries. Now he realizes the extent to

which he has disappointed and let Jesus down. After each reply, Jesus' response is nothing short of amazing—amazing grace! He says to Peter, "Feed my sheep." Into Peter's hands, as well as the other disciples, Jesus entrusts His Church. Feed them. Lead them. Protect them. Besides the fire on the beach that day, Jesus would kindle a new fire burning in the heart of Peter.

Such is the nature of grace. Undeserving though we are to be forgiven, He not only forgives us but entrusts His Holy Church into our hands. The message of the angel to the women is a message to you and me. "Go tell His disciples and Peter." Who is it in your life whose name you could write below Peter's and now your own? Who is there that is detached from Christ because of personal failure, who finds it difficult to live according to any "Code of Persistence" because they cannot get beyond the first principle—# 1: "I will never give up so long as I know I am right"? The mission of the church is to go and tell them what we have learned: the Lord is alive and wants to see them. The message of the empty tomb is about a Lord who is able to meet each of our needs no matter where we are in life:

To the imprisoned – Jesus is the Key to Freedom, the Door of Salvation.

To the sick – Jesus is the Great Physician.

To the naked – Jesus is the Lily of the Valley, more adorned than all of Solomon's raiments.

To the attacked – Jesus is the Advocate and Redeemer from the law.

To the addicted – Jesus is the Supplier of every need.

To the debtor – Jesus is the Payer of our debt, our Earnest.

To the lonely – The Comforter has come.

To the drowning – Jesus is an Anchor and Green Pastures.

To the homeless – Jesus is the Cornerstone of that mansion, just over the hilltop.

To the depressed – Jesus is the Sun of
Righteousness, the Rose of Sharon.
To the educationally harassed – Jesus is the
Alpha and Omega.
To the lost – Jesus is the Bright and Morning
Star, the Day Star.
To the wanderer – Jesus is the Way.
To the dead – Jesus is the Life.
To the seeker – Jesus is the Truth.
To the hungry – Jesus is the Bread of Life, the
bagel of the day.
To the thirsty – Jesus is the Cup of Heaven,
the Vine that can turn water into wine, [the
Everlasting Water].
(Leonard Sweet, p. 43)

Prayer: Jesus, you satisfy every thirst and every hunger pang within my being. Your love and compassion toward me humble me. Thank you for the message that you have passed onto Peter and to me so that nothing keeps me distant from you or you from me. I love you Lord. **Amen.**

Challenge: Is there a “Peter” in your life to whom you can tell the Good News that Christ is alive and wants to see them?

Scripture Reading: Romans 8

From the Book of Concord: ““And remit our debt, as we remit what our debtors owe.’ This petition has to do with our poor, miserable life. Although we have God’s Word and believe, although we obey and submit to his will and are nourished by God’s gift and blessing, nevertheless we are not without sin. We still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among people who sorely vex us and give us occasion for impatience, anger, vengeance, etc. Besides, the devil is after us, besieging us on every side and, as we have heard, directing his attacks against all the previous petitions, so that it is not possible always to stand firm in this ceaseless conflict.

“Here again there is great need to call upon God and pray: ‘Dear Father, forgive us our debts.’ Not that he does not forgive sins even apart from and before our praying; for before we prayed for it or even thought about it, he gave us the gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness. But the point here is for us to recognize and accept this forgiveness. For the flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it does not trust and believe God and is constantly aroused by evil desires and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed, in acts of commission and omission. Thus our conscience becomes restless; it fears God’s wrath and displeasure, and so it loses the comfort and confidence of the gospel. Therefore it is necessary constantly to run to this petition and get the comfort that will restore our conscience” (The Large Catechism, The Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, p. 452.85-89).