

## What God is Looking For

Series: Encountering Jesus (through the Gospel of Luke)

March 22, 2020 – Brad Bailey

Series #63 / Text: Luke 22:54-62

Note: The following message was given during the season of the coronavirus pandemic in which churches were unable to meet and were live streaming. The text follows our flow through the Gospel of Luke but includes some reference to the unprecedented change in daily lives and concerns at hand.

### Intro

Welcome...so glad you are joining me in this moment.

**We've all been in** something of a “**slow shock**”...as the past couple weeks unfolded ... and we face major change in our daily lives for a while.

Safe to say... we **all sense** some **unsettledness**... and **uncertainty**.

**Naturally** it's a time to **engage what our God may say to us**.

As such...it **may seem natural** to venture to any number of words in Scripture.

But we have **been in a LONG venture** of encountering Jesus through the Gospel of Luke.

And not only do I feel a desire to see us complete this concluding section that leads us into Easter in a few weeks.... But I'm also finding that there is something here ... prophetically. In this drama... there is that which speaks to the drama of this time.

Here we have the **confrontation of all powers** ...here **Jesus speaks** into the **condition of human chaos**.

**Last week...we engaged the question** of “**Who is in control?**”

During a time like this...it is natural to wonder...who is in control... and as we feel the loss of control in our lives... it's not uncommon to try even harder to take control. And as the moment approached in which Jesus was going to be seized... he warned his disciples that here would be chaos.

**And as we saw... that is exactly what began to play out in his arrest.**

We see in that moment that everyone is making a play for control. And there in the midst...Jesus is the only one who is in control. ... he is revealing there is something bigger. When most bound... he was the one in control... for he had just acknowledged that if this was indeed needed... he would accept the suffering... as the good will of God.

For all along he had known that he would bear the consequences of sin and separation of all life.

**There is a virus... a spiritual virus... that of our tragic self declared independence from God...and God is providing his own life as the vaccine.**

What a vital word to our souls. In this time... we can stop and realize...

**Our existence is ultimately rooted in the WILL of God ....and it is GOOD.**

And today... we take up another question.

## **What is God looking for in us?**

**This is a relevant question because during this time in which so much common activity is suspended... we may have more time with ourselves... less distracted...less diverted. When we don't have the usual forms of activity that occupy us...we may face more time with ourselves... facing ourselves.**

**And I believe what God wants us to realize is that he is not only looking at us...but he is looking FOR us.**

Today God speaks to us as we look at **one of the core lives in this drama... Peter.** Peter ... also known as Simon Peter.... was **one of the 12 which Jesus chose** as his initial core disciples. One of the three closest to Jesus.

Also the one who **always jumps in**... speaks out...sometimes too quickly.

Peter is a **proud man.**

He'd been a **leader among fishermen.** He has **never been comfortable with weakness.**

When Jesus first told his disciples that he must suffer and die... Peter jumps in and says that can't happen. **He's really saying: "I don't do weakness."**

**He's loyal...but also proud of his loyalty. His loyalty is bound in pride.**

What is Peter trusting in? His own strength.

**And Luke tells us about the profound exchange that took place between Jesus and Peter. After the Last Supper... in which Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples... on the night he was arrested... Jesus said...**

### **Luke 22:31- 34 (NLT)**

<sup>31</sup> "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers." <sup>33</sup> Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you." <sup>34</sup> But Jesus said, "Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me."

**And in Matthews account [1]...**

### **Matthew 26:33,35 (NLT)**

Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you." ...<sup>35</sup> "No!" Peter insisted. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same.

In this moment...Jesus is preparing Peter... that his pride is going to be confronted.

**Jesus had chosen those who were humble...** they were not in the religious class.

But even when **rooted in more humble life positions...**they were vulnerable to pride.

As here he says he will never deny... "even if everyone else does."

Whenever we say or even think: "Everyone else...but never me"...we are probably having a hard time facing our common humanity...facing ourselves.

Now comes that devastating moment of truth. [2]

### **Luke 22:54-62 (NLT)**

<sup>54</sup> So they arrested him and led him to the high priest's home. And Peter followed at a distance. <sup>55</sup> The guards lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. <sup>56</sup> A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!" <sup>57</sup> But Peter denied it. "Woman," he said, "I don't even know him!" <sup>58</sup> After a while someone else looked at him and said, "You must be one of them!" "No, man, I'm not!" Peter retorted. <sup>59</sup> About an hour later someone else insisted, "This must be one of them, because he is a Galilean, too." <sup>60</sup> But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup> At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered that the Lord had said, "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me."  
<sup>62</sup> And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.

This is a dramatic moment of facing oneself.

But don't miss that this was something Jesus had shared with Peter would come.

Jesus **wants Peter to know that he is aware...** that this will be part of a process.

**Humility can be devastating...and Jesus knows that.**

Satan wants to sift you.

### **Luke 22:31- 32 (NLT)**

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."

**This harkens back** to what God revealed **regarding Job...** appeared so faithful...but Satan said let me bring suffering...and then he will turn away.

Similarly... Satan appears to want to sift all the esteem from Peter... to show what will be left when he faces his weakness.

