

## Outcasts Part 4

Peter

*Matthew 16:13-20, John 21:15-19*

*Memory Verses: Matthew 16:18*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

For the past month we have been in a series about the Outcast friends of Jesus. While most of Israel had discarded the camel haired locust eating Johns of the world, and the tax collecting, fishing, freedom fighting, disciples of the world, Jesus embraced them. Every outsider; every ragamuffin, every person who has been othered or sits on the fringes of society is embraced by Jesus Christ. He is where we all find belonging. In Him we all find a home. And he calls us friends.

And, it's not because of anything we've done. In fact, it's actually in spite of what we've done. Take for example Peter. The lowest of Jewish culture; a poor, destitute, lonely, fisherman. He stinks, he is very rough around the edges. He curses. He most likely gambles and drinks. If you were looking for him before he met Christ you would've most likely found him in a bar.

But, even after agreeing to follow Christ as a disciple we still find him making a mess of things every time we turn around. He keeps sticking his foot in his mouth, losing his temper, flying off the handle, or rushing into things without thinking them through. In his weakest moments he even allowed his old sinful self to open the door for Satan's influence to rebuke Christ and eventually deny him.

Peter did nothing... listen, NOTHING, to deserve the love, care, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and discipleship of Christ. And yet, Jesus, in the flesh, not only made him a disciple but allowed him to take the unofficial leadership spot of the 12 disciples.

Man, this **coffee is strong!** It is bitter, unsweet, and very hard to drink. It reminds me of my friend Doug who lives in Michigan. If you remember, Doug came and visited our church for my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday three years ago. Doug is a good guy, but Doug is rough around the edges. And, when I say rough, I mean, as rough as it gets. When describing Doug we often use the analogy that Doug is a very strong cup of coffee. He's an acquired taste. Doug will never cheapen his authenticity with sugar and cream. He's dark roast straight up. So, if you don't have a lot of mercy, grace, and patience, when getting to know Doug, you will probably never get to really know him.

I think Peter was a lot like that. I think Peter was a cup of very strong coffee. He was an acquired taste that took time to befriend. And I think I would be naive if I didn't believe that there might be someone in

here this morning who is also like that. You may be thinking, there is no way anyone can really know me. There's no way I can be a part of the group. And there's definitely no way Christ can use me as a leader. And I'm here to let you know that the story of Peter says you are dead wrong. If Jesus can use Peter he can use you. Today we are going to take a closer look at Peter. The Gospels offer way more on Peter than they do on any of the other Disciples. Peter's story has a lot to show us and we look at him I believe he will remind us that **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails!**

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to see this morning through the life of Peter is that... **A Strong Faith In Christ Doesn't Mean You Won't Ever Stumble In Your Flesh.** I want us to begin by looking at one of Peter's finest moments. In **Mark 8:27-30** and **Luke 9:18-20** Jesus asks, "who do people say that I am?" The disciples all pitch in various answers; they say you are John the Baptist, or Elijah, or maybe Isaiah or another prophet. Jesus responds, "I'm not concerned as much about what they say as I am about what you say. Who do you say that I am?" Peter responds, "you are the Christ."

**Matthew 16:13-20** says it best. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are the Messiah, the one we've been waiting for our whole lives. The one who will come and save us and bring us into the kingdom of God. Not only that, but you are actually the Son of God. You are divinity. God in the flesh. And not a dead or dying God. He is alive. Faith in you is not futile, it is living and breathing... it is life! In fact, Peter's answer is so good that even Jesus has to respond by blessing him. But look carefully at what Jesus says. You are blessed because it was not any man who revealed this to you. In fact, it was not even something you could have come up with on your own. Rather, this was revealed to you by God. Kudos to Peter, he's got his spiritual antennae up and alert. He can hear the still small voice of God.

Then Jesus goes even further and tells Peter that not only are you blessed with spiritual discernment, but you are a rock, and on this rock I will build my church. Now there is some debate as to which rock Jesus is speaking about. It could be that in mentioning Peter's nick name, "the Rock," he's letting him know that Peter is the rock that the church will be built on. It could also be that he's making a contrast between Peter the rock and Jesus who is the rock the church will be built on. Or it could be that the statement, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God," is the statement; the solid rock decree, that the church will be built on. It might even be all three. Regardless, Peter will be heavily involved in its creation, organization, and stability as a leader of the early church.

