

Contemporary Idea: *When we fail to follow God's call to his will or his ways, Jesus is faithful to remind us of who he is, restore our sin, and call us again.*

Sticky statement: *When we fail Jesus will remind, restore, and call again.*

Good morning, my name is Harmony and I'm sorta a newer face around here but it is a humbling honor to share God's word with you this morning. Now to prepare you I've been doing ministry with teenagers for the last 9 years so if I say something like homie, please forgive me.

Intro: What is God's facial expression when we fail? How do you picture God looking at you when you have just dropped the ball? Especially when that failure has to do with following God's commands? Close your eyes and picture it. I dare you right now. This question comes from a book that I dearly love and has significantly shaped how I view God and my relationship with him. But I ask you this because I'm sure if we had the time to hear everyone's answers, they would be different but I guess we might see a theme that on average most people would say God looks at them something like this... (cross arms and look on in annoying disapproval.) What I hope to show you today from our reading in John 21 is the real and accurate response to how Jesus Actually responds to our failure. Because the truth is this, when we fail to follow God's will or his ways Jesus is faithful to **remind** us of who he is, **restore** us from our sin, and **call us again** into his will and ways.

Point 1

Statement: When we fail to follow the call, Jesus is faithful to remind us of who he is.

Restate: When we dig into the text of John 21 we see that Jesus is reminding Peter of two specific moments in his life. Two moments where Peter had the profound realizations that Jesus wasn't just a man but actually the Son of God. the God who controls Nature and is perfectly holy. Jesus Does this by the circumstances and ambiance which he recreates this morning for the disciples. Jesus is reminding Peter of who he really is. Holy God, in control, Loving. We have to go back into the larger story and understand what Jesus is reminding Peter here So let's look briefly at what Jesus is doing. They are at the sea of Tiberias, fishing and catching nothing. Jesus calls to them and is "Hey you got a catch, no? Try the other side." so they do and boom a catch so big they have trouble hauling it in. What does this story remind us of? Jesus is recreating, almost reenacting when Jesus first called Peter and some other disciples to follow him. Remember when he said, "I'll make you fishers of Men?" In Luke 5:5 Peter's response to Jesus is this, "get away, I'm a sinful man." Peter realizes Jesus as God and as Holy. He can feel the weight of his sin in God's presence. And Jesus responds with follow me.

But this time instead of wanting to move away from Jesus, Peter literally leaps out of the boat to return to his lord. And on the beach Jesus has a charcoal fire with fish and bread going. He welcomes them, and feeds them fish and loaves. What do fish and loaves remind you of? Some of you might be picturing a felt board with a little boy with two fish and five loaves, a large group and baskets of leftovers? Jesus again is referring to the time he did a miracle and fed multitudes. But we have to understand the whole story. Because, why was that significant in the life of Peter to remind him that Jesus is God? If you go back to John 6, we read the story of feeding the multitudes, but that progresses to a discussion about Jesus being the bread of life, And people, jewish leaders and other disciples are confused. Because Jesus being the cool

guy he is like, eat my body, drink my blood and have life, and all the people are like, ew, gross cannibals. Obviously, we know Jesus was speaking in metaphors, this is where we learn about communion etc, but from that discussion, which is begun by the feeding of the multitudes, many of Jesus' disciples leave him. And Jesus turns to the twelve and he says this, (Read this) **John 6:66-71**: *“66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*”

These are two significant moments in Peter's life where he solidly and undeniably believes Jesus is the son of God. fully God and fully holy. Jesus reminds Peter of who he is.

Image: If you have a relationship with God, you too have significant moments where you came to these same realizations. For me I remember when I really trusted god for the first time. Austin and I were newly pregnant with our first baby. I was in grad school and doing a crazy prayer project for one of my seminary classes. Some things started to go wrong, and I can't explain really but I was doing my prayer in the car and I just felt God so strongly telling me, I'm going to take this baby. And I was like, well ok but I trust you. And sure enough, we miscarried and it was really sad. But God didn't just tell me that and leave me hanging. God was faithful, He carried me in that season, he was so present, caring and sweet to me. He Held me in my grief and I fully trusted his plan and goodness through that painful time. I wear two rings, my wedding ring and a ring with the birthstone from the month that baby was supposedly to be born. And I do that because it reminds me of God's faithfulness and trustworthiness in that season of my life. So many times, since then, when I'm confused, when I have failed, when I feel weak and inadequate, I will feel that ring on my finger and remember who God is. He is faithful, he is In control, He is kind, merciful, Holy. He is all these things. When God reminds me of who he is I feel like I can snap back to reality and face whatever I'm dealing with because I know he is really the one in control.

Objection: But maybe you are sitting there and thinking, that's great for you lady , but I still have trouble trusting God, in fact I'm not even sure where I stand with God. How am I supposed to trust him or remember these moments when I'm not even sure ive had any and I'm not sure that God even likes me? I'm glad you asked.

