

The text this morning is an interesting one. It's one of those texts that if you or I were writing the scriptures, this is a story I would not have included. I would have avoided adding this to the story of the Gospel of Mark. We're in Mark 14, which is getting towards the crescendo of the Gospel of Mark, the story of Jesus. In a few weeks we'll see his death on the cross, which is the climax of what Mark is trying to communicate.

Right here, as we're ramping up towards that conclusion, we see this epic tale of two trials. We see Jesus on trial before the religious leaders, but then we also see Peter on trial at the exact same time. And what's interesting about Peter's trial is he fails quite spectacularly. He fails to really withstand the pressure that he's experiencing at the same time that Jesus is undergoing his trial.

It's one of those texts that I would not have included in the gospel story. Because here is Peter, which we know in about 40 or so days as Jesus would ascend to heaven, will be the foundational leader of this new Jesus movement, the rock on which Jesus builds his church. Imagine for a moment the founding document of that movement telling a story towards its climax of its leader's greatest failure. Isn't that interesting? But yet there's something to this in which Mark, who we believe was either writing it with Peter or, at minimum, was drawing on the resources that Peter had given John Mark, the author of this gospel, had almost insisted on the inclusion of his own failure. To me, that's fascinating.

Often, when I talk to those skeptics who say the Bible is just made-up stories. It is just something that coincidentally or conveniently ties together these stories that they manufactured in order to prove their validity. But my point, as we look at this text, is this is not only one I wouldn't have included; this is also a story I never would have made up. The cultures before the modern Western world were really rooted in an honor/shame culture, which means everything hinged on you honoring those in positions of authority.

In an honor/shame culture in which the Bible was written, you never would have included a story of your greatest leader's failure, and even at that, in the midst of the story, you see Peter actually cursing Jesus. This is so profoundly radically different from what you ever would have imagined, made up, or included that the very existence of this story, in my opinion, testifies to the very validity of the scripture because you would not have added this. You would not have made up this story.

It's interesting to come to this, where we see both the failure of Peter but also the faithfulness of Jesus. Mark, as we've been unpacking, is a brilliant literary genius who's constantly intricately knitting stories together. Here, you see another one of those in which he's weaving the trial of Jesus with the trial of Peter for the very purpose of us thinking through why these two stories are together. Why both of them are

happening at the same time. Mark is intentionally inviting us to read with that perspective. Why is it that the trial of Jesus and the trial of Peter are juxtaposed next to one another? Well, I want to give you my main idea upfront because it's important and hopefully simple enough for you to remember.

What Mark is getting at is Jesus' faithfulness covers our failure. If there's anything you get out of this sermon, I want you to take that with you. Jesus' faithfulness covers our failure.

Let's jump into the text, and we'll unpack that as we go. Turn to Mark 14.

**They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. vv. 53-54**

Last week, we saw Jesus arrested in the garden, and we had this epic scene in which this horde, this mob, went to arrest Jesus. And it says that the crowd—that's the "they," the very first word in verse 53—took him directly to the high priests, the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the law. This was all the who's who of religious authority of the time. They marched Jesus right into the middle of this, but notice in verse 54 that Mark also introduces the Peter narrative. He says, "Peter followed him at a distance." We'll see this failure on Peter's part. He's still trying to work out this discipleship to Jesus.

Mark, in his telling of the story of Jesus, is very fond of Peter. I can't actually think of a big moment in the narrative of Jesus in which Peter was absent. So, in some sense, Peter is Mark's quintessential character of what it means to follow Jesus. We track with him, and we think through the lens. He's using it to invite us into the text. We're, in some ways, supposed to see ourselves as Peter.

Peter is following Jesus but notice that he's following him at a distance. He's not quite with him, but yet, he is with him. Remember, the invitation from the very beginning was Jesus walking around saying, "Come follow me." That was the invitation, very literally, to follow Jesus. But what's interesting is it appears from the garden of Gethsemane, in which Jesus is arrested, that Peter seems to be the only one that Mark references as actually following him, yet he follows him at a distance.

