

Matthew 26:69-75

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 June 2020

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. So we're in Matthew 26 and the camera has been focused hasn't it on the Lord Jesus very clearly on his path to the cross.

Of being exposed. Something within us that hates exposure. Public exposure of our failure. We all fear it. We've managed to kid ourselves haven't we that we are far better far more decent than we know we really are.

And you very very rarely if ever meet someone who'll admit that they're a bad person. Jonathan Aitken the politician who was sent to prison said he never met a prisoner who couldn't justify what they did.

And sometimes I think that we wrap ourselves in so many layers of self-justification it becomes doesn't it a kind of impenetrable cocoon of self-delusion.

And that's what I think makes Peter's denial so compelling and so moving. All four Gospels are very open about Peter's abject failure.

[1 : 33] And given that one of them Mark is Peter's own eyewitness account it seems extraordinary that none of them airbrush what is stupendous failure.

There are no excuses offered no extenuating circumstances. It's it's one of the things that makes the Gospels so compelling and so self-authenticating.

That they really are open about the failures of the eyewitnesses. Whereas normally eyewitness accounts airbrush over the failures. And we've got to ask ourselves what is it that Peter wants us to realize.

What does Peter want us to realize as he makes public this incident that that only he would have known about. He must have told it mustn't he again and again in the early church.

And what is it that the apostle feels that you and I need to know this morning. Because they include it in such graphic detail. And so let's let's learn the lesson.

[2 : 34] First of all we'll see Peter's proud presumption. Peter's proud presumption. That if ever you and I are to be acceptable to God.

You and I need to come to terms with our spiritual failure. With our weakness. That we have nothing to offer God except our sin.

The flesh is weak and however committed you are. And courageous or convinced we may be. Apart from Jesus Christ we will always find ourselves failing. And if only we can peel back the layers of our self-justification and come clean.

We have to confess that we're weak beyond our imagining. And I think Peter's failure is all the more dramatic because of his privilege.

Peter is such a fine man. He has such a privileged position amongst the disciples. He is the first one to be called. And so when Matthew gives the list of the disciples.

[3 : 40] He says first Peter. Peter. He's given the name Peter by Jesus. Because the name sounds like rock. On which God is going to build his church.

And Peter is told with the other disciples. That he will judge. That he will sit on the throne and judge everyone else alongside Jesus. So he is in a hugely privileged position.

He's been extraordinarily privileged in the revelation that he's been given. He's one of the three disciples who's taken up onto the Mount of Transfiguration. And they see Jesus in all his splendor and all his glory.

Peter says later on that even angels long to look into the things that I have seen. And Jesus says to Peter. Blessed are you Peter.

Because my father has revealed this to you. And Jesus tells Peter that the prophets and the righteous people longed to look into what he saw.

[4 : 44] So Peter is privileged in his position. He's privileged in what he has shown. He is unique in his perception. And so when Jesus says who do people think that I am?

Who do you think that I am? He says you are the Holy One of God. He tells Jesus you are the one who has the words of eternal life. To whom else shall we go? It is Peter who testifies that Jesus is the Christ.

The Son of the Living God. He is privileged. And I think it's easy to romanticize this picture. And to think of Peter as being foolhardy.

And actually he's very courageous. And so of all the twelve disciples. Who is the one who gets out of the boat in the middle of the night? When he sees Jesus walking towards him on the water. And says Lord if it is you. Let me come to you walking on the water. It is Peter. Would you have done that? A couple of weeks ago we saw that when Jesus comes to be arrested.

[5 : 48] And the crowds come to him with their clubs and their swords. It is Peter who gets out his sword and lops off the servant of the high priest here. It's foolhardy.

But it is brave. It is Peter who is the one in verse 58. It's still there. In verse 56 all the other disciples have left and fled.

But there is Peter. Look at verse 58. Was following him at a distance. It's very poignant. It's Peter who is the man who is stuck.

He's the one isn't he? In chapter 26 in verses 31 to 33 if you glance there. Jesus says. You will all fall away because of me this night.

For it is written I will strike the shepherd. And the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up I will go before you into Galilee. And Peter answered him. Though they all fall away because of you.

[6 : 49] I will never fall away. And Jesus said to him. Truly I tell you this very night before the rooster crows. You will deny me three times. And Peter said to him. Even if I must die with you.

I will not. Deny you. And all the apostles said the same. But for all his great privilege. And for all his great courage.

