

Where's Tim? Where's Tim? Tim? In here. He said he might go home because he didn't have any responsibilities.

I didn't even know if he's going to show up. But I was going to say, last time I was up here, my face looked like hamburger. And he pointed that out. I was kind of wanted to, you know, hey, you look really good now. That's okay.

Do you know who Lauren Daigle is? A lot of you do. She's a contemporary Christian artist who has a beautiful voice and powerful songs. And her song youg say a few years back was very popular. In fact, it crossed over from Christian charts into mainstream music.

And you hear it in odd places from time to time. The song you say is filled with powerful lines and it was written by her at a time when success was really happening. It was early on and she was still. Even in that context of doing well and being successful, she was feeling insecure and uncertain and filled with self doubt. And all those feelings are captured in the opening line of youf say, which says this.

I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough.

She's reflecting, I think a struggle that many of us know and most of us relive our past on a regular basis. In fact, that's really how you know who you are in lots of ways. And it's. I don't know about you and I've read a lot and I think this is pretty normal that it's kind of like in your mind you have video clips that play from the past, from recent and distant. And you have audio clips that play remembering things you said and things that were said to you.

And it's like we can see these things, both good and bad. And if we're not careful, this is. I think Scripture teaches this. If we're not careful, Satan will grab a hold of that and gain control and. And he will kind of dictate what you see and what you hear from your past.

We were talking about this Tuesday night in our regeneration group. It's like your life is just going straight down the middle here. And there's facts and there's behaviors. There's just things. It's just the reality of your life where you stand determines what you see.

If you stand over here, you can look at it and say, you know what? Doing okay. I'm doing pretty well. I can see evidence of God's working in my life. I see the fruit of the spirit to some degree.

I see. I see blessings. I see good things. Thank you but then Satan says, hey, hey, come over here. I want to show you something.

And we're looking at the same reality. And he's saying, look at that. That's just like this time. You did all the same things all the way

back. Remember all the stupid things you said?

Don't you remember? Look at that. Look at your sins. Look at your. Your faults and your flaws and your shortcomings.

Just, hey. And so it's a constant battle for me. It's probably a constant battle for most of us. And so we're. We're going along in reality.

And out of the blue will come a major failure from the past in full color with surround sound. And Satan narrat, narrating in a deep voice, and he says, look at this.

You really messed up. And more than that, you are absolutely a failure. Just look at you. Here's all the evidence. And who do you think you are trying to follow Christ and act like you're a Christian?

And come on, get real. And it seems to me that Satan's one of his greatest tactics. He tries to make us feel useless. And I don't know how many people over the many years of ministry that I've met who will say something like, I can't serve in that capacity. I can't do that because I got this.

I've been defined by that. And I just. I feel like I can't do that. I'm disqualified. And they feel useless.

They hang around, but they don't get involved and don't feel useful. Maybe that's you today. I wonder about Simon Peter, you know, the guy in the Bible. I can really relate to Peter because my life's a lot like his. There's some really good things, and then there's like, oh, these epic failures.

And Peter. Peter had a lot of both. And Jesus saw them coming. Jesus felt the pain from them. But he still loved Peter, and he never gave up on him.

Well, there's some really weird, ominous words kind of in Luke 22 if you. If you think about him. We're not going to unpack that. But. But look at Luke 22, verses 30, 31 and 32.

This is Jesus speaking to Peter. He says, simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I've prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.

And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. So these words are spoken as Peter is bragging and proudly proclaiming his loving loyalty to Jesus. Even if everybody else falls away, I won't. God, Jesus, I will Go with you all the way. Even if I have to die for you, I will do that.

Well, just a few hours later, Peter denies even knowing who Jesus is. And I wonder what it was like when Peter heard that rooster crow signifying his epic failure.

I don't know if people talk about this much, but I wonder, and I really wonder if Peter didn't consider suicide.

And I say that because his fellow apostle, who had the same time and experience with Jesus, Judas did, and he did it. Both Peter and Judas have their worst moments in the context of the crucifixion. And Judas looks at it and sees something that says to him, there's no way to come back from this. There's no way I can be forgiven. And so he hangs himself.