It's interesting because that's a good marker for us. Many of us are accustomed to following Jesus but at a distance. We're about him. We see him as a good teacher. We view him as someone who's upright and moral. We're willing to follow and see. But what happens is Peter exchanges a costly, intimate following of Jesus for a safe distance of observance. We also tend to do that, don't we? In those moments, we follow

Jesus, and we feel the invitation of Jesus to step further into connection with him, but it gets to that point where it begins to cost us something. As we get to that place, we have the option of continuing to follow him in a costly manner or retreat back and observe from a safe distance.

Peter follows Jesus, but it's at a distance. He's concerned about what will take place. Verses 53 and 54 are the introduction to this intricate narrative. From verses 55 to 65, we'll watch the trial of Jesus unfold. From verses 66 to 72, we will see an alternate trial going on at the same time with Peter.

What I want to do is flip those narratives. I want to track Peter's narrative first. And then I want to circle back and see the way in which Jesus' narrative or his trial takes place because Mark wants us to see these together. And so, let's look further down in your Bible to verse 66. Here's where we're going to pick up the narrative of Peter on trial, all happening at the exact same time. There's that little note that says it was happening in verse 66, below in the courtyard, meaning the story is taking place at the exact same time. Hold your finger here in verse 66, but I want to circle back to a moment where Peter's narrative really begins in this story that Mark's telling, which is a few verses earlier in verse 27.

Jesus was at dinner with his disciples. It was his final supper, the last supper before being arrested, and they were sitting around this table. At that moment, Peter is very adamant that he will follow Jesus wherever he goes. Jesus is speaking and says,

**"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same. vv. 27-31**

Remember, this is the context in which this trial is now taking place just hours before. He had emphatically said, "Jesus, I will follow you wherever you go, even if it's to the point of death." He is staking his claim, saying, "I will not back down. This is who I am. You are the one I will follow. You are my rabbi. I will follow you wherever you go." I'm fascinated by what's going on in Jesus' mind at this moment. Knowing what's about to unfold. I wonder if it's fear. I wonder if it's empathy for Peter because he knew Peter didn't know what he was asking. I wonder if it's disappointment. I wonder if it's loneliness. It's interesting to think of where Jesus is at in this moment because he understands. He says, "Listen, you will fall away. All of you will fall away. This path I walk alone." Now, let's flip back to verse 66.

**While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand**

**what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. vv. 66-68**

Peter's outside now at that safe distance, and the servant girl is observing the scene and recognizes that Peter was with the Nazarene. Now, that's a phrase in which we understand that they're in a distant land. My guess is that she was picking up on Peter's accent. It felt like he was from a different place. He was different. And yet the girl looks and says, "You must have been with him." But notice she doesn't even question Peter. It's really an interrogation that's more like, "Hey, you're with him. You're around in the same area with him. I feel like you must be connected." And Peter immediately begins to dismiss it. He denies it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about." And he went out into the entryway.

Now, there's a tragic irony in Peter's words here, isn't there? Because in some sense, Peter, although denying it, has that conviction, but yet he's telling the truth, is he not? He doesn't really know Jesus. He doesn't really understand Jesus. Because although he's been walking with him and although he's made these strong, bold convictions, there's still a sense in which he really isn't a disciple yet. He's wrestling with what it means to follow Jesus. He's following at this distance.

So there's a tragic irony that he's ultimately telling and revealing the truth about his own heart, whether he knows it or not. His failure to walk intimately with Jesus in this moment reveals that he ultimately doesn't know him in the way that would lead him to lay down everything, including his life, for Jesus. It's a pathetically accurate statement. "I don't know this Jesus." The story continues. And note that Peter's running. Maybe it doesn't say running, but he's trying to avoid this scene.

**When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Again, he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept. vv. 69-72**

This girl goes back to him and says, "No, you are that one." And he denies it. And then others begin to come into the scene and say, "No, you are one of his followers; surely you're one of them." And he fights this and says, "I don't know this man that you're talking about." It's the most blatant statement of his denial. And it says he began to call down curses.

This is interesting. I have to get a little Greek nerdy here on you to understand the implications of this, but the word here is *anathematizō*. You may hear the word anathema in there because that's how we would translate this word—anathema. Anathema is this idea of cursing or vehemently disregarding or disassociating with a thing. Now, let's take it one nerdier layer lower! This is a transitive verb, which you have no idea what that means! I didn't either until I looked it up. But a transitive verb

essentially means it has to have an object, meaning that to anathematize, to claim out “Anathema, I disagree strongly with you.” There has to be an object to which you are disagreeing.

