

I. Intro.: Last week I wished you "Happy New Year", because the Passover marked the beginning of the Jewish religious year

A. Maybe today I should wish you "Happy Half-year" since this is the half-way point of our YOTB

1. For 6 months we've been working our way through God's interpreted holy history as found in the Bible
2. This salvation history describes God's continuous efforts to establish and sustain a chosen covenant shalom people who would be Yahweh's light to all the nations
3. After so many successes & failures of those chosen people in the O.T. (mostly failures), God brought the promised Messiah into the world in Jesus of Nazareth
 - a) One of the major efforts of Jesus early on in his ministry was to develop that chosen covenant shalom people in a particular way: through a group of twelve disciples whom Jesus personally called
 - b) These twelve were his proteges, his trainees ... they were his prototype of what that chosen covenant shalom community (that city set on a hill) could be
 - c) These disciples appear in all 4 of our Gospels, but as we're "walking with Jesus thru Holy Week" we're especially focusing on Mark

B. One of the characteristics of Gospel of Mark: *Jesus' disciples don't get a very flattering portrayal*

1. One theme some commentators have described from Mark: "failed discipleship" ... examples:
 - a) Over & over Mark describes Jesus' disciples as just not "getting it" ... either thick-headed or hard-hearted
 - b) With several parables Jesus told, disciples have to ask for explanation
 - c) They seem rather dense at times, which continues into the events of Holy Week we're focusing on now:

Before arriving in Jerusalem for that fateful week, 3 separate times Jesus predicted his own coming suffering, death & rising again.

But disciples responded to these predictions with puzzled silence, or they ignored what he said, or they outright resisted him

2. During Jesus' 3 years of active ministry, seems like his disciples failed in discipleship more often than they succeeded

II. I can relate to failed discipleship

A. For myself, the life & teachings of Jesus have been models I seek to emulate ...

1. But more often than not, the person I resemble from the Bible is not Jesus, but one of his bumbling disciples
2. I feel like a failed disciple every time I ...
 - a) Obsess about money and realize later I've made money my master
 - b) Pass harsh judgment on someone else while ignoring the "log" in my own arrogant eye
 - c) Look at a woman lustfully & then realize the internal adultery I've just committed
 - d) See a person in need in a public place, but I pass by on the other side, assuming that someone else will come along whose job it is to help them
3. I know these are not the actions that Jesus expects from his disciples, so I must not be a good disciple if I haven't conquered these sins ... At least that's how I feel
4. Do you ever feel like a failed disciple?
 - a) It's even more humbling when I realize I'm a pastor & a seminary graduate w/ a degree title after my name: *M.Div.*
 - b) If that isn't the most ridiculous degree ever conferred: Who on earth is a master of divinity?

B. Leads to some titles & abbreviations we all take for granted

1. Every day you see billboards, professional signs, business cards or letterhead w/ some letters after a person's name ... an abbreviation that tells you a little more about who they are or what they've done

Some abbreviations that describe us

Physicians	MD
Dentists	DDS
Many pastors	M Div
Jesuits	SJ
Order of St. Benedict	OSB

2. *(go thru them)*

- a) Some are professional
- b) some are religious ... (found on a website almost 600 distinct abbreviations Catholics use for titles, degrees, or religious orders!)

3. Here's a copy of my current business card ... You may notice that I haven't put MDiv or another abbrev. after my name



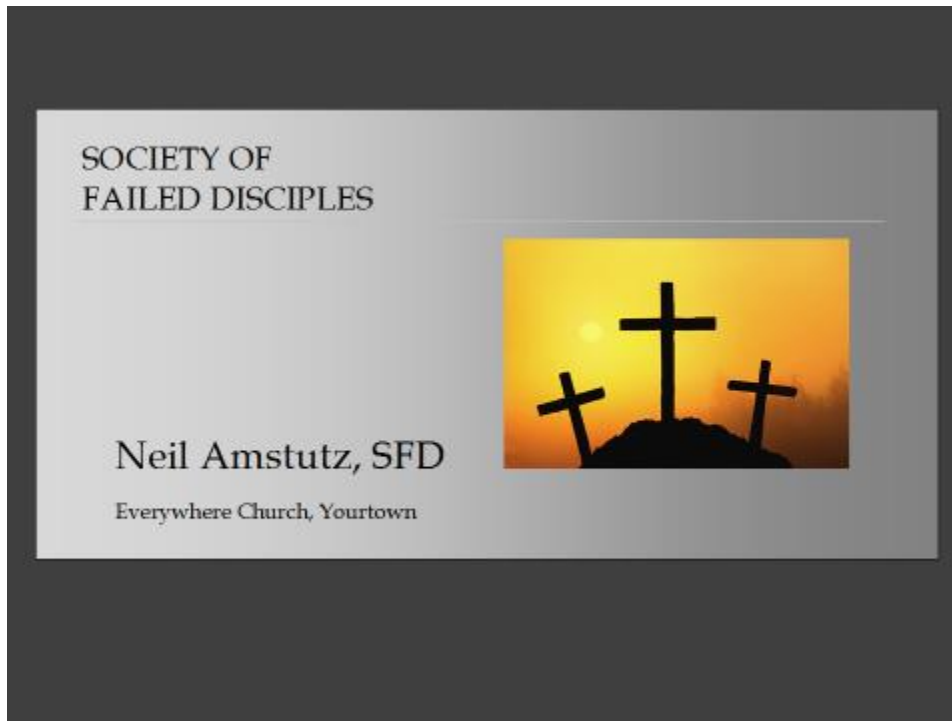
Text: Mark 14:32-52

(Lent 2) 4

- a) This is partly because that might make me look more like an academic than a pastor
- b) It's also because I want to identify more with regular folks