Peter is interesting because maybe those words of Luke 22 hang with him. So he hangs around, and he doesn't kill himself.

Peter's hanging around, and I think he's reliving the past, trying to figure it out. This is after the crucifixion. And so I have a vivid imagination about scripture. I try to enter into it and be there. And so I imagine Peter sitting alone as the sun sets on Saturday night.

Can you see him with me? There he is. He's had all day Saturday, which is a Sabbath. You're not supposed to do anything as a good Jewish man. So he hasn't had any activity.

So all he's got to do is to sit there and think. Think about what happened yesterday, the crucifixion and Thursday. But then he's also thinking about the whole three years with Jesus. And it's coming to a peak on this Saturday night as the haunting of Friday's crucifixion is very present in the room. And Peter's absolute failure.

I see Peter there. He's alone. It's quiet. It's just too quiet. And the videos are just playing in his head, one after another.

And Satan is narrating. Satan is telling him what to see and what to think. And Satan is speaking and accusing Peter. You are such a loser. Look at you.

You're an absolute failure. You said you wouldn't do this, and you did it. You know, some of the things Peter relives, the successes momentarily make him smile. And then his smile turns into tears as he remembers the failures. And so he remembers his life with Jesus.

And he remembers the day Jesus finally compels him to leave fishing. The thing he knows and the thing that brings him comfort. The call of Jesus is too compelling, so he follows. Jesus says, follow Me. And he follows.

And maybe he remembers that time when Jesus stayed behind. He sent the

guys out on the boat, and they're out the middle of the lake, and it's pretty scary. It's right before dawn, and they see somebody or something coming on the water, and they're terrified. It says.

And Jesus says, don't be afraid. It's me. And Peter says, well, if it's you, let me walk to you on the water. And Jesus says, come on. And so it says, Peter climbed out of the boat, and he starts walking on the water.

What a great, amazing success. But then he takes his eyes off Jesus. There's a sermon there, and he starts to see the waves and the wind. And when he takes his eyes off Jesus, he starts to sink, and he has to cry out, save me, Jesus. Save me.

And Jesus reaches down and pulls him out of the water. And then Jesus, after this great moment of success, rebukes Peter and says, you have little faith. Come on. Come on, Peter. I wonder if he remembers.

And this is probably the highlight of Peter's time with Jesus. The day they were all sitting around in Caesarea Philippi. And Jesus says, who do people say that I am? And they start rattling off different names. And he says, what about you guys?

And Peter speaks for the crowd and he says, you are the Messiah. You're the son of the living God. And Jesus is so pleased and tells Peter he's proud of him for saying so and says, you're going to be such a key person in the kingdom of God. And then Jesus goes on to say, here's the plan. I've got to go to Jerusalem.

I've got to die. And that's all Peter hears, and he starts arguing with Jesus and says, no, no, no, no. That's not going to happen. And it gets to the point after this moment of greatness that Jesus looks at Peter and says, get behind me, Satan. You don't have the things of God in mind.

You only have your stuff in mind.

I think Peter winces when he relives those moments. And maybe tears trickle down his cheek on that Saturday night.

It's just too much. So he tries to shut it down, but he can't. And then he goes to what happened just a few hours ago on Friday, and then Thursday night. And I don't know, he remembers seeing Jesus lose control. Jesus being arrested, Jesus being abused, and Jesus being crucified.

And Peter, it says, is afraid during that whole context. Who wouldn't be? And so he follows kind of at a distance, trying to blend into the crowd, to watch what's going on. And then he relives those horrible moments of fear that lead him to lie about his connection with Jesus

and then to deny that he even knows who he is, with cursing and swearing, I don't know who he is. I don't know the man.

Then the rooster crows, and the words of Jesus, the words that led to that last argument with Jesus, come to mind. Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

So Peter hangs his head again, weeps again. On this terrible Saturday night, he falls asleep, maybe hoping he'll never wake up. It's that bad.