**We are all in a time of sifting.... When some of our esteem may be stripped.**

It leads to a profound moment.

## **Luke 22:60-62 (NLT)**

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup> At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered that the Lord had said, “Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.” <sup>62</sup> And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.

What a moment... the **rooster crows** ... **Peter realizes** what Jesus had said... he had done....and “**at that moment Jesus looked at Peter.**”

Imagine that look. It was the look of one who cared about Peter...who ultimately wants Peter.

**And Jesus know that it is a moment in which Peter is facing himself.**

What is Jesus looking for in Peter?

Looking for the **fragileness** that **can embrace** the **faithfulness of Jesus.**

He is **looking for the sinner** who **can embrace the savior.**

**In this time** in which we have less activity... **potentially more time with ourselves...** We **can avoid facing ourselves...** our fragileness... find plenty of **new diversions...**new ways to prop our weakness.

We do well to see Jesus and Peter. In that moment...Jesus looked at Peter... and **he is looking at us.**

**And what does Peter do?**

**He leaves... weeping bitterly.**

Peter **withdraws.**

That is **what we all want to do.** He faces his own fragileness... and can't see anything else.

I can think of times that I have sinned...and not just sinned...but sinned in a way that perhaps I had before and found it even harder to accept again.

And I know the tendency to withdraw from God...and from others.

This becomes even more dynamic as we consider what we learn about Peter in the days that followed.

Because Jesus would **soon be crucified**...but then news would come...he is risen...and Peter would know what Jesus has done.

And still... he would simply feel lost.

He would **still feel he was now alone in his fragileness.**

**Even after Christ has risen... Peter appears lost...and says he just going to go back to fishing.**

And this is so important to hear: **Jesus was not done with Peter.**

Jesus would come to Peter again. One day...Peter is fishing... and a voice calls out from the shoreline... and there is Jesus... Peter races to the shore...and there finds Jesus ... who had prepared breakfast...and Jesus **looks him in the eyes.**

A moment of great discomfort.

There **he would call him again.** (Profoundly personal... Peter even asks about another...and Jesus ways... this is about you.)

Do you love me? That is what mattered.

And he **now had Peter's heart... not rooted in pride but in humility.**

This is what Jesus is looking for. This is what God is looking for.

### **1 Peter 5:5 (CEV)**

**"God opposes proud people, but he helps everyone who is humble."**

Yes this is what God is looking for. And in this season we have the opportunity to embrace the humility of being weak... in more ways than one.

This is **what the Apostle Paul would discover.** He asked God for help in an affliction... and in this case he came to see how the affliction served his humility.

### **2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV)**

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Don't be afraid of weakness**... embrace your weakness so that Christ's power can rest on you. These are the **words of one** who had been a **religious leader.** That is significant.

Because **human pride** will always **form a false Gospel**...a false understanding of what God is doing.

The **false Gospel of religion** is that God will choose us and make us special people... people who can be proud of themselves.

But the **true Gospel** is that we are worse sinners than we ever have admitted... and more loved than we ever imagined.

The gospel is not I accept Jesus and he makes me a good proud person... it is that you are **worse than you ever thought** and **loved more than you have ever known.**

So our strength comes not from avoiding ourselves but from facing ourselves ...facing who we are.

**There is a false self** that we develop **to cover our own naked selves.** Imposter.

That false self **can never know God**...because it isn't real. Doesn't exist.

**Jesus wasn't just looking at Peter...he was looking FOR Peter.**  
When Jesus is looking at us...it's because **he is looking FOR us.**

Here is the great news. When Peter knew that God saw his fragile nature... he became what Jesus had said he could be... a rock.

**I think of the John Newton**... captain of a slave ship... who had a moment of facing himself. From that experience... wrote he these words:  
“Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost. But now I am found. Was blind but now I see.”

### Closing Prayer / Worship

#### **Notes:**

1. When we see Matthew's account, we can note that they all took the same posture of denying that they could be so weak.

Interesting... when he spoke of someone betraying him... rather than finding that a crazy idea...they asked “Is it me?”

What is at hand was clearer to all of them than to us.

Someone has noted that this may reflect that they all felt the pressure...not just Judas. They all felt that the powers of the religious leaders would bring Roman support to crush this movement. They all felt the vulnerability of getting in good with those powers....and wondered if they would prove to weak.

They were going to find themselves facing being left as those who would be crushed... or they would do something to protect themselves.

In this sense Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial were each rooted in the same choice.

Betrayal is notably more offensive than simply denying knowing him... they both were statements that one wasn't going to maintain being faithful when it would cost.

2. I chose the NLT version because it had a couple helpful elements. It says that Jesus was taken “to” the high priests home rather than “into his home” which simplifies the dynamics of how Jesus could have looked at Peter as the scene unfolds. It also adds the dramatic word “immediately” to the point at which Jesus looked at him...which all translation imply but here the timing is accentuated.

It is also notable that John's Gospel notes that the third denial is prompted by one who would have reflected a more intense threat to Peter...for they were a relative of the one whose ear he had just cut in the garden.

**John 18:26 (NLT2)** - 26 But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?”