

Day Fourteen

Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

Epic Fail

Matthew 26:57-68(NLT) *Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of religious law and the elders had gathered. 58 Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and came to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and sat with the guards and waited to see how it would all end. 59 Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death. 60 But even though they found many who agreed to give false witness, they could not use anyone's testimony. Finally, two men came forward 61 who declared, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" 62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" 63 But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." 64 Jesus replied, "You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65 Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Blasphemy! **Why do we need other witnesses?** You have all heard his blasphemy. 66 **What is your verdict?" "Guilty!" they shouted. "He deserves to die!"** 67 Then they began to spit in Jesus' face and beat him with their fists. And some slapped him, 68 jeering, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who hit you that time?"*

Jesus is arrested. He is about to face six court appearances; three by the Jews and three by the Romans. He would be found guilty by all three courts of the Jews, but innocent before the Romans. Then a final public appearance when the crowd would yell, "Crucify Him." Pilate would then wash his hands and hand Jesus over to be crucified. The peculiar thing would be that the guilty would be accusing the innocent. The law breakers would be judging the Law Giver. The Jews would be breaking several of their own laws in this kangaroo court. There is some debate whether these trials were legal or illegal; nevertheless, there are a few things to consider; for instance, trial at night or during the Passover. Jesus' trials went from 2am to 9am, during Passover. Each person had to vote individually, but they voted as a group. They did not have the authority to put someone to death, so they tried to find lying witnesses. That is why the accusations before Pilate and Herod were not the same as before Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. There was not supposed to be immediate execution in death penalty cases. The penalty could only be carried out after a night has passed. Any person appearing before the court was given representation, yet Jesus was alone. Legal or illegal, they had their knives out for Jesus and they were going to use any means necessary to get rid of Him.

That's the thing with religion; when it is void of compassion, it always leads to self-deception. When the rules are inconvenient, they do not apply. In their desperate attempt to convict Jesus of breaking the law, they were the actual law breakers. Religion can be ruthless, heartless, and if you find yourself in its crosshairs, watch out! Religion does not take lightly when you cross it; especially, when you point out its own hypocrisy. Jesus was loved by the common folk, yet hated by the religious leaders of the day. You can understand their anger. He told parables that made them the bad guys. He cleared the temple twice. He apparently did not wash His hands enough, (this was before COVID). He made sinners and Samaritans heroes and the religious villains. He threatened their political position and influence. He challenged their greed and questioned their motives. He called them "snakes" and "vipers." He told them they were on their way to hell. He called the devil their father. We could go on, but I think you get the message. They wanted Jesus to fail in the worst way possible. In the end, it is **their** failure that is evident to us all.

To be able to truly judge something or someone a success or failure, we need time; enough time so that we could look at a complete picture, not a partial one. If we were witnesses to all these events, it would be very difficult, from a natural point of view, to see Jesus as a success. After all, the religious leaders finally had Him where they wanted Him, or so it appeared. Luke writes in **Acts 4:25-28(NLT)** *"You spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, 'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? 26 The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.' 27 In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. 28 But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will.'"*

All that planning to make Jesus seem like a failed Messiah did, in fact, just prove the opposite. All that anger, all the political power, just ending up doing what God willed. In all of this commotion and upheaval, we are aware of someone else who is trying his best to stay in the background, but who is about to have his own epic fail.

v58 *"Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and came to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and sat with the guards and waited to see how it would all end."*

There are moments in life when we are the worst versions of ourselves. We begin with great effort and even a sense of bravado, but at the first sign of resistance, we shrink back like a turtle in its shell. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, had many moments that are recorded for us in scripture; some great moments and some not so great moments. Sometimes he had a great moment, followed by a not so great moment! Can you relate to that?

We think of failure as a one-time event. We go along in life and everything seems fine. Then all of a sudden, we fail. But this could not be further from the truth. Failure, just like success, is a building thing. A moment-by-moment thing. Before you know it, you are acting in ways and developing patterns that lead to destructive results.

What made matters worse for Peter is that Jesus already warned him. But Peter was adamant about his capacity to withstand whatever might be coming his way. **Luke 22:31-34(NLT)** *“‘Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. 32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.’ 33 Peter said, ‘Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you’ 34 But Jesus said, ‘Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.’”*

Peter is saying, “I can handle this. I know better than anyone else how I am going to respond. I am capable of handling this!”

Jesus knows what lies ahead. Never for one moment did Peter see himself as part of the problem. We can see that from his response. Peter is so self-assured that while Jesus is praying, Peter is sleeping. While Jesus is in agony, Peter is resting. While Jesus is crying out, Peter is snoring out loud! Jesus comes back and says, “Peter, all I needed from you was one hour. But you allowed your flesh to subdue your spirit. You needed it, because you are about to go over a cliff and you don’t even know it!”

Self-assurance, instead of God-confidence, has an amazing capacity to give us a false sense of security. It also produces a hypocritical sense of peace. “I am committed,” is what Peter would protest, “I am just tired.” Commitment is more than just being there. That’s the thing with self-deception, it makes me seem better than I really am. Jesus is not fooled. Peter’s failure is about to break out in the open; his failure on the inside is about to become public. All his self-assurance and self-confidence, in one moment, is going to be reduced to the biggest regret of his life. He is about to betray the One he vowed he never would.

John 18:25-27(NLT) *“Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, ‘You’re not one of his disciples, are you?’ He denied it, saying, ‘No, I am not.’ 26 But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, ‘Didn’t I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus’ 27 Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.”*

Luke 22:59-62(NLT) *“About an hour later someone else insisted, ‘This must be one of them, because he is a Galilean, too.’ 60 But Peter said, ‘Man, I don’t know what you are talking about.’ And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord’s words*

flashed through Peter's mind: 'Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.' 62 And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly."

Self-deception always leads to regret. Not just regret. It leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure that others could see, but that we were never aware of. Peter is being recognized by a family member of Malchus. The guy that got his ear chopped off by Peter. Peter's recent failure is coming back to haunt him, so he does the only thing he knows to do, he denies. The rooster crows and Jesus turns and looks at Peter. What do you think the look looked like? Accusatory? Condemning? Disappointed? "I told you Peter, I knew you were going to mess up. I knew you would drown in your own bravado! Look what you did to me!"

That could not be further from the truth. I believe that Jesus looks at Peter with a look that said: "Hang in there, Peter. I knew that it was going to happen. Remember, I told you I have already prayed for you! Although you are so low right now that you can't even trust what comes out of your own mouth, I still believe in you. **In your greatest failure, your most epic collapse, I still believe in you!**" You cannot surprise God with your failure. He knew you were going to fail before you ever failed. Religion might tell you that your failure disqualifies you. It might find you guilty and continually remind you of your failure. But always remember, let your Father have the last word.

To those of us who have had great and grand visions for ourselves, but have come up short, we need to remind ourselves that, despite our failure, Jesus still believes in us!

Prayer:

- **Ask the Lord to help you see your failure correctly.**
- **Ask for forgiveness where you have tried to justify yourself.**
- **Pray for the wisdom to not judge something a failure or success from a human point of view.**
- **Thank the Lord that you have a relationship with Him that is not based on you, but on Him.**
- **Pray for others so that they may see themselves the way Jesus sees them.**