But early on a Sunday morning, Peter's been in and out of sleep, and he hears somebody outside, somebody running, breathlessly, coming to him. And the sun's rising, and they beat on the door, and Peter opens it, and they say, the tomb is empty. Angels told us he is risen.

They also said, go tell his disciples. And Peter, he is risen. This concerned friend says, peter, Peter, he's risen. And he wants you, Peter. He singled you out.

He wants you to know about it. He wants you to come and see him. So Peter's life begins to change with those words of hope. And he runs to the tomb. He sees.

Sees it for himself. And then he waits to meet Jesus. And Sunday night, Sunday night of the resurrection, Jesus shows up. And I imagine the first reunion with Jesus and Peter is pretty awkward, wouldn't you think? And it seems to me they meet a couple of times, and it seems to me that they don't really ever clear the air about this.

Seems like the subject's not mentioned. And maybe Peter is wondering where he stands. It's like, you know, Jesus seems nice enough, but I don't know. I don't know where I stand with him. This takes us to John, chapter 21.

Peter's confusion, I think, seems to get the best of him. And so in John 21, we find him saying this, I'm going fishing. This is not like saying, I'm going to Monroe for the afternoon, see if I can catch some fish. This is, I think, Peter saying, look, I'm going back to what I know. I'm going back to what's comfortable.

I understand fishing. I don't. I just can't quite get this Jesus thing. And so I'm going fishing, going back to the old way of life because I feel useless. Some of the other guys go with him, and they fish all night.

And as a new day is dawning, Peter looks And he sees a mysterious man on the beach. This mysterious man says, have you caught anything? No. And then he says, well, throw your net on the other side and you'll. You'll catch something on the right side.

They do. And the nets are so full they can't even bring them into the boat. John figures it out, and he looks at Peter and says, it's the Lord. It's the Lord. And Peter immediately jumps out of the boat and swims to the shore.

They weren't that far off. And the other guys pull in the nets full of fish. 153 big ones, it says, to be exact. And when they get to the shore, Jesus has prepared a charcoal fire and he's got some fish roasting on the fire, and he's made some bread as well. And he invites them to eat.

John tells us this is the third time that Jesus has met with these guys since the Resurrection. So they eat. And I just imagine they're sitting around the fire. You know how most of us like to get a stick and kind of poke the fire and hold it up. I can imagine they're doing that kind of stuff.

And I would guess they're talking about. I don't know what they're talking about, but I imagine the conversation has gone very quiet.

The waves are gently lapping up on the shore. The boat is gently going up and down. And we pick up the reading in John, chapter 21, verses 15 through 17.

After breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, Peter replied, you know I love you. Then feed my lambs, Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question. Simon, son of John, do you love me? Yes, Lord, Peter replied, you know I love you. Then take care of my sheep. A third time, he asked, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time.

He said, lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said, then feed my sheep. It seems like Jesus is challenging Peter about his commitment and at the same time, perhaps symbolically removing the three denials of Peter with the opportunity to express and affirm his love three times. Peter's confused because I think he probably thinks, am I going to do it again?

He's a little bit hurt by it. But Jesus lays it out clearly. He says, I tell you the truth. When you were young, you were able to do as you liked. You dressed yourself, you went wherever you wanted to go.

But when you're old, you're going to lose control.

You will stretch out Your hands and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go. Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, follow me.

There's a huge difference between failing and being a failure.

Peter. Peter failed multiple times, but he was not a failure. And John 21 is about Peter's identity and his purpose. His identity is not Peter the failure, but Peter the follower of Jesus. Peter's story is a living picture of step seven.

We're doing 12 steps here in the sermon series. Step seven of regeneration is followed by we humbly ask God's spirit to change our hearts and minds in order to follow Christ fully. So Peter fails in gut wrenching ways.

But when Jesus shows up on that beach, he doesn't shame him, he doesn't name the stuff. Jesus restores him, he recommissions him and invites him once again into the simple life changing call. Follow me. Follow me.

Step seven is where we do what Peter did on the beach.

