

As we watched this drama play out, I think we can relate to Peter more than we care to admit. We can all think of times when we failed miserably—in a relationship, in a job, in school, or let down our family in some way. And we think of times we failed God. We may sit here today with big regrets.

Good morning everyone, I'm Dan Reid. May all of us who relate to Peter experience God's grace in mighty ways this Easter morning. What's your biggest regret in life? University students set up a chalkboard on the sidewalk of a busy intersection in New York City for one day. At the top of the board was written, "Write your biggest regret." They provided plenty of chalk and set up a video camera to record people writing on the board. The chalkboard attracted many people walking by and soon it was filled with written regrets.

- Burning bridges
- Never speaking up
- Not being a good husband
- Should have spent more time with family
- Staying in my comfort zone
- Not saying "I love you"
- Never applying to med school
- Not making the most of every day
- Not being a better friend

But then they gave these same people an eraser and wrote "Clean Slate" at the top of the chalkboard. As one woman erased her regret she had tears in her eyes as she said, "I feel hopeful. It means that there are possibilities."

If we put up a chalkboard of regret in our lobby this morning, I think we could easily fill it with our failures; failures we have analyzed over and over in our minds. Why did it happen? Why didn't I catch it before it was too little and too late? What did I learn from it? How can I make things right with others I hurt? Will I ever be able to forgive myself and move on? Will I ever be useful again? You may have thought, "If only I had another chance I would do it differently next time." But would I? Or would the same demons surface, the same sinful reflex exert itself, the same pride before the fall?

If you can identify with these thoughts and feelings, you understand what Peter felt that early morning on the lake. His chalkboard of regret was full and he had no eraser. He had failed his friend. He had failed the one to whom he had so boldly confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." He had failed the one to whom he had boasted to earlier, and I quote, "Jesus, everyone else may fail you but I never will." So this morning, do you see yourself distant from Jesus because of your

own chalkboard full of regrets, asking, "How do I show Him that I am sorry for everything I have done? What can I do to make my failures right?"

Maybe you can identify with the words of the song you are about to hear. It's not a song about Jesus or a song about the resurrection. It's actually a pop song recorded by Adele. I think many of us can connect to the feelings this song emotes. It's a lament; she is expressing her sorrow, her regret over a lost relationship. From her place of pain she is asking, "How do I make it right?" You hear her despair because she doesn't know how to make it right. I believe this song displays our broken human condition. We are not meant to carry the guilt from our failures beyond the cross. We are meant to come back from our failures and be set free from regret by the amazing grace of the risen Christ.

Hello, it's me

I was wondering if after all these years you'd like to meet

To go over everything

They say that time's supposed to heal ya

But I ain't done much healing

Hello, can you hear me

I'm in California dreaming about who we used to be

When we were younger and free

I've forgotten how it felt before the world fell at our feet

There's such a difference between us

And a million miles

Hello from the other side

I must have called a thousand times

To tell you I'm sorry for everything that I've done

But when I call you never seem to be home

Hello from the outside

At least I can say that I've tried

To tell you I'm sorry for breaking your heart

But it don't matter it clearly doesn't tear you apart anymore

Hello, how are you?

It's so typical of me to talk about myself I'm sorry

I hope that you're well

Did you ever make it out of that town where nothing ever happened

It's no secret that the both of us

Are running out of time

So hello from the other side

*I must have called a thousand times
To tell you I'm sorry for everything that I've done
But when I call you never seem to be home
Hello from the outside
At least I can say that I've tried
To tell you I'm sorry for breaking your heart
But it don't matter it clearly doesn't tear you apart anymore*

*Oooooohh, anymore
Oooooohh, anymore
Oooooohh, anymore
Anymore*

*Hello from the other side
I must have called a thousand times
To tell you I'm sorry for everything that I've done
But when I call you never seem to be home
Hello from the outside
At least I can say that I've tried
To tell you I'm sorry for breaking your heart*

But it don't matter it clearly doesn't tear you apart anymore

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Maybe today, in your place of regret, God is coming to you and inviting you over from the other side. You need to know that God has made it possible to heal from your past and have hope for the future. God has made it possible to connect in new ways with all that is good because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I want you to know that there actually is a place where our regrets can be erased. That place is revealed to us on a beach where the risen Jesus Christ prepares a breakfast for Peter.

So what happened that early morning on the beach? About 100 yards off shore, Peter is back in his fishing boat, no doubt wondering, "If I could ever talk to Jesus about my failures, what would I possibly say?" The dawn was breaking over the Sea of Galilee. We know six other disciples—James, John, Nathanael, Thomas, and two others—were fishing too. They fished all night and caught nothing. But Peter's mind was not on fishing, it was on his chalkboard of regrets, wondering if it could ever be erased.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. 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. (John 21:4-6).

The professional fisherman fished all night and got skunked. Then this guy on the land tells them where to fish. And here is the kicker: the guy on the land turns out to be right. He knew where the fish were!

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. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred

yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread (verses 7-9).

