

06.01.22 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “Failure Isn’t Final”

Scripture Reading: [John 21:15-22](#)

Reflection: Rev. George Vink

Jesus’ third appearance to his disciples tells us considerably more about his expectations for our ministry and mission. It’s clearly a matter of people, people with failures, people who make mistakes, and persons who are difficult for a variety of reasons. However it’s worded, the “life lived in His name,” includes dealing with difficulties, some who walk into our lives and others of our own making. Some are even seen in mirrors...Let’s reflect a little on one.

There are only two instances in John’s gospel that mention charcoal fires. The first is found in [John 18:18](#) recording Peter’s denial at Jesus’ trial. The second is in last week’s reading about Jesus’ hosting surprised disciples for a breakfast of fish and bread. Both instances serve to tell us more about Jesus and Peter. In the first instance, Jesus’ brief look of compassionate disappointment sent Peter into the alley, weeping bitterly. In the second instance, we see a loving Lord nudge, challenge, and then restore Peter to a position of leadership, a faithfulness that’ll result in a committed life of difficulty, if not real, and personal pain once again.

Again, we have no record of any conversation around Jesus’ barbeque breakfast. But “When they had finished eating,” Jesus challenges Peter very directly. Three times Jesus asks, “Do you (truly) love me?” Peter is understandably hurt, a feeling or reaction we can appreciate. But there’s healing also, a wonderful love shown by Jesus as he restores Peter to the position of leadership. It’s clear as we listen. Jesus does not rebuke, chastise, or ask Peter to explain, “Why?” Pointedly, yet pastorally, Jesus reaches into Peter’s heart and asks Peter to declare his love, and each time the Lord rewards the answer with a mandate to ministry. Peter is told to feed and take care of the sheep. Peter had a mission, a calling requiring dedication and commitment, eventually including a willingness to offer his life.

Thankfully, there’s another vital lesson to be learned as John recorded it and we read further. Not too unexpectedly Peter inquires, “What about him?” In response, Jesus shows little appreciation for Peter’s question and says what we might summarize as “MYOB.” Jesus didn’t dismiss Peter’s question totally. Instead, he gave a bold disciple what he needed, what all of us need: forgiveness and restoration. Failure may be painful, but it’s not final. Failure may be humiliating or embarrassing, but it’s not final. Forgiveness is what’s final.

John’s gospel reveals for us a loving Jesus who calls us to live life in His name. That’s the clear calling and challenge in Christ’s concluding command, “Follow Me!” The question Jesus then asks comes your way, my way, “Are you following?”

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you were so gracious with Peter, be gracious also with me, a sinner who falls flat on their face.

Restore me and show me where you want me to follow, whom I must challenge and what you want me to do. I do desire to be faithful and obedient, always! Amen.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Reflect on your life, and possibly a friend's, and see how God has restored you or him/her despite failures or sinful disobedience. Give thanks and rejoice in God's grace and forgiveness. Make sure you see others with the eyes of Jesus.

Songs for today:

[Just as I Am](#)