

## **PETER (Mother's Day) When Jesus Shows Up... Failure Becomes Restoration**

### **INTRO**

Mother's Day is beautiful for some people... and complicated for others.

For some, today is celebration. For others, it is grief. For some, it is joy. For others, it is regret.

Some people walk into church today carrying gratitude. Others walk in carrying guilt. Because life has a way of making us feel like we have fallen short somewhere.

As parents. As spouses. As leaders. As disciples.

And if we are honest, many people quietly carry the weight of feeling like they failed.

One moment. One decision. One season they wish they could redo.

Something they wish they could take back. And that is exactly where Peter is in this story.

Because the last time Peter stood near a fire... he denied Jesus three times.

The disciple who once said, "Even if everyone else falls away, I never will," collapsed under pressure. The bold disciple became fearful. The outspoken disciple became silent. The loyal disciple denied even knowing Jesus.

And now Jesus is risen.

And Peter has to wonder:

“What does Jesus do with someone who failed Him like I did?”

And maybe more of us have asked that question than we realize.

“What does Jesus do with regret?”

“What does Jesus do with shame?”

“What does Jesus do with people who know they blew it?”

The good news of this passage is this:

**BIG IDEA:** Jesus restores and recommissions broken people.

## **TRANSITION INTO THE TEXT**

Do not rush past how human this moment is.

Peter has seen the empty tomb. He has heard the reports. He knows Jesus is alive. But instead of moving forward... he goes backward.

“I’m going fishing.” On the surface, that sounds ordinary. But this is bigger than fishing.

This is retreat. Because when people carry shame, they often return to what feels familiar.

Peter goes back to the life he knew before Jesus called him. And maybe that is because failure has a way of making you feel disqualified. Like maybe God can still use other people... but not you.

And some people know exactly what that feels like.

Not necessarily walking away from God completely... but quietly retreating.

Pulling back. Shrinking down. Returning to old patterns because disappointment convinced you the story is over.

But Peter is about to discover something powerful: Failure is not final when Jesus steps into the story.

Go with me to Gospel of John 21:1–19

**21** Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup> Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. <sup>6</sup> He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. <sup>7</sup> Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.<sup>1</sup> <sup>9</sup> When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. <sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to

*Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"*

## **THE FAILURE**

Peter had every reason to feel ashamed.

This was not a minor mistake. He denied Jesus publicly. Repeatedly. Three times.

And what makes it even heavier is this: Peter truly loved Jesus.

That matters.

Because sometimes the deepest failures happen in the lives of people who genuinely love God.

Peter was not fake. He was not pretending. He was passionate, committed, and sincere.

Earlier in Gospel of John 13, Peter boldly declared that he would lay down his life for Jesus. In Gospel of Matthew 26, he insists that even if everyone else falls away, he never will.

But passion alone is not enough to sustain you.

And under pressure... Peter collapsed.

One servant girl asks if he knows Jesus, and suddenly the bold disciple becomes fearful and defensive.

Because failure has a way of exposing what confidence was hiding.

But here is what is incredible:

Before Peter ever failed, Jesus already knew it was coming.

In Gospel of Luke 22, Jesus tells Peter:

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

Do not miss that.

Jesus did not say, “If you return.”

He said, “When you return.”

Which means Jesus saw Peter’s failure coming... but He also saw Peter’s restoration coming.

And some people need to hear this today:

Your failure did not surprise Jesus.

And it did not cancel His purpose for your life.

Still, Peter carried the weight of what happened.

The sounds.  
The words.  
The memory.

And maybe worst of all... the shame.

Because shame does not just say, "I made a mistake."

Shame says:

"I am the mistake."

And there are people in this room carrying that kind of weight today.  
Not just regret over what happened... but a quiet belief that maybe God sees you differently now.

Maybe God is disappointed in you.

Maybe God is done with you.

Maybe your failure changed His mind about your future.

But this story is about to reveal something powerful about Jesus.

## **THE SAVIOR WHO RESTORES**

After a night of catching nothing, Jesus appears on the shore.

And John gives us a detail that matters.

There is a charcoal fire burning.

That may not seem important at first, but this is only the second charcoal fire mentioned in the Gospel of John.

The first charcoal fire was in the courtyard where Peter denied Jesus.

John wants us to see the connection.

The last time Peter stood near a charcoal fire... he failed.

Now Jesus brings Peter back to a charcoal fire again.

Not to shame him.

Not to humiliate him.

But to redeem the memory.

Because Jesus has a way of taking the places connected to our deepest failures and transforming them into places of restoration.

And do not miss how tender this moment is.

Jesus does not start with rebuke.

He starts with breakfast.

Before Jesus corrects Peter... He cares for Peter.

And do not miss this:

The risen Christ is still acting like a shepherd.

Still feeding.

Still serving.

Still pursuing broken people.

The cross did not change the heart of Jesus.

The resurrection revealed it.

Jesus cooks breakfast for tired, discouraged disciples standing on the shore carrying failure and confusion.

And I think some people need to hear this:

Jesus does not approach broken people with coldness.

He approaches them with compassion.

Then comes the moment.

Three times Jesus asks Peter:

“Do you love Me?”

And do not miss the beauty of this moment.

