

Grace Bigger Than Our Failures

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: 24 July 2022

Preacher: Andrew Goyzueta

- [0 : 0 0] This morning, we're going to welcome the Reverend Andrew Goisweta to our pulpit. Andrew is the former assistant pastor at a Presbyterian church in Traveler's Rest, South Carolina, and now serves as the campus minister for Reformed University Fellowship at Davidson College.
- And Andrew's not just simply a guest preacher, he's actually had some influence on our church, so I'm going to tell you a couple of stories. I first met Andrew in 2008 as a student. We were both students at Davidson College, and Andrew went ahead of me to Covenant Seminary.
- Andrew started Covenant in St. Louis in the summer of 2012. And July 3rd, 2012, was a Sunday. July 4th, 2012, Andrew walked over from his apartment on campus, and he scanned in his worship guide from the worship service the previous Sunday and emailed it to me.
- You might be wondering, why was he sending you a worship guide? Well, he wanted me to see what this church was doing, which is that they had these interesting worship guides where they had a sidebar explanation of what was happening in the worship service.
- And I thought, that is so cool. If I'm ever leading a church, we have to do that. So nine years later, it finally happened last year in 2021. So if you can either thank or insult Andrew depending on your feelings about the worship guide, it's his fault.
- [1 : 2 5] The other thing that's Andrew's fault is, so that was 2012. And then in 2014, I actually started at Covenant Seminary. And what I think none of you know is this Bible that I use every Sunday to preach from was a gift from Andrew as soon as I arrived in seminary.
- And he gave it to me partially to show me the importance of having a Bible. What's neat about this Bible is it can stay open on any page of the Bible, including Genesis 1. So it's a preaching Bible. And he told me, it's really important when you preach.
- You've got to always have the Bible in your hand so people know where the authority comes from. So that's some influence. It has this inscription in the front that says, For my dear friend, Matthew Capone, June 2, 2014, from Andrew Coisweta, Proverbs 30, verse 5.
- And Proverbs 30, verse 5 says this, Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Which is fitting because Andrew's going to come now and bring us God's word.
- So, Andrew, we're delighted to have you. Thank you. Thank you. Matthew, for that kind introduction.
- [2 : 3 6] It is great to be with you this morning. Joined by my wife, Amanda. This is actually my second time worshiping with y'all. Even though it's my first time preaching for you, it's my second time worshiping here.
- The first time was several years ago at Matthew's installation service. And what a joy that was to be here for that special occasion and to worship the Lord that Sunday morning, that Lord's Day morning.

So, it's a delight and a privilege to be able to preach God's word for you this morning. I want to thank Matthew and the elders for having me. My sole regret in offering to preach for Matthew this morning was that I wouldn't get to hear him preach this morning.

As y'all know very well, Matthew is quite the gifted preacher and has been for very many years. I know that he has served y'all well through those preaching gifts.

But even more importantly, Matthew is a good man. And I'm sure you've learned that as well. He did not mention this, but he was actually the best man in my wedding and one of my dearest friends for very many years.

[3 : 41] So, it's a privilege to preach in his stead this morning. If you have a copy of God's word, I'd invite you to turn with me to John chapter 21.

We're going to be looking at verses 4 through 19 this morning. And we are jumping into the very end of this gospel account. We're going to be looking at the very famous passage of Jesus restoring Peter.

And as we prepare to read God's word, I want to ask you this. Have you noticed how very many TV shows these days, they begin with the two words, previously on.

And then they launch into a recap. In fact, Matthew and Amanda and I were watching a TV show last night and it did the very same thing. It started with previously on. And it helps orient you to where you are in the story.

So, as we're jumping into the very end of John chapter 1, I want to begin by saying, previously on John's gospel, Jesus has been crucified.

[4 : 43] He's been buried in the tomb in Jerusalem. He remained there for three days. And on the third day, he has risen again to new life. And he appeared to many of his disciples on multiple occasions.

Well, our story begins more than a week after those events. No longer are we in Jerusalem, but we are up in the north in Galilee. And this story begins after Jesus' disciples have been fishing all night and they've caught nothing.

