

Year C – Third Sunday in Easter – May 4, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

John 21:1-19; Acts 9:1-20

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen savior, Jesus Christ, who knows we are not perfect, and yet still calls us daily to follow. Amen.

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I love a good redemption story.

A classic tale of an evil villain... or even... a more relatable character who has unfortunately made terrible choices... They recognize the error of their ways, and their life is transformed.

My top guy is probably Ebenezer Scrooge... and yes, I'm talking about A Christmas Carol ...during the Easter season...

A few years ago, a movie called *Spirited* came out... a story with Ebenezer Scrooge working away in the afterlife to bring such a transformation to others who have gone astray.

He was paying it forward, if you will

Delightfully funny movie... and it raised a good question... when someone has seen the error of their ways, and changed their behavior... do they change permanently?

... does that transformed life... stick around?

Everything is set right... the book ends or the credits roll... but would Ebenezer still have his generous Christmas spirit when Easter came around?

...what happens six months later when life throws some challenges... what happens when that moment of realization and commitment to change is a faded memory... and we fall back into old habits?

These stories of redemption tend to hook our imagination... because they are so relatable... so human.

All of us have made mistakes... every single one of us has done things we later wish we had done differently...

...the things we could have said in a kinder way... the times we wish we had stopped to help instead of tucking our head and walking by.

We need to believe that there is hope for us... if Ebenezer can turn his life around... so can we.

If Jesus still calls Peter to follow him... still calls Peter into discipleship after how badly he messed up... then perhaps Jesus is still calling us.

Peter followed Jesus for three years... he pledged his life to Jesus...

He tried to *give* his life defending Jesus in the garden when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave.

And yet... only a short while later... around that charcoal fire outside the courtyard of the high priest... when it seemed they had lost... Peter denied ever having known Jesus...

Three times he said... *I do not know the man.*

And then the cock crowed... and Peter realized what just happened... and that Jesus *knew* he would fail him... I can only imagine how deeply that must have gutted Peter.

And I bet seeing Jesus appear to them in the locked room only made it worse... it would have only highlighted Peter's lack of faith...

He was wrong... they had not lost... and so his shame at his three-fold denial... would have been bone-deep.

Can anyone really blame him for going fishing?

But then... just as Jesus found him three years ago... Jesus finds him again.

Seated at a charcoal fire... Jesus is there, cooking them breakfast.

This scene... I love it.

This is the Jesus I know... not a distant, unattached God in the sky watching over us... but... my Lord and my God, meeting me in the ordinary days of my life.

Jesus... meeting me in the moments when I feel like the world has turned upside down.

Jesus... saying to me... come and sit... let's share a meal. Things have gone a bit sideways for you... I know... but come... and let me remind you of my love.

And how do they know that it's Jesus? ...because of the abundance! ...the great haul of fish... the grace upon grace.

Around that charcoal fire on the beach, Jesus offers Peter another chance...

Peter, do you love me... Yes, Lord... Then feed my lambs.

Peter, do you love me... Yes, Lord... Then tend my sheep.

Peter, do you love me... Yes, Lord, I love you... you know everything, and you know that I love you... Then feed my sheep... and follow me.

The crucified and risen Jesus Christ tells Peter... and tells us... I've already taken into account your shortcomings... and still, I am calling you... come, and follow me.

Jesus came so that we might have life, and have it abundantly... so don't think for a minute that Jesus can't work with what you've got.

Just consider what Jesus has already done...

In the great reversal of death's power, Jesus has transformed the dreadful cross and tomb into a sign of forgiveness and love... a sign of redemption...

Jesus transforms Peter, a three-fold deserter... into a shepherd of Christ's people.

And shortly after, Jesus transforms Saul, a murderous persecutor... into a champion for the Way of Christ.

Jesus knows our failings... and still loves us... forgives us... and calls us to follow... to put that love into action, and to feed and tend his sheep... the people of the world whom God so loves.

Jesus calls us into a transformed and joyous life... life with our Lord and our God by our side

And yet... even after encountering Jesus in our lives... we sometimes drift away... we might pull away from Jesus and drift back into our old ways.

...or perhaps... we may even admit that we are a little afraid of what the power of a new life with the risen Christ might mean... and so we deny we ever knew him.

It's that question that the movie *Spirited* asked... what happens down the road... is the transformation lasting and permanent?

Is Ebenezer still as generous at Easter as he was on Christmas Day?

If it were only up to us and our own willpower, then I'd say no... we cannot secure our own redemption... the kind that leads to true transformation.

But fortunately... our redemption is not from within us... it comes from the crucified and risen Jesus.

Jesus, who knows our faults and our failings, and calls us anyway to follow him daily...

Jesus calls us to receive grace upon grace.... and allow the redemptive power of a living Christ transform our lives with love... to transform us anew, each and every day.

Our redemption is permanent... a once-and-done experience... we are forgiven and redeemed by the grace of the risen Jesus Christ...

But our life with Jesus... our encounters with Christ... that is not one-and-done.

Our experience of meeting Jesus in our ordinary... our good days and our bad... of sharing a meal... that is an ongoing experience.

An ongoing relationship, rooted in love and grace... a relationship that deepens and matures over time...

It's a relationship that calls to you every single day, even after we may have drifted away... even after we have made mistakes.

So come and have some breakfast with Jesus... and receive Christ's transformational love for you...

It is... the best redemption story there is. Amen.