And then, as if it's not already enough, Jesus tells him that He will

give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. He tells Peter that he will have the power to share the Gospel and when he does it will shackle people to Christ and loose the chains of sin here on earth and for all eternity. In recap, Jesus just laid out the mission for Peter and for all of us. With Christ as Lord, and through the vehicle of the Church and the Gospel message we will bring people into the kingdom. This is really good stuff. Peter is clearly the right guy for the job, right? Well, that might be if you never read the next part.

Look at [Matthew 16:21-23](#). Jesus tells Peter, by the way, in order for the Church to rise up, first I must die. Peter, probably feeling himself from being blessed by Jesus seconds earlier, now thinks he can speak into this situation as well. So he decides to start rebuking Jesus. He basically says, nope, that's not gonna happen. No way Jose. Jesus, you are just flat out wrong. And this is where it all goes down hill for Peter. Jesus who was blessing him moments earlier is now rebuking him to his face and tells him a very hard statement; "get behind me Satan." Get this; Peter, who just moments earlier was under the influence of God, discerning God's words, being given the keys to the kingdom is now being told that he is under the influence of Satan and isn't discerning a dang thing. Can we talk about whiplash? This is the quickest 180 ever. Canaan doesn't even take corners this sharp.

Jesus even tells him that he is being a hinderance to him. You ever been here before? One moment you are high on the hill, living your best life now. Your tight with Jesus, discipleship is going well; you read your Bible, served your neighbor, gave your tithe, I mean, you are basically the next coming of Billy Graham or Mother Theresa and before you can even blink you've gone and stepped in it again and everything implodes. You fall back into that old sin, you get in a fight with your spouse, you yell at the kids, you break a promise to your friend, you look at that page, you go to that place, you do that thing and you are left with blood on your hands wondering... what? What... whaaa... how? How am I here right now? Seconds ago it was all gravy baby and now its all in shambles again.

I might have shared this before, but I remember after my sophomore year at Liberty I was riding high. I had the girl, Lisa, hottie, loved Jesus, loved me. It was good. And I had just had a spiritual awakening where I was stronger with Christ than I had ever been. I was crushing college, and the sky was the limit. And so I went home for the summer and thought, you know what, I can lead some of my friends to Christ. My plan was to go over to the house they all hung out at, play spades, hang out and put in a good word for God and win them over with my new found walk with Christ. It did not go according to plan. Not only did I not lead any of them to Christ but I ended up going back to my old ways; smoking, drinking, partying! I felt like a fraud, a failure. I thought,

well, Jesus, I blew it again. I guess I'm not really changed after all. I thought maybe God would be done with me, why would he want a failure like me anymore? But that's not what happened. God picked me back up, shook the dirt off my back, and said, now lets start back where we left off. And that's what he did for Peter, and that's what he will do for you! Listen, **Jesus doesn't give up on his friends, even when they give up on themselves.** Get back up, get back in the game, let's start over where we left off. **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails.**

Secondly, **A Sure Faith In Christ Doesn't Mean You Won't Ever Be Scared To Confess Him.** If rebuking Jesus to his face isn't bad enough, now we see Peter straight up denying that he even knows Christ. Look with me if you would at [Luke 22:31-34](#) and [John 13:36-38](#). Jesus, here warns Peter of his coming betrayal. Listen, Pete, Satan has demanded to have you in his army. He wants to wreck your testimony. I know your faith is sure but it is also frail and under attack, and so I, God in the flesh, have actually prayed to God the father that your faith won't fail. Jesus, don't worry about me, I will follow you anywhere. Pete, where I'm going you can't follow. But, Jesus, I will go to prison for you if I have to. Pete, you will deny me to avoid prison before this day is over with. Never Lord, I... I... I will lay down my life for you. Pete, you will deny me three times in this day alone before the rooster crows.

Can you hear Peter's confidence. He seems like a guy who would never, could never, betray his Lord by denying him. If anyone is going to stand strong, it's got to be Peter, right? Let's see how it plays out. Look with me at this account which is only account of Peter that is recorded in every single Gospel. Look with me in [Matthew 26:69-75](#), [Mark 14:66-72](#), [Luke 22:54-62](#), and [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#).

Aren't you one of his disciples? You were with him weren't you? What? Me? Nah. But John here just told me that you were with them. Huh? John's crazy? Jesus who? Yeah you were, you were with him in the garden, we've all seen you. Dude, stop playing. I told you guys, you've got the wrong guy. It's not me. Bro, you cut my cousins ear off with a sword. I know it's you. Listen, I do not know this guy! I swear it! So leave me the bleepity bleep alone!

