Title: Misplaced Trust
Text: Luke 22.54-62
Theme: When we believe that it cannot happen to me.
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to help my people embrace the need to humble themselves and rely on the Lord daily.

Read Text:

This text is unsettling because it reveals things about ourselves that make us uncomfortable. We would like the Christian life to be like levels in a video game where we achieve incapable of falling status." If we could get to that level, then we could relax and not have to always be on our guard. In this world, we will never get to that level where we can rest in our fight against sin. I get tired of fighting sin. Don t you? It is one of the sweet promises of glory that I long for more as I get older than I used to.

Peter s denial of Christ scares me to death. But he was not the first, nor the last to have a public failure. Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah and about every person named in Hebrews 11 at some point had a personal failure that caused much grief. We feel that grief in this text. Peter is not the only one to experience it.

Beloved, we need to be humble before God and honest with ourselves and with one another. I am Peter. You are Peter. This is not a cautionary tale so that you won t be like Peter, as much as it is an exposure of how shallow our faith can be. That is why this text makes us so uncomfortable. We fear that we could be like this. I think that in order for us to really come to terms with why the Spirit of God put this account in his Word, we need embrace the fact that apart from God s sustaining grace, I am like this. As Thomas Brooks said, The best of saints are sinners."

Peter was a titan of the Christian faith but he, like you and me was prone to self-inflicted issues. Back in Matthew 16 Jesus asked the disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" After a bit of talk, Jesus asked them who they thought he was. Peter stepped up to the plate and knocked it out of the park. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was an incredible moment of confession, understanding and faith. Jesus affirmed that and then told Peter that he was going to use him as a rock on which to build his church. But a few verses later when Jesus told the disciples that he was going to suffer and die in Jerusalem, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes him, at which Jesus rebukes Peter in as strong of language that Jesus ever uses and said directly to Peter, Get behind me Satan!

It is not out of character for Peter to assume that he knows more than what he does or assume that he is stronger than what he really is. We all tend to do that. My favorite health and wealth heretic from Houston wrote a book entitled You are Stronger than you think: unleash the power to go bigger, go bold and go beyond what limits you." He got that from

Christopher Robin in Winnie the Pooh; he did not get that from the Bible. The humbling and painful truth is,

1. **<u>We are capable of doing things we cannot imagine</u>**. (54-60)

We are not stronger than we think, we are weaker than we realize and fools to trust in ourselves.

It is early in the morning, not too long after midnight on April 7, A.D. 30. The brief rumble in the garden of Gethsemane ended as quickly as it began. Jesus healed Malchus, the servant of the high priest whose ear was unfortunately in the way of Peter s sword. The disciples ran and were not pursued. The mob had captured what they came for. As v.54 says, They seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest s house." Peter did not run far, but after a bit came back and followed from a distance.

At that time of year, the nighttime temps can dip close to 40, with the average low being a chilly 48. The home of the high priest was large and like many estates had a large courtyard where people and entourages would wait for an audience or meeting with him. In this case, a crowd gathered and a fire was kindled as the people waited to see what would happen with Jesus. In a few hours, the city would be ablaze with the news that Jesus had been arrested. For now, it was this group, awake in the middle of the night huddled around a fire trying to get warm. Just beyond the courtyard was the entry hall where Jesus stood before his first round of accusers and accusations. They could actually see him.

As the fire danced, the light reflected off the faces of those in the courtyard. People sat down around the fire, and Peter, at some point, slipped in, tried to blend in, and sat down among them (55). He may have been seeking to keep his promise made a few hours before to go to prison and even death with Jesus. That boldness in the upper room was now about to be tested. We do not know all that was said around the fire, if anything. It is hard to imagine that nothing was said and if so, it would have been very likely that someone commented on the fact that Jesus was always surrounded by his loyal followers. I wonder what happened to them? If the conversation was not getting uncomfortable, the long looks by a servant girl were. She was looking closely at him." (56)

How does Luke know this? He knows this because Peter was the one who probably told him about it years later. If so, her staring at him got him off his game and then she said, it. *This man was also with him."* There in the courtyard surrounded by more foes than friends of Jesus, and with plenty of officers close by, Peter panicked. *Woman, I do not know him."* When someone was banned from a synagogue, they were told, We no longer know you." The wording of Peter s denial sounds very close to that phrase. It is strong.

What just happened? Peter, single-handedly was willing to take on a small army and his sword swinging proved it. Now, was he just taken down by a servant girl? What happened to Peter? He probably wondered the same thing himself. Did I just say that? Did I just do that?