So, that's where our story begins early the next morning. So, would you please give your attention to the reading of God's word?

This is John chapter 21, verses 4 through 19. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, Children, do you have any fish? They answered him, No. He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.

[5 : 52] So, they cast it. And now, they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, It is the Lord.

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with some fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.

So, Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. Now, none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

[7 : 00] This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

[8 : 07] This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, Follow me. Every word of God proves true.

He's a shield to those who take refuge in him. Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, would you grant us this morning eyes to see and ears to hear glorious things spoken of you in your word.

We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Amen. Now, I don't know if Pastor Matthew does this when he preaches, but a lot of times I will preach and I'll save the main point, the big idea to the very end of the sermon.

Not this morning. This morning I am too excited and this is too important for you to miss. So here it is. Here's the big picture, the big idea from this morning's passage.

In fact, it's right there printed in your bulletin. God's grace is bigger than our biggest failures. Can I say that again? God's grace is bigger than our biggest failures.

[9 : 36] You know, that's the message of all of Scripture and in particular it's the message of this morning's passage. And as we dig into this story that we just read, let me ask you this.

What's been your biggest failure from this past week? Take a second. Think over this last week. Perhaps it was a sharp word spoken out of anger and frustration to a child, to a spouse, to a parent.

Maybe it was a show that you watched or a website you visited that you know you had no business visiting. Maybe it was a word of gossip or slander where you highlighted someone else's failures instead of covering over them in love.

What's been your biggest failure from this past week? Maybe you're sitting here this morning and you're thinking, well, shoot, I've had a pretty good week this week. I haven't had big failures.

Well, if that's you, let me ask you this. What's your biggest failure from the past month or the past year or your entire life?

[10 : 57] If you have read any of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, then you already know what Peter's biggest failure was, don't you?

Peter's biggest failure was denying Jesus three times, just mere hours, maybe even minutes, since promising to Jesus that he wouldn't.

Now, you and I, we may have failed pretty spectacularly this week or this month or this year or in our lives, but not quite like Peter, not like this. And yet, look at that very last verse that we just read together, verse 19.

Jesus, even in the aftermath of Peter's biggest failure, Jesus turns to him and says, follow me. In other words, Jesus doesn't discard Peter even after his biggest failure.

He doesn't discard Peter. In fact, he beckons Peter to himself. If God's grace is bigger than Peter's biggest failure, then it's bigger than our biggest failures too.

[12 : 14] And what this story highlights for us, what it shows us, is just how this grace, this huge grace, comes home to us. And it does so in three ways. Through the grace of presence, the grace of place, and the grace of persistence.

So let's begin with the grace of presence. Have you noticed how many protagonists, how many heroes, main characters in books or movies have particular calling cards?

These distinct things that they do or they say that lets everyone, including the reader or the viewer, know that they're there? I mean, think about it.

Who says, elementary, my dear Watson? Everyone knows that's Sherlock Holmes, right? Or, I'll be back. We all know who that is, right?

Or, to infinity and beyond. Like, we can't help but know who exactly is talking to us with those distinct calling cards.

[13 : 17] Well, Jesus has a distinct calling card too. Did you catch it from this morning's story? Look back with me at the first couple of verses, verses 4 through 6.

The text says, God's word says, that just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, children, do you have any fish?

They answered him, no. In verse 6, he said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. So they cast it and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish.

Okay, so did you catch it? What is Jesus' calling card? It's him telling his disciples after a really poor night of fishing to cast the net and then providing them with this miraculous, this supernatural catch of fish.

That's Jesus' calling card. that's his thing. That lets everyone know that it's him. And this is not the first time that Jesus has done this, right?

[14 : 28] At the beginning of Luke's gospel in Luke chapter 5, we read that this is precisely how Jesus called his first disciples. It's his calling card.