This charcoal fire should remind us of another charcoal fire a few days before where Peter, while warming himself, denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples; not once, not twice, but three times just as Jesus has said Peter would do.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 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. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish (verses 10-13).

For things to be made right, God had to come to Peter. And that is just what God did.

What did Jesus really serve at this breakfast? Our text says fish and bread. But I guarantee you that Peter wouldn't remember how the fish and bread tasted after that breakfast. But what he would remember is what else was served at that breakfast. He would remember the wonderful and lingering taste of grace that Jesus served him. I think Jesus served Peter three heaping helpings of amazing grace on that beach that morning.

The first helping of grace Jesus served up on that beach was His Love. This one is easy. By just showing up on that beach and inviting Peter and the other disciples to His breakfast demonstrated God's love. But there is more. Paul says in Romans chapter 5 verse 8, **"God demonstrated his love for us in this. While we were sinners Christ died for us."** We are filled with hope this Easter morning because Jesus says to every one of us.... I love you.

Thirty-three years before this breakfast on the beach, Jesus came to earth. God incarnate was born in a manger in Bethlehem. God became man, and John says He dwelled among us and He lived a perfect life. Fast forward to three years before this breakfast on the beach. Jesus came to Peter on this same Sea of Galilee while Peter was working his trade as a commercial fisherman. And when Jesus the carpenter filled Peter's nets with fish, Peter fell at Jesus' knees and cried out, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." I am a failure. My chalkboard is full of regrets. But Jesus didn't go away. Jesus called this broken man to follow Him and become a fisher of men instead of a fisher of fish. So Peter dropped his nets and followed Jesus for three years.

Just a few days before this breakfast, we can read about Peter's boasting and we can read about his denial and we can read about Jesus, the innocent man, who willingly died a horrible death on a cross. But through this act of hate, God's love was revealed. Jesus was buried in a tomb and then rose from the dead three days later. The power of death was defeated. The penalty for sin was reversed. The enslaving power of evil was broken. Jesus the innocent one died for the sins of the many. Because of God's amazing grace, what appeared to be a colossal failure was turned into a victory. Oh how He loves you and me! **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"**

(John 3:16). *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”* (John 15:13).

So today, Easter 2017, we are assured that at the precise moment each of us realize our own sinfulness and our own helplessness to make things right, and we call on Jesus to save us and believe that Jesus died for our sins, we are saved from our sins and given new life. And just like Christ, we too will be resurrected after we die to live with Christ forever in heaven. We call this amazing grace. Grace means gift. It means receiving something of great value that we didn’t deserve and could never earn. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Apostle Paul says that if there was no resurrection of Jesus our faith is in vain. The resurrection assures us that everything Jesus said was true, and everything He did was through the power of God. And when the women and the disciples inspected that empty tomb and handled His empty grave clothes and then saw Him alive again and touched Him, even putting their fingers into the holes in His hands and side, and the fact that the resurrected Jesus appeared to many people around Jerusalem before He ascended up to heaven, assures us that the power of death was broken for all who believe. *“Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?’”* (John 11: 25-26).

This act of God’s grace to us is why we can be hopeful that our failure isn’t fatal, and that we can be set free from our regrets. Christ has the power to erase the bad things off our chalkboard of regret, and then write new and wonderful things there instead.

We are not privileged to know what they talked about while they ate their breakfast. Maybe there was a lighter moment when they teased Peter about putting on his coat before he jumped into the water. What we do know is that there was an unresolved issue between Peter and his Lord. Peter had been brought to the undeniable truth that he had failed. He was broken. And he was in a place where he needed to be—a place of helplessness. He wasn’t capable of making things right between him and his friend. He had nothing to offer that could clean up his mess. He had no excuse to offer for his behavior. He had no one around him he could blame. And it’s in that place of helplessness where God’s amazing grace can work in his life.

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.” 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.” 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 (verses 15-17).

Notice the name Jesus called him. He didn’t call him Peter, the name he had given him three years before when Peter had started following Jesus. The word “Peter” meant rock, and Jesus

changed his name to Peter because it meant that Peter was going to be a valuable part of the church Jesus was building. But now, Jesus called him the name he went by before he had met and followed Jesus. Peter needed to be restored.

Two times Jesus asked and two times Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” But after a third time, Peter realized what was going on and it hurt. The third time Peter answers, “Jesus you know me. You know everything about me. You know me beyond my actions, beyond my sin, you know what is deep inside, I am broken. I got nothing to boast about. I don’t trust myself. I need you... and my love isn’t perfect, but you are, and you know that I love you. I have screwed up, but you know that I love you.”

What is to be our response to our failure? First, remember God loves you. Whatever it takes believe that God loves not just the person sitting next to you right now, but that He loves you too. And once we understand that, our response is to Love God Back. To come back from failure and be set free from regret, we must accept Jesus’ invitation to love Him.

For Jesus, love isn’t just a manifestation of a deep feeling or emotion. For Jesus, love is demonstrated in obedience. If we love Jesus we will care about what He cares about. And what does Jesus care about? “Peter, we both know that your love is not in any way perfect, but because you love me, you are useful to me. Let your love be lived out in obedience to me. I call you to feed my lambs. Care for my sheep. Feed my sheep.”