We stop replaying the failures with Satan's narration on every scene and we turn toward Jesus and let him speak into our lives and let him establish our new identity over us. We are followers, not failures. I've told you this story multiple times. Say it in a different way today. There was a time before I started here at Sherwood Oaks when I experienced a couple years of of big failing.

I left a 20 year ministry and then two years of darkness. And during that darkness I cried out to God. And one of the things I said to him is I want to be useful because I felt useless. I want to be useful in your kingdom. Then I met Sean Green, lead minister at Bloomington, Sherwood Oaks, and eventually ended up at Sherwood Oaks.

And in my early years with Shawn, I told him about my desire to be useful. I used that term I want to be useful. And he's used it against me several times.

And through God's providence and goodness, along with Shawn's help, I've been at Sherwood Oaks six years, had several different roles. And the other day Shawn came into my office to talk about two things I'm doing right now. And we were talking about it and he paid me one of the most memorable compliments I've had in a long time. With a loving, knowing, playful smile, he said, alan, you are useful. It actually made me cry because he was drawing upon longings from years ago that he remembered.

Useful. That's really all I want. There's been a time when I wanted to

be the hero. I wanted to Be the star. But I'm past all that now.

I just want to be useful. And I think that's Peter's posture. I want to follow Jesus. I want to become like him, somehow contributing to his kingdom. And that's step seven.

That step seven is a simple identity that leads to a simple purpose. I am a beloved son of God, and I want to be like my brother Jesus. The road may be difficult. It may end in crucifixion, like it did for Peter. And you know the story.

Peter was crucified, but he said, crucify me upside down. I'm not worthy to die in the same manner that my Lord did. So that's what we're called to that there will be challenges, but through it all, Jesus says, follow me. Follow me. Trust me.

When we started Day, we talked about Lauren Daigle's song. You say the voices in my head that tell me not that I'm not enough.

We talked about how easy it is to stand on the wrong side of reality and see all the problems and all the faults and flaws and sins and hear Satan's accusations. And that's where Peter stood on Saturday night. And maybe that's where you are today. Is anyone there? Probably seeing all the things you've said and done wrong and you become defined by your past.

That's not what God says. Jesus says, come over here. Step to this side and listen to the voice of truth. Listen to the voice of grace and restoration. On that beach in John 21, Jesus doesn't tell Peter who he used to be.

He tells him who he is. You're not a failure. You're not useless. You're not done. Follow me.

Peter failed, but he wasn't a failure. And neither are you. Neither am I. Step seven is about God reshaping what we believe about ourselves. It's about letting him transform our minds and our hearts so that we can see and agree with God and follow Christ fully.

It's about refusing to let Satan define us by our worst moments and letting Jesus define us by his love and grace. You're not defined by your failures. You're not useless. You're not disqualified. It's about hearing the voice of truth.

You are mine. You're my beloved child. You are useful now. Come on. Come on, come on.

Follow me. Let's go.

As we come to communion, I love that picture of charcoal fire on the

beach. Jesus didn't meet Peter with a lecture. He didn't meet him with lyster. I told you so. I told you none of that Jesus met him with warmth, grace and breakfast.

And they ate together. And our communion is kind of like that, really. As you take the bread, remember he gave his body because you matter to him. He loves you. I think he likes you.

And as you take the cup, remember that his blood restores and gives you new life every day around that fire. Jesus didn't bring up Peter's denials. He brought up Peter's love. And today, he's not focused on your past. He's focused on your heart.

And so, as you receive communion, let the voice of Jesus drown out all the other voices. Hear him sing, speak a better word, Speak a better reality. You are forgiven. You are mine. You are useful.

You're useful in the kingdom. And then hear him say, come on, follow me. Follow me. Let's pray. God, thank you for such a story as Peter.

What a mess he was at times. And so are we. But you love us. You don't shame us. Just call us to get up, dust ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and follow you again.

We thank you for this communion that reminds us of who we are and whose we are. And we have this wonderful standing as your beloved children. So help us to rest in that, to to enjoy it and to live that out. We thank you for this bread. We thank you for this juice.

In Jesus name, amen.

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