And so how, here in our story, how did the disciples respond to Jesus' calling card? look at verse 7. First, something snaps, something clicks in John's mind, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

It said that he said to Peter, it is the Lord. John gets it. He turns to Peter and says, it is the Lord. And then, and then something kind of goes haywire almost in Peter's, in Peter's mind because look what happens when Peter hears that it's the Lord.

he put on his outer garment for he was stripped for work and threw himself into the sea. He was so overwhelmed and overcome by the realization that Jesus is here.

He's overwhelmed by the grace of Jesus' presence. And you can imagine him just thinking, can this really be? Is Jesus really here? When I was 12 years old, my Grandpa Santos, my dad's dad, passed away.

[15 : 44] Now, Grandpa Santos was one of my favorite, I'll just say, he was my favorite grandparent. He was the one that loved me and my siblings the most. And he had a unique calling card.

It was this whistle, this sound that he would make that let everyone know that he was present, that he was there. And you probably never heard it before.

I'm going to try it this morning. But Grandpa Santos' whistle sounded like this. That was Grandpa Santos' thing.

Who here has ever heard that noise before? Exactly. Right? A couple people. Have you met my grandpa? That's amazing. But whenever I would hear that, if I was in a large crowd, I would know that Grandpa Santos was there.

Well, like I said, he passed away when I was 12. It was really sad and really tragic. It was the first grandparent to lose. And, you know, he was in the hospital.

[16 : 49] He was recovering from surgery. They had removed some cancerous tumors. And we thought he was going to pull through and make it. And then the day that he was supposed to come home, everything went south.

All of his internal systems started shutting down. There were complications from the surgery that they didn't catch. And I remember as a 12-year-old praying fervently with my family that the Lord would spare his life.

And within a day or two, he was gone. Now, if I were walking around Davidson where I live, where my wife and I live with our two girls, let's say I was walking down Main Street or I was walking around campus where I work, and I heard, you better believe that I'd be overcome with emotion, that the hair on the back of my neck would stand up just as it's standing up right now.

And you better believe that I'd be wondering, could this really be? Is Grandpa Santos here? Are all these sad memories coming untrue?

Brothers and sisters, have you, like Peter, have you heard Jesus' calling card? Have you experienced the grace of Jesus' presence?

[18 : 12] Have you been overwhelmed by that grace? If you have ever experienced genuine, loving fellowship, Christian fellowship, then you have heard Jesus' calling card.

He promises that where two or three are gathered in his name, there he is among us. Or, have you ever opened up God's word and let God's word open you up?

Have you ever let yourself become saturated in God's word? If so, then you have heard Jesus' calling card. Jesus was so saturated in God's word.

And if you have internalized God's word, then you've internalized Jesus as well. The word of God, the writer of the Hebrew says, is living and active. Why?

Because Jesus is living and active among us in and through his word. Or how about this? Have you ever prayed? Have you ever offered up your sincere thoughts, longings, desires, fears, worries, anxieties?

[19 : 20] Have you ever lifted them up to the Lord? If so, then you've experienced the grace of God's presence. God's word promises that our prayers are like incense before the Lord.

Even today, even right now, in the very presence of the most high God in the heavenly throne room. An extension of you is there. Your thoughts, your desires, your longings in God's own presence.

Or, how about this? Have you ever participated in communion? Have you ever taken communion? Have you ever been baptized? Have you ever witnessed a baptism? Then you, too, have heard Jesus' calling card.

Because he promises to meet with his people in and through the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism. Well, not only does God meet with Peter and with us through the grace of his presence, but he also ministers to us through the grace of place as well.

Would you look with me at verses 9 through 14, kind of the middle of the passage that we just read. And as we look over these verses, I want to invite you to imagine the sights and the smells of this scene through the eyes and, yes, even the nose of Peter.

[20 : 42] So enter Peter's sandals and imagine this scene through his eyes and even through his nose. Here's what I mean. So for one, it's dark out.

Verse 4 told us that day was just breaking. And on the shore, there's this charcoal fire already set up. Jesus is there and he's breaking bread and he's serving you a meal.

He's feeding you. Now, if you're Peter and you're taking in all these sights and smells, what do these things remind you of? when was the last time you saw Jesus break bread and serve you a meal?