Have you ever said something or did something that felt like an out-of-body experience? That just came out of my mouth? This is when the excuses and denials start. Oh, I don t know what happened. Anybody who knows me, knows that I would never say anything like that. I have never done that before. That is so out of character for me. I am not like that. That couldn t have been me. Ask my friends! Ask the people who know me."

Well, the humble and painful truth is this: The one (Jesus) who knows us better than we know ourselves knows that we are capable of doing things that we would never imagine. He knew this about Peter and told him so. Jesus did not tell Peter this to shame him, but to warn him. Peter, your trust is misplaced. And what did Peter do when Jesus warned him? Peter argued with Jesus. Which only reinforced what Jesus had said. Peter trusted in himself which is why he did not trust and accept what Jesus said. You will deny me.

Peter s conscience is burning. He really said that. Even if he did, what if he course-corrected and said, You know what, you are right. I panicked when you asked, but the truth is, I am one of his followers. How could I not be? You see, I m a fisherman and one day, Jesus was going to preach by the Sea up north. I happened to be there because me and my crew had been out fishing all night long and we hadn t caught a thing. We were pretty miserable. But here is Jesus and the crowd was so big, that it was pressing him closer and closer to the water so he got into my boat and wanted me to push off just a bit from the edge so the people could hear him. Now I had the biggest fish in my boat that day than I will ever catch. And then, after he was done, I just needed to go home and get some sleep but instead, he told me to go out a ways and drop my nets. I was not in the mood. Stay in your lane buddy. You are an amazing teacher, but clearly you are clueless about fishing. So, I argued, like I always do, but he won, like he always does and so, I put down my nets and the haul of fish was bigger than anything I have ever seen. It was like every fish in the stinking lake was jumping into my boat. The nets were breaking. The other boat came to help with the haul. And that was just the beginning of 3 years of incredible things he taught me, incredible things he did and the way he loves? The way he cares for people? The way he is willing to do anything for those he loves? Yes, I am his follower and I am here because he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I believed it then; I believe it now. My faith isn t perfect, as you can see. I don t believe perfectly, but, yea, I do believe.

Sitting in this text this week, I tried to imagine how Peter s head was spinning. Maybe he thought about going back and admitting. Maybe the servant girl left to attend to her work. Maybe it would blow over and no be worth making a fuss. His attempt at anonymity was broken again. A short while later someone else, this time another servant girl (Matthew) saw him and she and others said, You also are one of them." Again, Peter denied it. Man, I am not."

For about an hour, the weight of those denials pressed on Peter as he tried to reconcile what he had just said with what he was actually doing. If you are not a follower, if you are not a disciple, if you are not one of them" then, what exactly are you doing here? There are times when what we do does not align with what we profess. Here, what Peter was denying

did not match with what he was doing. Peter, like us, can be a contradiction and when what we say does not match what we do, it is confusing to people around us (as is the case here), it is also conflicting to us. We cannot live like this. God made us in his image. Jesus is the way, the TRUTH, and the life and the light of the world. John describes what that means in his epistle when he says that God is light and that in him there is no darkness. While the glory of God is certainly displayed as a fire or even blinding light at times, John is speaking about the character of God. God is transparent. There is not a dark side to him. What he says is what he means. What he says is what he is. What he does, matches what he says. That is why it is impossible for God to lie.

Have you ever read Proverbs 20.10? Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the LORD." It is basically repeated in v.23. The merchant is selling a ½ pound of sugar or flour and he fudges the scales to increase his profit margin. It s not like he is murdering anyone, right? After all, he is a farmer, just trying to make ends meet and who can blame him for just trying to make a little bit more without blatantly raising his prices. But an unequal measure is an abomination to the LORD. God is grieved, his anger is aroused, why? It s just a peccadillo, a white lie, a petty offense. With all the evil in the world, why does God bother to be so stirred up by a harmless indiscretion. The very nature of God is complete truthfulness. He cannot lie and will not lie. Lying is deeply offensive to him because it is completely contrary to who he is. You were made in his image. You were made as a reflection of his being. You cannot lie without doing grave harm to yourself. Lying fractures your being. When you lie, you are denying what you are and you are not whole.

We know that many people have anger issues. I think much of it simply comes from the fact that we are not simply angry at the world, we are fractured within. And our attempts at living or existing, or like Peter, trying to survive in the courtyard are often seen in us pretending to be something that we are not. And when people poke at it, we explode. I don t want to talk about it! You see why you get angry, don t you? You are living in conflict with yourself because you are in conflict with your Creator. Your being does not have the capacity to hold the weight of your contradictions. You collapse under the burden of your hypocrisy or you try to medicate it with something that numbs your brain to reality or distracts your thoughts.