Three denials... now met with three opportunities for restoration.

Jesus is not randomly repeating Himself.

He is intentionally restoring what was broken.

Every denial is being answered with grace.

Every failure is being met with invitation.

There is a lot scholars debate about the different Greek words for love in this passage. But the clearest point is not hidden in the Greek.

It is right on the surface.

Jesus keeps bringing Peter back to one central question:

“Do you love Me?”

Because before ministry... before leadership... before assignment...

Jesus wants Peter's heart.

And every time Peter answers, Jesus responds:

“Feed My sheep.”

“Take care of My sheep.”

“Feed My sheep.”

Jesus does not merely forgive Peter privately.

He recommissions him publicly.

“Feed My sheep” means:

“Peter, I still trust you with what matters to Me.”

Jesus is not merely restoring Peter back into relationship.

He is restoring him back into mission.

## **WHAT JESUS REVEALS**

This moment reveals something powerful about the heart of Jesus.

Jesus is better at restoring people than we are at ruining ourselves.

He does not define Peter by his worst moment.

And He does not define you by yours either.

And this restoration is not cheap grace.

Jesus can restore Peter because Jesus already carried Peter’s denial to the cross.

The resurrected Christ standing on that shore is still bearing the wounds of crucifixion.

Which means Peter's failure was fully seen... fully known... and fully paid for.

Grace restores what shame tries to bury.

And grace does not merely excuse what sin damaged.

Grace heals what sin damaged.

Jesus is not restoring Peter so Peter can stay the same.

He is restoring Peter so Peter can become whole, holy, and useful again.

John Wesley described this passage as carrying a peculiar tenderness, and you can feel it here.

Jesus is honest with Peter... but He is tender with him.

Notice what Jesus does not say.

He does not say:

"Peter, explain yourself."

"Peter, prove yourself."

"Peter, earn your way back."

No.

Jesus restores him through relationship.

Because grace is not merely the removal of guilt.

Grace is the restoration of communion.

Jesus never ignores Peter's failure... but He also never allows failure to have the final word.

Because conviction says:

"What you did was wrong."

But shame says:

"You are beyond restoration."

And Jesus breaks the power of shame.

## **WHAT CHANGES**

Everything changes in this moment.

Peter goes from defeated to recommissioned. From ashamed to entrusted again. From failure to calling.

And eventually this same Peter will stand publicly at Pentecost proclaiming the Gospel boldly in Acts of the Apostles 2.

The man once controlled by fear becomes a man filled with the Spirit.

Because real grace does not leave people where it found them.

Grace does not merely comfort Peter.

Grace transforms Peter.

The same man who once denied Jesus publicly will one day proclaim Jesus publicly.

Why?

Because restoration changes people.

An encounter with grace changes people.

Your failure may explain your pain... but it does not define your future.

Failure may mark a chapter of your story... but it does not get to write the ending.

## **JESUS' WORD TO US**

Some of us have spent years carrying one moment.

One parenting failure.

One relationship failure.

One moral failure.

One season we wish we could erase.

And somewhere along the way, you started believing:

"Maybe God can use other people... but not me."

But when Jesus shows up... failure is not the end of the story.

Because Jesus does not consult your worst moment before calling you.

He restores.

He heals.

He recommissions.

And some mothers in this room have carried the crushing weight of believing you failed somewhere.

Failed your kids.  
Failed your family.  
Failed God.

But hear me clearly:

Jesus is not standing over you with condemnation.

He is standing on the shore calling you back to grace.

### **APPLICATION**

You do not have to hide your failures from Jesus. You do not have to pretend they never happened.

Bring them to Him. Because shame isolates... but grace restores.

Do not bury your failures. Do not build your identity around them. Bring them to Jesus. Because some people have spent so long replaying their failures that they forgot Jesus already went to the cross for them.

Your failure is real. But His grace is greater.

### **RESPONSE MOMENT**

I believe there are people in this room carrying hidden shame.

People smiling externally... but internally believing:

"I have gone too far." "I failed too badly." "God could never use me again."

But hear me clearly: Peter denied Jesus three times... and Jesus still came looking for him.

So if you are here today and you need restoration... if you need freedom from shame... if you need to know your story is not over...

Lift your hand.

Church, this is our moment.

Let us pray for restoration. Let us pray for healing. Let us pray for grace to break shame off people's lives.

Because the same Jesus who restored Peter... is still restoring people today.

## **FINAL LANDING**

Peter thought failure disqualified him. But when Jesus showed up... failure became restoration.

And the same Jesus standing on that shore still comes looking for broken people.

Still restores. Still heals. Still calls. Still recommissions.

Because resurrection means failure never gets the final word.

Jesus does.

The fire Peter thought would forever remind him of shame became the place where Jesus restored his calling.

Because grace is greater than failure. And your worst moment does not get the final word.

Jesus does.

## **BLESSING**

May the grace of Jesus meet you in every place shame tried to hide you. May you know that your failure is not your identity and not your final story. May the God who restored Peter restore weary hearts, wounded lives, and discouraged souls. May the risen Christ heal what shame tried to bury and restore what sin tried to destroy. And may you walk in the confidence that the grace of Jesus is greater than your worst moment. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—amen.