Oh, yeah. It was that night when Jesus predicted that you, Peter, would deny him. And you doubled down and said, no way, I'm going to die before I deny you.

Or, man, what is that smell? I mean, what is that smell that's filling your nose, that's clinging to your hair, that's getting in all your clothes, that's stinging your eyes?

[21 : 49] What is that? Oh, yeah. How could you forget? It's the smell of a charcoal fire. Now, let me pause there. For you and for me, the smell of a charcoal fire, what does that remind us of?

It was a July 4th, Independence Day, right? Like, gathering with family and friends, cooking some hot dogs and hamburgers, right? Not so for Peter. What does the smell of a charcoal fire remind Peter of?

Well, for Peter, that smell is the smell of failure. Because it was around another charcoal fire that Peter watched Jesus be dragged before a kangaroo court in the high priest courtyard.

And it was there around a charcoal fire that you, Peter, denied Jesus three times. And you know, they say that smell is one of the strongest senses, especially as it relates to memories.

So again, if you're Peter and you're there on the shore of Galilee, your body might be here on the shore of Galilee, but your mind and your heart are back in that courtyard, around that other charcoal fire, watching Jesus and denying that you ever knew him.

[23 : 15] And so, for Peter, the smell of failure is the smell of a charcoal fire. It reminds him of the biggest failure that he's ever had in his entire life. What does failure smell like to you?

Is it the smell of your childhood home? Maybe a particular room in your childhood home? Is it the smell of a certain perfume or a certain cologne?

Is it the smell of stale beer or whiskey? Is it the smell of a high school gymnasium or locker room? Is it the smell of scantrons and number two pencils?

What does failure smell like to you? Well, for me, failure smells like rubber. Not all rubber, but a very particular kind of rubber.

The kind of rubber that they put in stairwells in commercial buildings. You know what I'm talking about? Like those concrete stairs in commercial buildings that have the rubber coating and that's glued down and it has those little bumps that prevent you from skidding.

[24 : 23] That smell, that's the smell of failure for me. Because when I was in college, when I was a junior at Davidson, I had a huge crush on this girl that I met in RUF.

The same ministry that Matthew and I met in, the same ministry that I now serve with. And it just so happened that my junior year, she lived one floor above me in our dorm.

And so one night, I mustered up the courage to go and ask this young woman out. And just so you know where this story is going, that young woman is not my wife, Amanda.

So late one night, I get the courage, I'm going to go ask her out. I go out of my room, down the hall, get into the stairwell, and bam, immediately I'm hit with the smell of these rubber steps.

Our dorm had just been renovated the year before, and I don't know if it was the rubber or the glue that was connecting the rubber to the steps, but man, it was making me lightheaded. So distinct.

[25 : 28] And so I go up the steps, I'm getting nervous, right, to ask this young woman out, and I go to reach for the door, to open the door to go onto her hall, and I say, I can't do this.

So I let go of the door, I turn around, I go back down the steps, I go to open the door to my hall, and I'm like, Andrew, you've come this far, you got to go follow through with it. And I must have done this probably two or three times up and down the steps.

And at one point, I actually started to get concerned for my own health and physical well-being because I was getting so light-headed from these fumes coming off these rubber steps. And so I was like, all right, you just got to go do this, you can't stay in this stairwell, go for it.

So I did, I opened the door, went onto her hall, got up to the door, knocked on her door, and she answered, I asked her out, and she turned me down.

And then I had to go back into that stairwell, get my nose and my lungs filled with this obnoxious smell of rubber, and then go back to my room. Now, that is not necessarily a story of moral failure, but it certainly felt like social failure.

[26 : 43] You know, that rejection from a young lady that you're interested in, it certainly felt like a failure of attractability, of desirability.

and so for years, whenever I would smell that distinct rubber smell, I'd be brought back to that place and be reminded of that failure. Until just a few years ago, when I returned to Davidson College to serve as the campus minister, and wouldn't you know it, the same stairs with the same rubber is in the student union, where we have all of our meetings, as it was in that dorm room, when I was a junior.