4. I propose that maybe **there is** an abbrev. We should all add after our names, if we claim to be Xians:

- a) SFD (Society of Failed Disciples)



- b) How about if I handed you this card to introduce myself? Would you be willing to put SFD after your name, to identify yourself? (Hold that question for a while)

III. Let's Review the story

A. Just finished Last Supper

1. In the Upper Room, Jesus tells them they'll all desert him ... they protest this ... go out thru Jerusalem city walls to Mt. of Olives ...
2. Proceed to Gethsemane, a garden or olive orchard on the slopes of Mt. of Olives.
 - a) Luke tells us it was Jesus' custom to go there, so it was a familiar place to him & disciples
 - b) This was a large place, because once they arrive Jesus takes Peter, James & John in farther than other disciples
 - c) & then goes even farther in by himself

B. This makes it clear that he came to pray, but also becomes clear that he's upset, agitated, distressed

1. Instructs his 3 closest disciples to stay awake, while he goes off alone to pray
 - a) Out by himself, he throws himself on the ground ... no holding back
 - b) I imagine there's desperation in his voice, when he cries out, "*Papa, take this cup from me!*" After a pause, filled with the weight of the whole world, he finishes with, "yet, not what I want but what you want"
2. He returns to his 3 friends, expecting them to be looking to him for instructions on what they're going to do next
 - a) Instead, they're all asleep!
 - b) He calls on Simon, expressing his disappointment. He urges them to stay awake so as not to fall into temptation
3. Perhaps the letdown from his good friends causes his spirits to sag a bit, because he goes back to pray again & says the same words to God
 - a) Unfortunately, his friends let him down a 2nd time after his prayer
 - b) And then it repeats a 3rd time!

C. Somehow Jesus knows the time for private prayer is past ... tells them it's time to go ... maybe he hears approaching voices, or perhaps he sees flickering torches amid the trees in the dark

1. While collecting the other disciples he'd left near the garden entrance, who shows up but one of their own group, Judas?
 - a) While Jesus & disciples were walking & praying, Judas had slipped off to see the chief priests, introducing himself as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth & offering to deliver him to them.
 - b) Jesus knows Judas came to betray him, but from here on out, the close-knit bonds between teacher & his community of disciples fall apart
2. Judas doesn't come alone.
 - a) He brings a big crowd from the Temple police, armed w/ clubs & swords.
 - b) And with a greeting & a kiss, one of Jesus' own trusted friends for past 3 years betrays him to be arrested.
3. Then there's a surprise in midst of this chaotic scene:
 - a) One of those standing near to Jesus pulls out a sword and starts

swinging!

Probably one of his 12 disciples, but we don't know for sure. Gospel of John says it was Peter himself.

In the melee, a slave of the high priest has his ear cut off.

b) The surprise here is that any of his followers carried a sword at all!

For 3 years he had preached peace, and counseled resisting evil nonviolently. He told people to love their enemies

But somebody either didn't hear that Sermon on the Mt. or maybe thought it didn't apply to them!

4. In any case, the fellowship of devotion, love & friendship that Jesus had built around him was suddenly gone, shattered!

5. They all abandoned him when he needed them most!

IV. So how do we today view Jesus in this story?

A. More keenly than perhaps any other text in all the Gospels, this one shows us the humanity of Jesus

1. If we believe that in him God truly became human, let's be careful not to minimize his distress & emotional agony
2. Let's not think of Jesus as God masquerading in human skin
 - a) Although he was very close & intimate with his heavenly father, he was not in some spiritual "zone" ...
 - b) nor was he on some divine "auto-pilot" that just overrode his own thoughts & emotions
3. The prayers he cried out in Gethsemane were real prayers, not just going through the motions of human distress

B. He really DIDN'T want to go through with all this

1. He really would have preferred not to suffer & die
 - a) Jesus was not God's puppet dragged along on a predetermined plan
 - b) He had free will like the rest of us, and he really could have chosen to call the whole thing off
2. But he didn't, because he loved us so much that he was willing to give himself up to free us from the hold of sin

V. Today, even as we see the agonized choices of our Savior, I wish for us to see a story of failed discipleship

A. The bumbling thick-headed disciples who don't quite get it keep showing up throughout Mark

1. But in this story the failures are one on top of another.
2. When Jesus needed his friends the most and when he was most vulnerable, most hurting, they all dropped him like a hot potato