This particular verb is not self-reflexive, meaning Peter isn’t saying that he’s cursing himself. He’s cursing Jesus. This same word is used 14 times in the Old Testament, and every time it’s used, it’s pointed at this disassociation with God. It is Peter quite literally cursing Jesus. “I don’t know this man. There’s no chance. I vehemently disagree.”

Peter, as he’s sitting here on trial, is distancing himself and he is now denouncing the very existence of Jesus, saying everything in his power to distance himself from that. He’s defending himself. He’s arguing to save his own skin. That safe distance at which Peter is at has now become a full-on rebellion against God. “Anathema, not me. I don’t know this man.” And it says that he swore to them, I don’t know this man you’re talking about, and immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Peter remembered the words Jesus said would happen, that before the rooster crowed twice, he’d deny him three times.

The final line is a bit haunting. It says he broke down and wept. It’s a sense of Peter coming apart at the seams. I don’t know what, at this moment, is going through Peter’s head. Is it a sense of regret? My hunch is no. Is it a sense of sadness? Is it a sense of remorse? Is it a fear of what would happen next? I don’t know, but what I do know is that Peter seems to be falling apart. He was weeping because he couldn’t endure the pressure that was being put on him in this trial. It says he broke down and wept; he came apart at the seams.

There are two things that are worth noting before we switch over to the other scene, the other trial that’s happening at the same time. As we read ourselves into Peter’s life, we recognize that, in many ways, our ordinary life is the trial that’s playing out here. For most of us, we’re not going to be brought before a high council or before the high priests and the elders and have to figure out and make our claim and statement of faith. For us, this plays out in the very ordinary things of our life. As you follow Jesus and you’re confronted with scenarios in your workplace, in your classrooms, with your neighbors or classmates, or whoever it is, these are the moments in which Jesus is asking us to follow him and live in a different way.

But what happens when that pressure comes? You may not call down curses, but do you continue to step into it when following Jesus costs you something? When it means your social status might take a hit? When it means your job might become a challenging situation? What do you do when you feel that pressure? This plays out in the ordinary elements of Jesus. Will you follow Jesus when it’s not comfortable? Will you follow Jesus when you have to work and do the internal work of digging up all the pain and the hardship that life’s thrown at you? Will you follow Jesus then? Or will you, like Peter, remain at a safe distance, observing this Jesus thing?

I grew up in church. I know how to follow Jesus at a distance quite well. For many, many years, that’s how I would follow Jesus. I’d go to church, I’d walk through the steps, I knew the stories. I’d do all of these things for Jesus, but it was always at a distance. I would be like Peter: Jesus,

don’t do the radical work of making me confess my sins to others. Don’t make me do the work of having to live in community and expose the ugliness of my heart. Don’t do that. Don’t make me follow Jesus in a way that will cost me. I’m good. I’m just going to hang out in the courtyard. Then the servant girl walks in and is like, “Hey, aren’t you one of those Nazarenes like Jesus?” And I say, “Anathema, not me.” Church, will you follow Jesus in those ordinary moments of life in which your integrity is tested and challenged?

The second thing that we learn is not only that our ordinary life is our trial, but the second one might be a bit more haunting. I hope by the end of watching Jesus’ trial it actually swells up into a hope, but it’s that none of us are going to succeed.

Think of Peter. Peter had spent, at minimum, three years walking with Jesus, spending every waking moment with him, hearing his teachings. He was privy to long conversations around a fireplace in which they were peppering Jesus with questions and hearing his responses. He had the privileged position of physically being with Jesus for three years, and yet even Peter faltered. You see, it’s easy for us to look at Peter and think, “Why couldn’t he ever figure it out?” But the reality is that he had a formation, a way of life in which he was intimately walking with Jesus in a way that we may or may not ever experience.

And yet, I caution us not to be so naive as to think we would have gone a different course. None of us will succeed fully in this. That safe distance feels very much like the way I follow Jesus. None of us will succeed, but remember, there are two trials going on. And the beauty of the gospel that we’ll see in a moment is that Jesus’ faithfulness covers our failure.