And so from the very beginning, when I started serving as campus minister, I'd have to go up and down these stairs and smell that rubber smell to go to our large group meetings, to go to our Bible studies. But here's the difference.

When I would go on Tuesday night to go get ready for large group as a campus minister, I had my wife Amanda by my side. We would often go up those steps together.

And after a few times of that happening, I realized, this smell doesn't have a hold over me anymore. The Lord is redeeming that smell and that memory for me and replacing those with new and better memories with my wife Amanda.

[28 : 09] The Lord is doing something very similar here for Peter. He's bringing him back to that place of failure so that he can redeem that memory for him, so that he can heal him of the guilt and shame and regret that he felt in denying his Lord and Savior three times.

And the Lord is inviting you to return to those places of failure so that he might heal and redeem those parts of your stories. And now, it might not be practical for you to actually physically go back to those places.

I mean, what if it was in another country, right? What if it was in your childhood home and your family since sold it? I'm not saying that y'all need to go back and knock on a stranger's door and say, hey, I used to live here.

Can I go to my bedroom? There's some unfinished business that Jesus wants. No, that's not what I'm saying. But what I think the Lord would have us do is, look, you can invite Jesus into those places of failure by inviting a brother or sister in Christ into those stories.

You could turn to a trusted brother or sister in Christ and open up and share in vivid detail the story of your biggest failure and allow the Lord Jesus to heal and redeem those memories for you.

[29 : 36] That's the grace of place. Well, we've encountered the grace of presence. We've encountered the grace of place.

Lastly, we encounter the grace of persistence. Let me ask this. As I finished reading the last section of this story as Jesus is restoring Peter, as I read verses 15 through 19, where Jesus, again, he asks three times, do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? Did any of you feel for Peter? Like at least a little bit? I know I did when I first read this story and many times since.

Or how about when you read that Peter was actually grieved the third time that Jesus asked him, do you love me? I mean, anyone else here kind of feel like, man, Jesus, why do you got to be so hard on poor Peter?

Like, can't you see that you're hurting him, that you're causing grief, that you're inflicting pain? Anyone? Anyone else kind of feel for Peter in this situation? Y'all, there's no way around it.

[30 : 44] This is a hard passage, and especially when we get to those last two verses in 18 and 19, where Jesus predicts how Peter would die. That last section, this whole last section, can kind of feel like a wet blanket.

Like, man, that's cold, that's harsh, that's heavy. But what I want us to see before we end our time in God's word this morning, is that grace is abundant here.

And it's the grace of persistence. So look with me, and let's notice the grace of Jesus' persistence and even the grace of Peter's persistence. So first, Jesus' persistence.

In verses 15 through 17, three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Which, wouldn't you know, that's one time for each of Peter's three denials.

three times Jesus restores Peter to his high holy calling, to go and fish for men. That calling that Jesus placed on Peter's life, Jesus is now restoring Peter to that calling.

[31 : 54] And I don't know, I can imagine Peter, after a really poor night of fishing where they've caught nothing, just being really hard and down on himself. like, man, Peter, what made you even think that you could fish for men like Jesus called you to?

You can't even fish for fish anymore. Like, I just imagine Peter just so hard on himself or even wondering, you know, man, now that Judas is gone, I'm the worst disciple.

I mean, the text doesn't say it, so I'm not saying that this actually happened, but if I were Peter, that would be going through my head. I mean, Judas was the worst disciple.

He betrayed Jesus. But Judas is gone. Who does that leave? That leaves me, Peter, the denier. I denied him three times. Have you ever been there?

Have you ever been to this place where you failed just so spectacularly that you're like, man, is life even worth living?

[33 : 04] Should I keep going? If you have wondered that at all, and I'll just acknowledge that there have been a few times when I've acknowledged, when I've wondered that myself.

If you've ever wondered that, please pay attention to what Jesus is saying to Peter here. He is saying, look, Peter, I am not done with you yet.