Peter really messed up. I mean really messed up. And that moment he heard that rooster and the moment he sees Jesus turn to look at him must have been one of the most gut wrenching moments of his life. He had denied his Lord. It reminds of me of this very sobering warning in [Luke 9:26](#) where Jesus says that whoever is ashamed of Him and his words, He will be ashamed of in Heaven.

Now I can't remember a time when I have outright denied that I follow Christ. But I can remember many times where I have failed to proclaim him. One time in particular stands out to me. We bought a new storm door for the

front doorway and being a young buck with no experience, I paid the Lowes guy to come install it. For an hour I just sat there on the couch watching this man put this door up, and the whole time I could almost hear the audible voice of God telling me to ask him about his relationship with Christ. Ask him where he goes to church. No. Come on, just ask him if he has faith in anything. Stop it. Shevi, ask him if he knows me. Jesus could you please let up man. That day I know I was called to tell that man about a relationship with my Lord and I let him walk out that door and for all I know, into eternity without Christ. I'm going to tell y'all the truth, I suck. I am not a good Christian. I fail all the time, and through neglect I deny Christ all the time. Listen, I know I have a sure faith in Christ, and I truthfully don't feel ashamed to say He's my Lord, but that doesn't mean that I'm above getting scared when the rubber meets the road.

So what do we do if we have flat out denied him, or through neglect failed to proclaim him? Are we toast? Is that the end of the road for us? Of course not, because Jesus is the ultimate grace giver. He forgives and forgives and forgives some more. **The forgiveness of Christ is put on full display every time the rooster crows and we repent.** The key is repentance. At the end of the day, are we okay with having denied him or are we broken. Like I said, I think about that door installer often and that was almost 20 years ago. And I never want to fail him like that again. **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails.**

Lastly, **A Solid Faith In Christ Means You Still Gotta Feed His Sheep.** After denying Jesus three times we see this story in **John 21:15-19**. Three times he denied him, three times he asks him if he loves him, three times he tells him to feed his sheep. I think there is no denying that these stories are connected. Jesus doesn't do things willy nilly. Before he died Jesus saw Peter's faith take a hit. After he rose Jesus wanted to make sure Peter's faith could finish the mission. This is Jesus' way of saying, Peter, not only do I forgive you; not only do I have mercy and grace for you in this moment, but I still want to use you for my glory.

At this point I'm sure that Peter is thinking, I know I messed up, I'll just go back to fishing, and you can find someone else better than me. But Jesus says, Peter, I still want you! I use people who mess up! It's you that I want to feed my sheep, and tend to my church. **Jesus cares much less about our mistakes than whether or not we will follow him and feed his sheep.**

After every mistake I've made. Even though I still struggle with sin, and stumble in temptation, and neglect to proclaim him when he tells me to... he still beckons me to finish the mission. I'm not a pastor because I'm worthy. I'm not a pastor because I'm great at what I do. I'm

not a pastor because I'm perfect. I'm not. I'm simply forgiven. And over the course of 20 years of ministry I've learned one simple thing that keeps me going. When I fall I gotta let Jesus pick me back up. **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails.**

### Application

The application is simple this morning. Let Jesus pick you back up. You've messed up just like Peter. You've been a very strong cup of coffee to say the least. You've said the wrong thing. You've done the wrong thing. You've denied Christ. You've failed to proclaim Christ. You've cut off an ear. You've sunk beneath the waves. You've gone back to fishing. All of that. Who cares! Stop thinking that you aren't worthy. Of course you aren't. You never were. But he is. So let him pick you back up! **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails**

### Conclusion

If you look back real quick at **John 21:18-19** you will notice that I didn't give any commentary to this part. Jesus is forgiving Peter, picking him back up, and putting him back to work to feed his sheep. And then He, seemingly randomly, just adds this part. Peter, you are going to die. And, Jesus tells him vaguely how he's going to die. He tells him, Peter, you used to do what you wanted to do. That didn't work out too well did it? But someday you will be taken somewhere you don't want to go. You will have your arms stretched out and you will die. Now, what kind of a death does that sound like? Death on a cross doesn't it.

Get this, Jesus is saying, Peter, you've messed up, you've sinned, and you've denied me, but one day you will be faced with either denying me or being crucified on a cross. And when that day comes I know that you will proclaim me as your Lord. And you will die the same way as me.

Listen, we are all going to mess up. But the story of Peter is so beautiful because it shows us that if we repent, if we don't give up, in the end we will be rewarded with an honorable death. A legacy that will last. And in the end, they will say of us, as they did of Peter. He made it by the grace of God. **Through every stupid mistake, the patient, merciful love of Christ prevails**