To that i would say, God is faithful. As we have learned from Easter, Jesus died for you. He isn't sitting up in heaven looking down waiting for you to get your act together. He came down and did it for you so you can simply be with him. He wants you to know him, and he wants nothing more to prove how good he truly is to you in your life. All that is required of you is to trust him. Do you wanna know who he is? The simple church answer is read your bible, but I don't say that because that's what I'm supposed to say. The truth is if you want to know God you have to read the bible. That is the main place where God has revealed himself for us living in this present day and age. So if that's you, go home, pray simply tell God I wanna know who you are, and then start reading through the book of John. See what happens. Peter knew Jesus because he lived life with him and heard his words. We hear his words by reading them. If you don't feel like you know God, the bible is where you start.

Restate: When we fail to follow God's call to his will and his ways, he is faithful to remind us of who he is.

Transition: What benefit is it to know who God is, why is that God's first step in this process? Because when we are solid in our trust and understanding of a holy loving God, it's much less scary to face our sin. Having an accurate picture of God as good, loving, merciful, and kind makes us want to run to him when we fail rather than run away from him. Because God is loving He must address our sin and not leave us stuck in that.

Point 2

Statement: When we fail to follow God's call to his will or his ways, Jesus is faithful to restore us from our sin.

Restate: So, after they finish breakfast, Jesus doesn't waste any time he gets right to the point. While his focus is on Peter in this next section, we have to remember that the rest of the disciples are involved in every part. And if i was a betting woman, which i am not, I would wager that they are experiencing similar emotions and realizations that Peter was. Jesus is addressing not just Peter's sin but all the disciples in this moment. And we should take note because we are the same.

Three times Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" I hope we can all recognize the significance of the three here. Peter Denied Jesus three times. So three times Peter gets the opportunity to declare His love back. Now some people like to get caught up in the words used for love in these passages from the original language. I could try to impress you with everything I learned from looking at the Greek, but that's super boring so I won't. Cause i spent all that time looking at definitions and tenses and moods, and all the other 10million things that go into understanding Greek, and here's what I realized, context is king. Yes Changes the specific words he used, but I believe he did it for variation and to drive home an emotionally healing point to Peter. The restoration of sin is not a business transaction, but God healing our heart from brokenness.

Here is what I mean. You can read a text any way but we lose the intonation when we read, we have to imagine it in our head. What I see in the text from context and word choice, is that Jesus is redeeming the three denials, but even more so allowing Peter to feel the weight of his sin, In comparison to his genuine love and affection for Jesus. I'm sure Peter justified his actions, no one would blame him. Some might even say he was wise to take measures to preserve his life so that he could carry the mission forward. In Peter's eyes (and to some extent in reality) He was facing life or death. This is what we do with sin isn't it. We try to make it lighter than it is. We try to ignore or deny it. I'm sure that Peter would have rather just pretended that moment never happened. But Jesus is faithful to deal with and restore his sin.

This is how i would read the text,

"Simon son of John, do you love me *more than these?* (Casual, getting Peter's attention. Perhaps bringing to mind how peter once said that even if everyone left i never will)
Yes, Jesus you know that I love you. (Silly slightly perplexed by the question. Why would you need to ask what you already know?)

Simon Son of John, do you love *me?* (Slower, more serious. Emphasis on Me,) You say you love me more than anyone but do you really love me? Do you love me above all things?
Yes Lord, you know that I love you. (concerned and confused, nervous about where this is going.)

Simon, Son of John do you *LOVE* me? (emphasis on love.) This last statement immediately grieves Peter, because I think he realizes that he cannot hide or excuse his denial. He cannot pretend it didn't happen anymore. Peter is faced with the fact that he deeply loves Jesus as his friend and in his hour of need Peter turned his back. Peter took all the knowledge of Jesus as God, as Messiah, as holy, and threw it out the window. There was no trust in this God, no loyalty, when the moment to stand came, Peter could not. He gave into fear and cowardice and abandoned the one he truly loves. Shame, Greif, what else can we experience when we look reality in the face and see ourselves as we really are. Peter says "Lord you know everything," and I think he means, Lord you see all the thoughts I had that night, the pain, the fear, the confusion, you know that I love you but I'm too weak.

Jesus strategically peels back the emotional protection, to help Peter recognize his true heart, and realize that his acts of denial did not ruin or diminish his genuine love for God.

And verses 18 and 19 are so powerful here. This has been a verse I've always glossed over but this is the crux! Jesus is describing his death, and ultimately Peter would be martyred. What Jesus is saying is Peter I know your heart, you've boasted for so long about how you love me more than anyone else but when your moment came you failed. You couldn't do it and you were weak and gave into fear, but Peter what I'm telling you is that you will be that man. I will make you that man and you will meet this moment again and you won't fail. You will be exactly what I've made you to be. Now follow me. Restoration!