And for all his great commitment. I think that makes Peter's fall secondly all the more intense. Peter's fall. No disciple was placed higher than Peter.

And no disciple fell lower. No one protested loyalty more insistently. And no one denied Jesus more inexcusably.

He who thought he could stand. Has fallen terribly. It's pathetic. Look with me at verse 69. Verse 69. Verse 69.

[7 : 51] Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl. Came up to him and said. You also were with Jesus. The Galilean.

But he denied it. It's just a servant girl. A wife of a girl literally. What was she doing?

Was she offering him a drink? Was she taking the orders? We don't know. Was she off duty?

There's certainly no threat of violence. There's no power to arrest him that she has. She just comes up to Peter in the courtyard.

Just a servant girl. And she says. You are one of them aren't you? And his denial is pathetic. It's public. Look at verse 70. But he denied it before them all.

Saying. I do not know. What you mean. When he went out to the entrance. Another servant girl. Saw him. And she said to the bystanders.

[8 : 53] This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again. He denied it. With an oath. I do not know this man. And after a little while.

The bystanders came up and said to Peter. Certainly you are one of them. Your accent betrays you. And then he began to invoke a curse. It is public.

It is pathetic. It is emphatic. He denied it. Before them all. He denied it. With an oath.

I do not know the man. And then he began to invoke a curse. The on himself. Isn't actually there. He began to invoke a curse.

It could be that he began to invoke a curse on Jesus. Just as the early church. Were told to do by the Romans. To show that they had no allegiance to Jesus.

[9 : 52] Cursed Jesus. He began to invoke a curse. And to swear. I do not know the man. It is pathetic. It is public. It is emphatic.

Do you see what Peter is doing? This committed. And privileged. And courageous man. Is distancing. Distancing himself publicly.

And emphatically. From the Holy One of God. And Jesus said. He who does not honour me. Does not honour the Father. Jesus said.

Whoever denies me. Before men. I also will deny. And this is a public. Emphatic. Denial. And surely we have to say.

Right. Towards the end of this gospel. That Peter's denial. Is placed here. That even the most. Privileged. And committed. And courageous.

[10:47] Disciple. Has absolutely nothing. To offer God. Apart from their own weakness. Peter. The apostle. Says to us.

That the church. May be built on the rock. Cephas. But I am the chief of sinners. And the striking thing here. Is that there is nothing new. About this lesson.

There is nothing new. About this lesson. That we must come clean. And be open. About our abject weakness. It's run. Right the way through. Matthew's gospel.

Do you remember. Blessed are the. Poor in spirit. Blessed are those. Who recognize. Their abject. Weakness. And so one of the.

Chief functions. Of the sermon. On the mount. From Matthew 5 to 7. Is to show. You and I. Our weakness. To drive us. To our knees. To recognize. Our own.

[11:44] Spiritual weakness. Just a few days. Earlier. Jesus had said. Unless you become. Like a child. You will never. Enter the kingdom. Of heaven. Saying.

I've got. I've got nothing. To offer you Lord. I can only. Bring you my failure. My spiritual weakness. And unless you. Become like that. You will never. Enter.

The kingdom. Of God. And all the way. Through the gospels. The disciples. Refused to see it. So Jesus says. To the disciples. Can you drink.

The cup. That I will drink. And the disciples. Say yeah. Of course we can. And yet. They all fled. Into the night. And Jesus says. To Peter. You will all run away.

And flee. And Peter says. Even if I must. Die with you. I will not deny you. And all the disciples. Said the same. And they all fled. Into the night. And Peter says.

[12:39] They might all run away. From you Lord. But I will never run away. I will never fall away. And then that very night. Peter invokes a curse. And swears.

I do not know the man. Why is it that Peter. Puts that in. Why is Peter. Insisted on this. Being included.

In the gospels. Why is Peter. So open. About his abject. Failure. When everything. Within us. Wants to keep. This sort of stuff. Hidden. And surely.

It is to show us. That until we. Grasp. That we have. Nothing. To offer God. Except our spiritual. Weakness. And failure. And unless we become. Like a little child.

We'll. We'll never enter. And have you. Learned that yet. Some of us. Some of us. We've been disciples.

[13:36] A long time. And you and I. Need to keep learning that. We can so easily. Fall into thinking. That we've got something. To offer. We have been so privileged.

We've learned so much. But the truth is. Nothing. In my hands. I bring. Simply. To your cross. I cling. Naked.