Yes, we will fail, but that’s not the end of the story. And if you know Peter’s story, you know it’s not the end of his story. In John 21, at the end of the gospel, Jesus has breakfast with Peter and three times says, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter each time says, “Yes, Jesus, you know I love you.” Jesus says, “Peter, do you love me?” And Peter says, “Jesus, you know all things, you know that I love you.” And then, a third time, he says, “Peter, do you love me?” And the text says Peter was emotional. He was broken. He says, “Jesus, you know everything; you know that I love you.” And Jesus, in that moment, tenderly confronts him of his failure but also reinstates Peter every single time. We will not succeed, but we are not the ones who end our story; Jesus is. And for Peter, this is not the end of his story. So now let’s flip back to the scene that’s happening in the same vicinity at the same time.

**The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even then their testimony did not agree. vv. 55-59**

So what is happening right in conjunction with this trial is Jesus is now on trial, and you could sense the intensity of the moment. I don’t know

if there is a more tense moment than when someone's life is hanging in the balance, and they're on trial, but this is the scene we step into. We go into the court, and there's the chief priest, the whole Sanhedrin, all the religious officials of the day, the highest authority in all of the nation of Israel, standing there looking at Jesus.

And if we've been tracking with Mark, we know this is not new. Since Chapter 3, they have been seeking ways to kill Jesus. They are now living out what has been happening for quite some time. And the text says they're looking for evidence. They're searching for something that would stick to Jesus. They're trying to find some claim that would justify their hatred, their internal vitriol to put him to death, but it says they could not find anything. Many testified, and now they're planting false witnesses, trying to get something to stick. It says many testified, but their statements did not agree.

It would have been, in the first century, impossible to kill someone if there were differing testimonies. And if those testimonies did not correspond and agree, it was nearly impossible to actually carry out an execution. However, this was not a typical trial. The religious leaders are hell-bent on bringing Jesus to the cross. In verse 57, it says some stood up and gave false testimony, saying he said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, which is actually false. If you remember back in Mark 13, Jesus is walking into the temple and he's flipping tables and doing all that and he looks at the disarray, the idolatry of the temple, and he says that not one stone will stand on another.

But we have to be careful here and understand Jesus' words because he never calls for the destruction of the temple. He never rallies the troops and says we're going to tear down this temple brick by brick. He simply says that this temple will fall. Which, for the record, history says it did fall. Not long after that, not long after this whole story of Jesus, the temple would be destroyed. Jesus was simply naming what he knew to be true, that this temple was going to fall, but in its place was going to be Jesus, the new temple.

The temple was the place in which you went to commune and be with Jesus, to experience the presence of God, to experience the presence of heaven on earth. And Jesus, post-resurrection, says he is now that new temple. If you want to experience God, you don't have to go to a temple any longer. You go directly into the presence of Jesus because Jesus is the new temple. He says, I will rebuild it in three days, but it's not going to be built like the one made with hands. It's totally different. He says you encounter the presence of God by encountering me.

But the crowd says, we can't get anything to stick here, but maybe we can stick them for sedition or sacrilege, inciting a riot and a mob, because if someone were to have called for the destruction of the temple, this certainly would have been a claim that would have been worthy of execution. So now they seem to be conjuring up these statements. Didn't he say that? Yeah, he said that, and this mob begins to ensue. The whole time Jesus is sitting there as this illegal trial, this miscarriage of justice is taking place right before him.

**Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him. vv. 60-65**

Imagine the scene. All of these claims are being made at Jesus, and the high priest is asking, "Are you going to say anything?" It's the judge saying, "What's your defense? Do you have anything against these claims that are being made? Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?"

"But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer." This is a fulfillment of a prophecy in which Jesus would not respond to his accusers. So, in the midst of all of that, as he's being unjustly tried, he sits there and takes it. He took the injustice and remained silent. Isaiah would say, "As a sheep remains silent before its shearers, so too would the Messiah, Jesus, remain silent." We know the identity of Jesus from the beginning of Mark's gospel, but Jesus has not come out and said it, or even when it was revealed, what has been his response? He kept it a secret. The time has now come. So, in some ways, all of this has been a crescendo to this question in which the high priest asks him, "Are you the Messiah? Are you the Christos?" That's the Greek word. Are you the Christ? Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?