He's restoring Peter to his Jesus calling to go and fish for men. Feed my lambs, Peter. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. I still have a use for you.

How amazing is that? So why is Peter grieved? Why does it hurt so much? And why does Jesus allow Peter to feel that grief? I think what's going on here is that Jesus wants to make sure that Peter doesn't take the same path that Judas took.

Peter, or Jesus, wants to call Peter off of that path that leads to death and despair. Peter, and Jesus is calling Peter back onto this path that leads to life and salvation.

[34 : 21] How do I know this? Well, in 2 Corinthians chapter 7, the apostle Paul, he highlights the difference between godly grief and worldly grief. And what does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 10?

Paul says that godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Again, Jesus wants Peter off that path that leads to worldly grief and onto that path of godly grief that produces a repentance that leads to salvation.

Jesus here, towards the end of our story, Jesus is like the field surgeon that is pulling the wounded soldier off the field. This soldier, Peter, has just stepped on this landmine of failure.

And there's all sorts of shrapnel of regret surrounding his heart. And so Jesus, the field surgeon, the good physician, he is working hard to remove that shrapnel and to save Peter.

[35 : 32] And yes, it's painful. And just as Peter starts to feel overwhelmed and overcome by this pain, and just as Jesus starts losing Peter, Jesus has his hands around Peter's face.

It's as if he's telling him, stay with me, soldier. Stay with me. Stay with me. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

Do you love me? Jesus is sharing the grace of persistence with Peter. And you know what?

That leads to the grace of Peter's persistence. So let's look at the ending again. Look at verses 18 and 19. Yes, this is a hard couple of verses.

Jesus saying that when Peter was young, he used to dress himself and walk where he wanted, but when he's old, he's going to stretch out his hands. Another is going to dress him and carry him where he does not want to go.

[36 : 38] And then verse 19 says, this Jesus said to show by what kind of death Peter was to glorify God. Please don't miss this.

Here at the very end, Jesus promises Peter that he's going to end well. That Peter's death is going to glorify God.

Peter has that promise from Jesus' own lips. And can I be honest here for a second? There are some days where I long to have that same promise from Jesus' own lips.

You know those kind of days where things are not going well, where you've messed up royally, when you're convicted over your own sin, and you're just, you wonder, man, am I going to make it?

Am I going to make it to the finish line? And again, being really honest here, like as a minister of the gospel, it is hard to see those news headlines of ministers who I'm sure went into ministry with great intent, but at the very end, they don't end well.

[37 : 47] And you know who I'm talking about. Their names end up in the news and in the media, right? I know that apart from God's grace, that can be me.

And there are some days where I'm just longing for that assurance that I'm going to end well. I know what kind of day Peter was having on the Sea of Galilee before Jesus showed up.

And y'all, it was not the same day, the same kind of day after Jesus showed up. Because after Jesus showed up, Peter has this assurance that he will end well.

And brothers, you and I, brothers and sisters, you and I have that same assurance from our Lord and Savior Jesus. And so as I end, let me ask you this.

Has Jesus shown up in your life? Have you heard his calling card? Has your hair ever stood on edge, on end, at the grace of his presence?

[38 : 56] Have you invited Jesus into those places of past failure? Have you heard Jesus' persistent knock, knock, knocking on the door of your heart?

If you can answer yes to those questions, then you need to rejoice. Rejoice. This is the best news there ever was. Rejoice. Have joy.

And share that joy with someone. Go tell someone about this. This is amazing. But if not, if you haven't experienced that sort of grace, a grace that's bigger than your failures, then please would you hear these words from Jesus' own mouth.

Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.

Peter heard that voice and opened the door. You all, you all have just heard that voice. Will you too open that door?

[40 : 11] Would you pray with me? Holy Spirit, I pray for all those in this room who have heard your voice, who want to open the door, but don't know how.

Would you rush into them right now? Would you overwhelm them with your grace that is bigger than their failures?

And would you, Holy Spirit, comfort and convince all of us of your presence and your persistence? We long for you to heal us.

And we ask all of these things in Jesus' powerful name. Amen.