For about an hour, Peter sat near the fire but away from the light. Why did he care about Jesus when he denied being with him? He was clearly conflicted, frustrated with himself and guilty. Again, he could have just admitted it, but he did what so many us do when we are confronted, we double-down. I ll lie now and figure out how to get out of it later. But a 3rd confrontation got even more personal. The first two accusers looked at him, the third listened to him (Matt 26.73) and identified him as a Galilean. Peter erupts. Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Matthew says that Peter invoked an oath, he swore to it.

The sun rises at 6.20 in Jerusalem on April 7. Roosters start crowing 2 hours before sunrise or anytime after. Peter s third strike brought three responses. 1) Immediately, Jesus turned and looked at him. That verb is very strong. It means to look intently, to fix your gaze, or in

this case, to lock eyes and look as it were into your soul. 2) the rooster crowed. 3) Peter s attempt at hiding failed. He remembered what Jesus said now his guilt crushed him. We then read some of the saddest words in the Bible. *And he went out and wept bitterly."* The story does not end there, not for Peter, not for you or me. It could have. We all know people who were crushed with their failures and chose to try to pay for it by punishing themselves. Many of you even have attempted some form of self-harm. Why are we prone to deal with our wounds by wounding ourselves? Intuitively we know that someone has to pay. In this moment, Peter does not know that Jesus is going to pay for his sin. He s heard it, but doesn t yet grasp that by **his** wounds we are healed." If you are reading this story for the first time, you would be so frightened that Peter was going to end it all. He is that undone by his own failure. So, why doesn t he? He doesn t because there is something else that you need to know besides the fact that we are capable of doing things that we could not imagine.

2. **God is willing to forgive in ways we cannot conceive**. (61)

A. **When God chose to save you, he already knew everything about you**.

Your sin does not surprise God. It may surprise you but not him. Peter s denial shook him to his core, and clearly Jesus knew what Peter would do and told him so. But Jesus knew that while this sin was deep, it was not fatal nor final. Back in v.32 Jesus said, but I have prayed for you." Think about that. You know that Peter did. When you have a kid or a friend on a fast-track to stupidville, you warn them about what is going to happen when they get there. And when they don t listen, what do you say? Didn t I tell you that was going to happen? We talked about that, right? What did you think was going to take place? And guess, what. You want me to help you put the pieces back together, again!" Was that what Jesus said with his look? I don t think so. Back when Jesus warned Peter of his impending failure, Jesus assured Peter. I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. Peter, you are going to fall, but it will not be fatal.

Go back to v.61. When Jesus turned and looked at Peter, what kind of a look was it? Was it shame? Was it disappointment? Was it frustration? Was, it see, told ya?" That verb is used 11x in the NT and while it means to lock eyes, it is often (not always) used to lock eyes as an expression of deep affection. Back in v.32, when Jesus warned Peter that he would fail, his warning was not motivated by shame, disappointment or a desire to humiliate. He said this because he loved Peter and wanted Peter to know his failure motivated Jesus to pray and that Jesus had a future ministry for Peter to fulfill. So, when Jesus turned to look at Peter, I think it was a look of love. He knew what Peter had done, but Jesus also knew what he was about to do. He was going to the cross and it was his love for us that was taking him to the cross and would keep him there until our pardon was paid. So, yes, when God chose to save you, he already knew everything about you and about the death of his Son for you.

B. Our salvation and pardon are personal.

Jesus prayed for Peter, but in John 17, Jesus prayed for us and according to Hebrews 7.25, he is still praying for us. We also know that Jesus died for us and that he rose again for us. The death and resurrection of Jesus are personal. He died and rose again for his own. This is so clear from Mark s account of the resurrection, where he notes that when the women discovered that the tomb was empty that morning, that one of the angels said, You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples **and Peter** that he is going before you to Galilee." Tell his disciples, and make sure that you tell Peter. He is alive and you will be with him.

Early on we noted Peter s misplaced trust. He trusted in himself that he was stronger than he was and he did not trust the warning of Christ. I think there is a related lesson not to miss. If we underestimate own weakness, we are likely to underestimate his grace. It is when we acknowledge that we dare not trust in ourselves that we are prepared to cast ourselves fully on him. I have told you before that if I could lose my salvation, I would. But Jesus. He keeps his own and will not let go.

Years later, Peter would write:

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 5.5b-11