Now, this phrase, Son of the Blessed One, is an Old Testament phrase that connects to the idea of God. Are you the one who has come from God? The blessed one was this idiom. He wanted to know if Jesus was the Christ. Are you who all these people have been saying you've been claiming to be? Are you the Son of God, the Son of the Blessed One?

It's hard for us to grasp this, but the idea of tearing your clothes is imagery of an explosive response. The high priest is filled with rage at Jesus' response. Why? When we see an explosion of emotion like this in the text, we need to be asking the question why? Well, it comes down to the statement in which Jesus said, "I am the Christ, I am the son of the Blessed One." Then he says, "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." This is a direct reference to Daniel 7. And in Daniel 7, there's this vision in which Daniel sees all these beasts that are terrorizing the world, and he says,

**"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given**



**authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14**

This is imagery. Don't map onto it literalism here. The clouds of heaven are different than the clouds of earth. The clouds of earth are just water vapor. That's not what's happening here. This idea of the cloud of heavens speaks to the positional authority of the individual. So Jesus is saying, "I am the Son of Man." He is evoking that imagery. The religious leaders would have had Daniel 7 memorized. When he says the phrase Son of Man, they immediately know what he's talking about. And Jesus says, "I'm the Son of Man that Daniel spoke about. My kingdom will never end." He's evoking all of that.

Then he says this thing about the clouds of heaven because what he's doing here is he's saying, "You religious leaders, you are in a position of authority, yes. But my authority is higher. It is far more superior than anything you could imagine." Jesus looks directly at the most powerful people in the nation of Israel and tells them that they have no idea who they are judging. He says, "I am the son of man whose kingdom will never end. And ultimately, someday, you are judging me, yes. But at the end of time, I will judge you. I am the judge who is on the cloud of heaven."

It is a moment in which the response of the high priest makes a whole lot of sense. He tears his robes. He rips off his clothes. He says, "Why do we need any more witnesses?" You've heard this blasphemy." The crowd is incited, and it says they all condemned him as worthy of death. This was the needle that broke the camel's back. It says some began to spit on him. They blindfolded him, struck him with fists, and said, prophesy. And the guards took him and beat him. This is right in the middle of a trial, by the way. Imagine the judge losing it. Imagine the jury rushing after the defendant, and they began to blindfold him, spit on him, and beat him right in the middle of the courtyard. Right in the middle of the court, the place explodes with emotion because Jesus is saying, "Listen, I am the one you speak of."

Don't miss that in this moment, when the identity of Jesus is fully communicated by him, he is at his human weakest. He is in the possession of the courts around him. There is an angry mob around him. See, Jesus chooses to reveal his identity in the most cruciform way, the most shape of the cross, in which he is not inciting his own army. Rather, he knew and just said that everyone would depart from him. Jesus stands alone before this court in a way in which weakness is strength.

We miss this. This is warfare, but it's radically different than what we understand. Because what will happen in a few pages is Jesus will ascend to his throne. The inauguration for the very king of the universe is being nailed to a cross. It is through death that life comes, radically different than we could ever imagine.

This is the story that Mark has been telling this whole time. This Jesus, this kingdom, is different from an earthly kingdom. It functions differently. This Messiah, this ruler whose kingdom will never end, looks

different than anything this world could conjure up because it is through death. And when Jesus is in this cruciform moment in the hands of another, he says that, ultimately, this is how I ascend to the throne.

Juxtapose this moment with Peter. Rather than Jesus standing confident in his very identity surrounded by this mob with the high priest and all the officials and the authorities, you see Peter stumbling around a servant girl. Jesus stands confident, "I am the son of man." Peter, on the outside with the servant girl, says, "No, that's not me." Jesus before them remains silent and doesn't say anything. A third time, others echo the words of the servant girl. Peter, you're that Nazarene. He says, "I don't know what you're talking about. I can't stand that Jesus guy, he's like an anathema." Jesus says, "I am the Messiah." The calmness, the non-anxious presence of just saying it is who I am. "I am the Son of Man. My kingdom will carry on, and ultimately, my authority is higher than yours. That's me." And soon he will be led to the cross.

