

If Jesus Can Restore Peter, He Can Restore You

One of the saddest parts of the Easter story occurred the night Jesus was arrested. His disciple Peter was stressed to the breaking point and fearful of the crowd. When the high priest's servant girl accused him of being a disciple of Jesus, he denied it.

When the girl repeated her accusation to some bystanders, he denied knowing Jesus again. When others questioned him, the Bible says Peter "began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak'" (Mark 14:71). The brave disciple who had promised Jesus he would follow Him anywhere turned into a pitiful wimp. He caved in under the pressure.

Then the rooster crowed, and Peter remembered Jesus' words: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times" (v. 72).

This could have been the end for Peter. He wept bitterly and disappeared. He never says anything else in Matthew and Mark's Gospels. Luke says Peter went to Jesus' tomb and found it empty. John's is the only Gospel that explains how Peter found full restoration after his failure.

Sulking, lonely and dejected, Peter went back to what he knew—his fishing job. He had fished all night and caught nothing. But then Jesus appeared on the shore and invited His friends to cast their nets on the right side of the boat—and they hauled in a full net of fish!

This was a divine sign that their Master still had plans to use Peter, in spite of his weakness.

Peter must have been curious when He saw the full breakfast

Jesus had prepared for the disciples on the beach. How could this be? Jesus wasn't frowning or scowling. Nor was he waiting to deliver a stern rebuke. He didn't scold Peter or even remind him of his cowardly denial.

This amazing Savior simply invited Peter to sit with him and eat. Jesus wanted to be with his friend.

Then Jesus talked his beloved Peter through the process of healing. He said to Peter three times: "Do you love me?" Surely Peter realized that Jesus was repeating himself three times in order to intentionally apply forgiveness to his three denials. Jesus' three commands to Peter ("Feed My lambs," "Tend My sheep" and "Feed My sheep") provided all the reassurance he needed.

Jesus had not disqualified him. Peter was not sent away as a failure. He was back in the game.

What is even more amazing is how the shaky, impetuous, insecure Peter was transformed after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit a few weeks later. This weak man who crumbled under pressure when His Master was arrested then preached not one, not two, but three important sermons in the opening chapters of the book of Acts.

First, Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and boldly declared to a crowd that Jesus is the Messiah—and 3,000 people were converted. Second, after God healed the lame man in Solomon's portico, Peter preached a sermon of repentance and 5,000 people were saved. Third, after Peter and John were arrested and brought before the high priest, Peter bravely defended his faith in Christ and told the elders: "There is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12).

Three denials. Three affirmations of Christ's love. Three courageous sermons defending Jesus in the face of opposition. I hope you can do the math.

Peter's story is my story—and yours. We all need to know that the risen Savior is willing to welcome us back even when we have disappointed Him. He is faithful even when we are faithless.

There is a bit of Peter in all of us. We are weak in the face of temptation. We have dropped the ball too many times. We allowed fear to paralyze us. Maybe you have even keep a spiritual scorecard to remind yourself how many times you have struck out. You may have assumed God's grace had reached its limit.

Yet the Easter story shows us otherwise. The same Christ who conquered the grave also conquered our sin and shame. The same Peter who denied knowing Jesus ended up being one of his boldest witnesses.

As you celebrate Resurrection Day this weekend, please remember that after Peter wept over his embarrassing failure, the sun came up and Jesus appeared on the shore with a meal prepared. He invited Peter to breakfast, and then lovingly restored his faith. Jesus can do the same for you, no matter how you have failed Him. {eoa}