And this is Jesus’ second heaping helping of grace he serves Peter at that breakfast. “Peter, because you love me, you are useful to me.” And Jesus says to every one of us here this morning... You are useful to me.

Our failures and our regrets don’t put us on the sidelines. If we love God we are useful to Him. And it feels good to hear we are useful once in a while, doesn’t it? So what is our response to God? To come back from failure and be set free from regret and accept Jesus’ invitation to serve Him by serving His church. If you are not familiar with Central Peninsula Church, we are a bunch of broken people. But we know God loves us, and we, far from perfectly, love Him back. But He knows we love Him, and we try to show that love by serving Him the best we can. It’s as simple as that. It’s because of God’s grace that we are privileged to serve Him.

There is one more heaping helping of grace that Jesus serves up to Peter. Look with me at verses 18-19. These verses reveal to Peter some of how his life will unfold in the future. It tells me that Jesus has a significant plan not just for Peter, but for each one of us who loves God and serves God. He says to Peter:

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.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (verses 18-19).

The words translated “Follow Me” in the original language are emphatic; they are a command. Literally, “You... Me... Keep

Following." And Peter did follow Jesus, and he came to realize that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lived in him. He followed Jesus boldly. And many came to faith in Christ because Peter followed Jesus. Peter fed Jesus' sheep and he cared for the sheep who suffered, all the while enduring great personal hardship and he died a martyr's death. He followed Jesus in the most literal meaning of the word "follow." And Jesus says to us, "Follow me. I have a plan for your life."

Jesus is telling us that we are not only useful to serve, we are a valuable participant in His plan for the world. We are so valuable to Jesus that He has put together a customized plan, unique for each of us, that will unfold as we continue to follow Him. And it feels good to be told we are valuable once in a while, doesn't it?

You might be thinking, "I am a broken and failed person, how can I possibly be valuable to God? I don't want us to overlook the fact that there is something beautiful about how God uses broken people who follow Him."

This week I heard from someone at church about a type of Japanese art called *Kintsukuroi* (Keen-tsoo-koo-roy). I was intrigued by how it's created. Each piece of *Kintsukuroi* is made from a simple clay pot that was broken. It starts with broken pieces that most would consider trash to be thrown away and replaced. But the *Kintsukuroi* artist gathers the shards from the broken pot and carefully bonds these broken pieces back together to recreate the pot. There is more. The artist doesn't use glue to put the pieces back together again. The artist uses a lacquer of gold or silver. And as a result this re-creation becomes an even more beautiful and priceless piece of art for having been broken.

What a wonderful way for us to understand God's amazing grace. You, me, and Peter were broken into pieces by failure, but have become something more beautiful and more valuable to God for having been broken. All because God's amazing grace, like gold lacquer, bonded us back together into something more beautiful for having been broken. All for His glory. Grace redeems the bad, the ugly and the broken.

So this Easter morning, we are privileged to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. We are privileged to respond to God's amazing grace and receive His invitation to Love Him, Serve Him and Follow Him. We are privileged to know that God erases our failures and regrets, and He sees us as not only useful but also significant to His plan.

For some of us here today, Easter is a time to look closely at the answer Peter gave Jesus, "Yes, Lord, you know all things and

you know I love you." I want you to consider Peter's answer and ask yourself, "Is that my answer when He asks me, 'Do you love me?'" If you have never earnestly told God you love Him, Easter 2017 is the perfect time to do that. If you have never entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, Easter 2017 is the perfect time to become a Christian and know that your sins are forgiven and accept that the guilt and failure and regret are erased by God's amazing grace.

God may be calling you into a relationship with Him this morning. He may be showing you His saving grace. I'd like us to all bow our heads, and if God is calling you to become a Christian I want you to pray this prayer with me:

"Dear Lord Jesus, You know all things and you know I love you Lord. I have failed, I have sinned, and I need your forgiveness. I need your grace. I believe that you died to take away my sins. I believe you rose from the dead. I want to accept the grace you offer me. I turn from the way I have been living and I invite you into my life. I accept you into my life Jesus as my personal Savior. I thank you for forgiving all my sins at the cross. I look forward to a relationship with you now and forever in heaven. I want to serve you and follow you for the rest of my life."

If this was the first time you earnestly prayed that prayer to God, you became a Christian. I encourage you to come down front after our service concludes and tell one of our prayer partners that you entered into a relationship with Jesus. Also, Jerome and I will be up here after the service. We want to encourage you in your next step in your new life.

For the rest of us who are here today, maybe you have celebrated many Easters as a Christian and many together here at CPC. 2017 is the perfect time to renew your love for God. Hear Him when He says to you, "I love you." Tell Him you love Him. Hear Him tell you, "You are useful to me." Hear Him tell you, "Follow me because I am the best plan for your life." Hear Him tell you, "Hand me your chalkboard of regrets and I will erase it for you." And hear Him tell you, "Today, my children, celebrate with joy the amazing grace I have shown you."

Happy Easter everyone!

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.