In closing, here's what I want us to notice. Jesus' identity demands a response because the reality is, what's really ironic and what Mark wants us to see is that the religious leaders at this moment actually respond with a significant amount of integrity because they took Jesus' claim seriously. Peter did not. He responded in fear. He ran from Jesus. He ran from that identity. But the religious leaders responded in a way that was actually quite integrous. It made sense that they ripped their clothes because they understood the claims Jesus was making were as big as they were.

Jesus' identity demands a response. It demands a response from you and from me. The religious leaders respond with outrage, but it's an honest response. Peter responds out of fear and cowardice. But he responds in a way where he fails the trial, and Jesus succeeds in the trial. How do you respond to Jesus's claims? C.S. Lewis famously said that Jesus, in his acknowledgment of who he is, incites three responses. Lewis says, "You can call him Lord, you can call him a lunatic, or you can call him a liar. Those are really the only three responses."

I would echo that and say that, really, the three basic responses you can give to Jesus are hatred, fear, or adoration. But if you want any integrity, if you're thinking at all about the claims Jesus is making—that he is the divine and the human combined into the very same person, that he is the one who liberates all of creation and establishes the kingdom of God, that begins this resurrection and renewing all of creation—if Jesus says that, the one thing you can't do is respond with apathy. It makes no sense.

If he's making this strong of a claim, you either hate him and just say that there's no chance that I could fall. This is an outrage. I am the author of my own identity. I am the one who gets to decide and depict the way I live. I'm the one that knows right from wrong, not this guy. What does he have to say? Didn't he live two thousand years ago? He must be out of date with the world.

Or, you recognize that if this is true if what Jesus says is, in fact, accurate, it would necessitate me to reorganize the whole of my life and fall before him as Lord, and that's a fearful thing. For Peter, it was fearful. You

can fall down in adoration and say that I have nothing but to worship this Jesus. If this is true, I will do whatever it takes to follow Jesus. And yes, you will fail and stumble, but you respond in adoration to Jesus. Hatred, fear, or adoration. It's the only response we can have because it's what Jesus' identity demands.

Like us, like Peter, we will fail this, but the point of this story is not to expose our failure. It's that Jesus' faithfulness covers our failure. It is that when Jesus stood before that crowd and he continued to walk faithfully into his identity knowing what was to take place, he knew that faithfulness was essentially being faithful on our behalf.

Jesus isn't just judged on his own. He's judged in place of us because here's the irony. Peter is charged with something that's true. Aren't you a follower of Jesus? He was trying to work that out. Peter is charged with something that's true and goes free. But Jesus was charged with something that was false and was sentenced. It is a substitutionary judgment in which, ultimately, Peter fails the trial, and he was the one who was supposed to take on the consequences of his failure at that moment. But who takes those on? Jesus. But Jesus was never found to have been in the wrong in the entire trial. He never actually succumbed to consequences or accusations that were true, but rather, Jesus takes on what was false about him and is sentenced.

It reminds me of Paul later in 2 Corinthians. Paul theologizes about this particular text and says,

**So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**  
2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Paul says to look at this story and look at the narrative. You and I are worthy of the punishment that we have fallen. Isn't that what sin is? Sin is taking the place of God. Sin is saying, "I know what's right for me." This goes all the way back to Genesis 3. This is the imagery of sin. I know what's right, and so I won't trust Jesus with what's right. Salvation is God taking the place of humans. So, in sin, we take the place of God, but in God's work of salvation, he takes the place of us and, therefore, the punishment that was due to us. He who knew no sin became sin so that we can experience the righteousness of God.

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

It doesn't make sense; it's the beauty and mystery of the gospel. But what I do know is that it's true. And the point, in case, is what Peter becomes after this. He's reinstated in John 21. As history would go, it says that he was so strong in his faith that he would stand before crowds and say this Jesus is, in fact, the Lord. So much so that at the end of his life, he was crucified upside down because he said, "I am not worthy to die in the same way as my Savior." But there was something in Peter where the message clicked. He got it. He understood it. And it swelled up in him a confidence where he recognized that Jesus' faithfulness covers his own failure.

Church, that is the hope of the gospel. It is the hope that the work of Jesus, as we're going to read over the next few weeks at the end of Mark's gospel, is the work that you and I desperately need.

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