

Life is just plain hard. It doesn't always work out like we hoped, planned, and dreamed. Life is not black and white.

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I now see with clearer eyes the complexity of our humanness. The truth of the matter is this: we are all broken people. The specifics and circumstances may look different – loss, betrayal, addiction – among others.

- And the dream we have for our life is lost.
- We feel trauma from the nuclear bombs that explode in our lives. No shalom. Only hurt. And pain.
- Shame often results from our brokenness, and it can keep us in bondage.
- The dream seems lost.

Sometimes we feel disgraced because of what happened. **[Slide]**

- Other times we are judged. **[Slide]**
- **Community can either give life or death. And sometimes, it gives death.**
  - I can tell you with utter certainty that the middle schoolers and high school students here have felt the sting of gossip and being judged.
  - And this can lead to shame.
  - And the dream seems lost.

No matter the form shame takes, we often cower, trying to ward off the blows of the world. We can become secretive, which is a self-protection mechanism.

- And we hide.
- And we hurt.
- And we are broken - we can feel like the world has stomped us down into nothingness because of something we did or because of what others did to us. We can stew in our victimhood because of life circumstances; bitterness knocks at the door.
  - And the dream seems lost.

**[Brene Brown Clip]**

Peter felt this same kind of pain and shame. His dream was for the Messiah to rescue his people. He was a proud man that boldly displayed his emotion, faith, and impulsive tendencies.

- In Matthew 16:16 Peter was the only one who proclaimed faith in Jesus, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"
- This leads to Jesus calling Peter "the Rock" and telling him he will build his church on him (vv.18-19)
- In 16:24-25 we begin to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."
- And what happens to Peter?
  - He betrays the one he loves the most. He saves his own skin. He denies the Messiah, the very Son of the Living God.
  - The dream he had seemed lost.
  - And the shame set in.
- Our text this morning comes after the Resurrection, and we find Jesus asking Peter three times whether he loves him.
- This was difficult for Peter.
- What makes it even more difficult from Peter's perspective is the way in which Jesus asks, and we see the shame in Peter's response, because he is focused on himself.

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V. 15 Jesus asks, Simon son of John, do you **agapao** me more than these?  
Peter's response: Yes, Lord, you know that I **phileo** you.

V. 16 Simon son of John, do you **agapao** me?  
Peter's response: Yes, Lord; you know that I **phileo** you.

V. 17 Simon son of John, do you **phileo** me?  
It's as if Jesus is saying, *Peter, if you can't love me unconditionally, do you at least love me like a brother?*

Peter's initial responses indicate an unworthiness to be in Jesus' company. He betrayed him. There is awkwardness. There is hurt. There

is pain. And Peter characterizes the most basic and sinister form of shame: *I am bad*. He is saying: *I am not worthy of agape*.

- He responded: Lord, you know everything; you know that I **phileo** you.

Jesus understood the complexities of humanness. He never waivered in his love and compassion for Peter, and gently restored him. He realized the trauma that occurred for both of them, but while Peter likely focused on himself – shame does that – Jesus focused on love.

Look at what Jesus does:

1. Do you agapao me? Peter – no, I phileo you.
2. Jesus again – Do you agapao me? Jesus is naming what Peter is capable of, and calling him to it. Jesus is saying – *Peter, just because you failed in this instance, does not mean you are a failure or incapable of agape. I have seen it in you. I am calling you to better things. I am calling you to life!*

But Peter can't comprehend the grace being offered. And says, no, I only love you like a brother.

3. So Jesus does what Jesus does – offers more grace and compassion. And he comes down to the level Peter is at. *Peter, do you love me like a brother?* Jesus enters into Peter's shame and humanness, and walks with him. He says: *We've been through some trauma together. I love you.*

What is also astounding is the restoration of calling.

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Peter is recognized as having pastoral authority, and there are parallels to Matt. 16:18-19 where Jesus tells Peter he will build the church on him.

- shepherd imagery in John 10
  - good shepherd protects his sheep, even if it means laying down his life
    - this is further strengthened by the fact that the command to feed the sheep is followed by the

prediction that Peter will die by laying down his life for the sheep.

- In John 21:19, "Follow me" may be an invitation to martyrdom
  - authority grounded in love, and an obligation to the flock
- John 21 stresses the theme of Peter's love and obligation to the sheep

Pastoral authority restored to Peter in John 21.

And love takes those tapes of shame that Brene Brown talked about and says: *You are worthy. You are loved. And there is a great future in store for you because you are mine.* We are now Jesus' hands, and feet, and mouth. Community holds the keys to life...and death. So give life! Give love!

No matter what you are going through, community that gives grace and love give life. Exposing the shame to the light in this type of environment breaks the power and bondage to it. The drumbeat of evil is triumphed by the love of Christ.

We all have failed at times. None of us has it all together. But that does not make us, a failure.

Love restores the dream of being human. It accepts our flaws and our failures; it allows us to not be perfect.

Love restores THAT dream.

Listen with me to a song from Tenth Avenue North that describes this shame, this loss, and the triumph of Christ's love:

### **[Times – Tenth Avenue North]**

I see that here at WMC. My first Sunday here I felt love – this congregation knows how to love well. Little hands were laid on my shoulders and back and they blessed me in ways that were healing, redeeming, loving. It was a moment dripping with grace.

Stephen Ministries is an amazing ministry that offers hope through love. Just like Jesus restoring Peter, Stephen Ministries offers compassionate care, unfathomable grace, and all encompassing love.

- The dream that was lost for some – now in process of being healed

Love. God's love is immeasurable. Unbreakable. Unfathomable. It is persistent. It never lets go. It never gives up. Healthy community manifests this by continually pouring out love.

Community has the power to heal shame and brokenness. We are called to bring shalom and love to others in this journey of life. The journey requires healthy and unhealthy trials; justice and injustice; mountain peaks and valleys; fairness and complete unfairness. It requires us to walk with others through valleys of pain, brokenness, self-doubt, and insecurity - to walk through the desert coming out with a deeper, richer relationship with Christ. Love happens in community where following Jesus requires us to work, live, and suffer with others; God's shalom and love mean we carry each other's burdens. It requires active listening and focusing on understanding rather than being understood. It means relinquishing the right to judge, and instead requires giving and giving and giving *deep mercy and grace*. It requires loving enemies and being unafraid of slander, humiliation, mocking, and even death. It requires working for justice out of a context of love, never losing sight of the humanness of all. Every human being is created in God's image and a third way is established that sees each other in our humanness and brings peace. Love breaks down barriers and offers deep grace to all.

Community that does this, that loves well, gives love, gives grace. And we see Jesus in the lives of each other.

Love restores the dream to be a human being. It heals the shame. And it gives us responsibility. It fills our little love cup till its overflowing, and everywhere we walk little drops of love spill out.

Love restores THAT dream.

My dream was lost seven years ago. I felt like my life was over.

At the lowest moment in my life, my three-year-old daughter at the time, tugged on my shirt and said to me, "Don't worry, Dad. Jesus loves you."

And God's Spirit poured out onto a three-year-old girl who profoundly shared the truth of the Gospel – Jesus loves you, and was a profound moment in my life.

And Jesus loves all of you, no matter what you are going through and facing. Jesus loves you, and if all of us exemplify that kind of love to each other, healing takes place and the dream is restored.