What a crazy moment. Peter, let's not pretend everything is fine, let's face the weakness and sin, let's realize that that did not destroy your love for me, and let me assure you that you can trust me to make you into the man you long to be. All you need to do is follow me. Sin acknowledged and dealt with, Restoration and assurance given.

When we fail, Jesus is faithful to restore us from our sin.

Objection: Ok but lady you don't know what I've done. You don't know my sin. Like Peter was just a coward and did not admit that he was a disciple. I've done some really bad stuff. You don't know what I've done. And to that I would say you're right. I don't know your sin. You don't know my sin. But God does! And I don't say that to mean GoD hAs a LaUnDry LiSt of all your crap. I say that to encourage you because God knows your situation more clearly than anyone else, more than even yourself. He fully and completely understands the situation and complexities you are dealing with concerning your sin. While he sees the things maybe we wish now one would see us do, he also sees who we truly are underneath that, and who we wish we had the strength to be. And how we feel powerless to change, or even try. There are so many layers and God sees them all. He knows how they all work together or fight against each other. He wants nothing more than to help us realize our deepest longing is actually a connection with God, and to heal us so that we can move towards that.

Restate: When we fail to follow God's call to his will or his ways, Jesus is faithful to restore us from our sin.

Transition: Jesus is in the business of restoration. When we understand who he really is, that gives us the strength and humility to look at our sin and allows him to restore us in that. These

steps are critical because when Jesus has done them in us we then get to move on to the best part and that is to be called again. The mission does not change, and our failure does not remove us from God's divine appointment for that purpose. Jesus asked us to follow him, and just because we fail doesn't mean we get kicked off the bus.

Point 3

Statement: When we fail, Jesus is faithful to call us again.

Restate: Our last point here is simple and profound. Our failure doesn't mean we are no longer acceptable to God for service. He has called us to his will and ways, and he will continue to call us to these things until we die. You may have noticed that as we looked at Jesus and Peter's dialogue that I didn't mention the part where Jesus says feed my sheep. Do you love me? Feed my sheep. I wanted you to really understand the emotional dynamics that were happening, but Jesus commands to feed my sheep are another significant restorative piece to bring Peter back to the mission. To call him again. Again, we are dealing with a larger narrative, and I think it's important to recall Jesus' final words with his disciples before he is taken away. Through chapter 13-17 John writes all that Jesus says and one thing we see Jesus says over and over is this: I love the father and obey his commands, those who love me obey my commands. Jesus over these chapters is really hammering home the point that Love is proved through our obedience. We show our love through humble submission. Jesus modeled this throughout his life as he constantly submitted to the will of the father. And we follow his example by obey his will and ways.

So now, we see Jesus simultaneously questioning Peter about his love, and then giving him a command to prove it. Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep. Tend my Lambs. Jesus is giving Peter the opportunity to love him by his obedience to his commands. When you Genuinely love someone it is not a burden to obey. I'm not saying it's easy and there are times when it's hard. But our love and trust enable us to obey with a humble heart. I want to be so clear here because this is an easy concept to get misunderstood. Obedience to God's commands proves our genuine love for him, our obedience is not a requirement for God to love us. Obedience is proof of our Love for God, Obedience is not a requirement for God to love us. Jesus calls us to obey out of our love for him. And when we fail at doing this, He is faithful to call us again, and again and again. God's love for us is not dependent upon our ability to obey.

Objection: The last thing I want to point out here is Peter's reaction to Jesus. In verses 20-21 again another portion it's easy to skim over and ignore or mis read think Peter is just being petty. Peter after this intense moment, after Jesus has just brought out his real heart and is calling back into the mission. Peter looks at John, the one who Jesus loves, and he says... What about him? What I think Peter is saying here is Lord I'm not fit. You say I can become that man, but I'm not him now. I'm not worthy, I'm not good enough. And I think we do this all the time. Lord, there are other people who are better than me, there are people who have not failed as much or as often as I have. Why would you use me now? Jesus responds, what is that to you? What do you care what I have called him to, You Peter, YOU Harmony, You Jan You Austin, You Brynn, You Follow me. You might still be thinking yeah God loves me after I've failed but I'm still going to be thrown off the bus... But Jesus called you. We have the benefit of knowing what a great call Jesus had for Peter, as the leader and planter of the church. We know that his ministry was different from John, and different from Paul who was to come after him. And Peter

continued to fail, but God continued to call him again and again. And Jesus is faithful to do the same for us.

Conclusion: So when we fail to follow God's will or his ways, Jesus is faithful to remind us of himself, his goodness and kindness. He is faithful to address our sin and restore us from our sin, and when we have walked through these two things, he is Faithful to call us again.