B. Failed discipleship happened several times in this story:

1. They failed to be there for him by staying awake with him
2. They failed to understand his nonviolent message for fighting evil
3. They left him alone in his hour of greatest need
4. And in vv. 51-52, one more interesting possible failure comes to us, one that only Mark writes about

C. What's with the naked young man, anyway?

1. It's not obvious at all why this was included in the story ...

- a) Bible interpreters have tried to figure out these verses for centuries
- b) No one knows for sure, but there's 1 theory I really like

2. Perhaps this young man was, or at least represented, the writer John Mark himself!

- a) Here's a little history review:

16 or 17 years after Jesus' death, John Mark went along w/ Apostle Paul & his own cousin Barnabas on Paul's 1st missionary journey

But partway through their journey to Gentile lands, Mark deserted them and went back to Jerusalem, which didn't set well w/ Paul

About 4 years later, Paul & Barnabas decided to go on another missionary trip, but Barnabas wanted to give his cousin Mark a 2nd chance & have him come along to help

This caused split between Paul & Barnabas, & they went separate ways ... Paul taking Silas w/ him, & Barnabas traveling with Mark

Later in N.T. we see evidence that Paul was reconciled w/ Mark, & welcomed him back to the ministry

- b) Now jump ahead 10 or 15 years to time when Mark is a middle-aged or older man writing down this oral story of Jesus the Messiah
- c) Just like Peter, Mark knew how it felt to abandon Jesus & his work, and then to be restored again
- d) What if a very young Mark had been following along at the edge of the

Gethsemane crowd?

And then what if some of those Temple police tried to seize him as a follower of Jesus, too?

What if he was so eager to escape Jesus' fate that he was willing to run thru the night naked?

3. Timothy Geddert wrote a Bible commentary on the Gospel of Mark and he added his own interpretation of why Mark might have included these last 2 verses:

Just at the point where all the disciples fail Jesus, Mark adds, "I know about that! I have been there! My failure was no less shameful! But I too heard the invitation to meet Jesus again in Galilee. These fleeing apostles came back, I came back, and so can you!" (p. 355)

VI. Conclusion

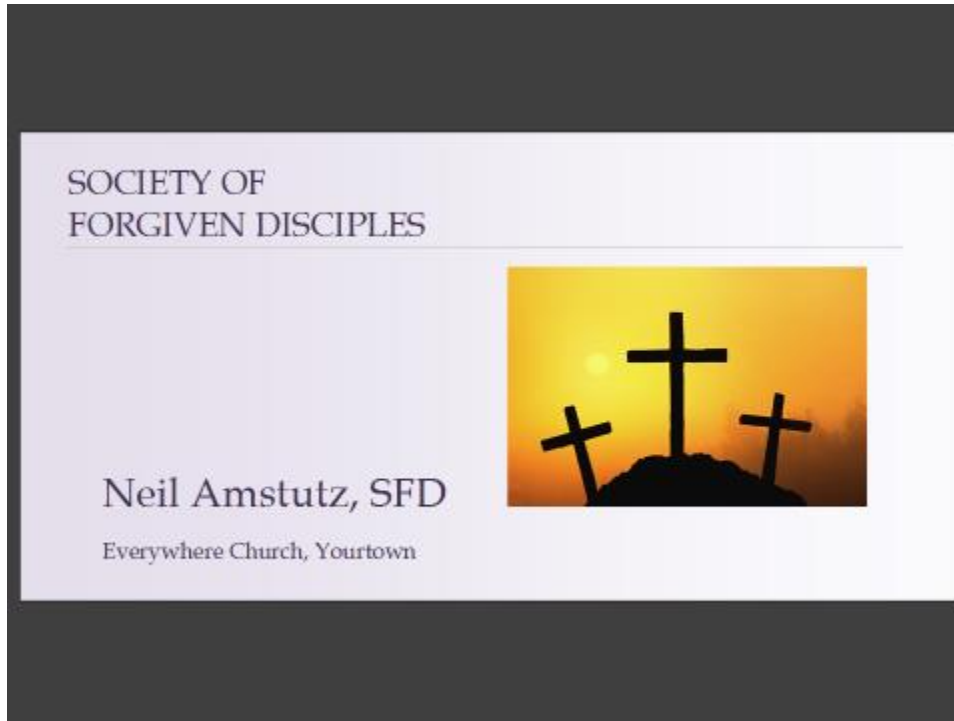
A. In the end I hope this is the message that all of us can hear

1. This story of Jesus & his society of failed disciples causes us to confess our own failures as disciples.
2. So have you ever ...
 - a) Fallen asleep when you were asked to stay alert and pray?
 - b) Reacted w/ violence when following Jesus might threaten you personally?
 - c) Abandoned Jesus when the going got tough?
 - d) Run away naked and ashamed?

B. The naked young man at the end may be telling us, "I've been there, too, and he still took me back!"

C. My friends, there's more than one way to introduce yourself as SFD

1. How about trying this card on for size?



2. ... instead of “Society of Failed Disciples” → “Society of Forgiven Disciples”
3. The story we’re following in Lent doesn’t end with failed disciples. It ends with forgiven disciples!
4. Thanks be to God!