Come. To you for dress. Helpless. Look to you for grace. I'd like you to think. For a moment. Of. The godliest person. That you know.

The most. Spiritual. Man. Or. Woman. That you can think of. I hope you're not thinking of yourself. But think of that.

That person. You admire most. For their godliness. And let me tell you. They have nothing. Nothing. Nothing. To offer to God. Apart from their sin.

[14:37] I wonder if you can think of. The most gifted man. Or woman. You know. Think of the most generous. Person. That you know. And here is Peter. The most privileged.

The most hugely committed. The most immensely courageous. He's had spiritual experiences. Like none of us have had. And he has to learn.

On the eve of the cross. That he is an abject. Failure. And it took the disciples. So long to realize this. And. It's taken me so long. To realize this.

And it's why we've got to try and drive it home this morning. That if it took the disciples lesson. After lesson. After lesson. To really learn this. That they really are so weak.

It makes me think. That it's a problem for us. Isn't it? That we think God must accept me. Because I know so much. Or I've seen so much. Or I'm so courageous.

[15:31] I would never desert him. I serve in the church. I give generously. Or I lead in ministries. Or small groups. And Peter would say.

Really? I'm self-justifying. And there's self-delusion. I used to think.

In that way. Said Peter. And I wonder if you've come to realize. How weak you are. And let me suggest.

If we think we have some. Track record. And we are able to stand. And we're not weak. Well I wonder whether we've understood.

The gospel at all. You believe he's the Holy One of God. Do you? You believe he has the words.

[16:29] Of eternal life. Do you? You offer to follow him. Wherever he leads you. I trust you do. And so has there been. An action. Or a thought. I do not know this man.

So on the one hand. This is what's going on. In this incident. It's here to show us our weakness. But.

There's another reason. And if this was just here. To show us our spiritual failures. Well. We would. All turn off the. Internet. Full of gloom. And despondency.

Wouldn't we? We'd just produce guilt. And desperation. But I want you to notice. How. Peter's failure. Is interwoven. Into the whole fabric.

Of this chapter. Very often. If you look at expositions. Of Matthew 26. And 27. This section. Is actually hardly ever dealt with. Interestingly. And I think that misses.

[17:25] The whole point. Of the passage. It's my last point. The point of the passage. That even as you look. Across the page. Can you see it? The title in verse.

57. Is Jesus before. Caiaphas. Or the counselor. It might be Jesus on trial. Before Caiaphas. But here at the end. Of Matthew 26. We've got Peter on trial.

Peter before this. Servant girl. Jesus before. Caiaphas. And what we're being. Is. We're given a contrast. Of abject.

Failure. Of humanity. That cannot stand up. And cannot do the right thing. With God. Side by side. With the selfless. Sacrifice. Of Jesus.

And so Peter. In the end of Matthew 26. He stands. Small. And fails. And is humbled. But throughout Matthew 26.

[18:23] Jesus stands. As the hero. Jesus is on trial. Before the 70 elders. Of the Sanhedrin. Jesus himself. Approaches his betrayer.

Jesus will not fight. Those who come to arrest him. Jesus faces false charges. And yet he is innocent. Jesus will not open his mouth. During a sham trial. And Jesus finally speaks.

To utter the absolute truth. That will take him. To his death. And they spit on Jesus. And they strike Jesus. And they slap Jesus in the face.

And they determine. To kill Jesus. And they bind Jesus. And they deliver Jesus. Over to death. And Jesus goes. Willingly.

To his death. And obediently. To his death. And deliberately. To his death. And selflessly. To his death. And sacrificially. To his death.

[19:20] To carry God's judgment. At our failure. And Jesus goes. Sovereignly. To his death. As part of God's. Great plan. To carry out. God's judgment.

At our failure. In his body. On the tree. And so here we have. Peter. Failing. Before the servant girl. But here is Jesus.

The selfless. Substitute. Who does what no human being. Has ever done. He tells the truth. Perfectly. And so the later on.

In his writings. Peter can say. Christ died. For sins. The just. For the unjust. To bring us to God. He bore.

Our sins. In his body. On the tree. And Peter. Wants you to know. This morning. That you can come clean. And you can.

[20:19] Actually come clean. You can come out. Into the open. And you can express. Your weakness. And your failure. To God. And your inability.

To stand with him. And as we do that. We find that there is one. Who can deal with it. The spotless. Lamb of God. Who takes away. The sin of the world. Jesus. The selfless. Substitute.

Let's pray together. Thank you.