

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1 – 19:42

Sermon Good Friday 2022

Jesus Paves the Way for Us

Today we reflect on the passion narrative. The struggle Jesus has with the powers that oppose God. Both the spiritual powers that work behind the scenes, as well as, the empire's powers, that are front and center, pushing back against the kingdom of God movement.

Today we reflect on Peter's struggle to follow Jesus as Peter faces these powers.

Today we reflect on our struggles to follow Jesus as we face these powers.

Now, we are no strangers to this concept we call struggle. There are things in our lives that we struggle to follow through on. There are things that happen to us that we struggle to deal with.

For example, investing in an exercise program to get healthy (**Image**). A few years ago, I hated feeling out of shape all the time. So, I started an exercise program. For a whole year I dedicated time and energy to this program. Then the pandemic hit, and I struggled mentally. So, I gave up on the program and gained back all the weight I had worked so hard to lose.

It is hard to stick with an exercise program long term. Fortunately, I reached that rock bottom again, and worked myself back to where I am today. There are things we struggle to follow through on. There are things we struggle to deal with.

For Peter, he dedicates three years of his life to follow Jesus. Peter is invested. And yet, the last twelve hours have been difficult for Peter. First, when Jesus approaches Peter to wash his feet, he resists. Second, when Jesus is arrested Peter chooses to act out violently, which is in opposition to what Jesus' movement is all about. Third, Peter denies that he knows Jesus on three different occasions. Peter struggles to stay dedicated to Jesus and his movement. Especially, as Peter faces the powers that resist God.

For us, we dedicate much of our lives to follow Jesus. We come to church and/or worship at home (**Image**). We read our bibles. We pray. We give of our time, talents, and money for the ministries of the church. We show hospitality to the marginalized, the rejected, in our community. And yet, when we find ourselves standing face to face with the powers that resist God, we struggle to stay dedicated.

Whether it is being afraid and anxious that people will reject us if we live out our faith. Or facing commitments that pull us away from God (**Image**). Whether it is our personal

suffering making it harder for us to find the hope we need to preach the gospel in this broken world. Or our inner struggle with the sinfulness within us that sometimes impacts what we say and do. There are many struggles we wrestle with when trying to follow Jesus. Especially when we are standing face to face with the powers that oppose God.

We can relate to Peter.

For Jesus, the arrest, the brutal abuse he faces during his trial, and the excruciating pain that comes with suffering from the horrific inhumane act of crucifixion, doesn't stop Jesus from challenging the powers that oppose God. Jesus walks the path he needs to walk. Why?

Because Jesus once and for all wants to show us that no power will stop God from creating, forgiving, healing, and redeeming life.

And even though we stand at the foot of the cross this afternoon (**Image**), confused at what just happened. Wondering if those powers that oppose God have won. Wondering if we will ever be able to overcome our struggles.

On Easter morning we will see that Jesus' arrest, suffering, and death means something profound. We will see that Jesus overcomes death on the cross. We will see that the powers that resist God will not stop Jesus from doing what Jesus has come to do. We will see that the powers that resist God will not stop us from following Jesus.

On Easter morning Mary will see the risen Christ. The disciples will see the risen Christ. Peter will be forgiven, and go on to do amazing things despite standing face to face with these opposing forces.

On Easter morning we will see the risen Christ (**Image**). The risen Christ who gives us hope that we can overcome any struggle we face. The risen Christ who gives us strength to stand face to face with the powers that resist God. The risen Christ that empowers us to follow Jesus even when these powers that resist God seem to be pushing back. The risen Christ that leads us from the cross of suffering and death to the tomb of new life.

Jesus once and for all shows us that no power will stop God from creating, forgiving, healing, and redeeming life.

Let us pray, thank you God for Jesus who paves the way for us to follow. Who overcomes the powers that resist you, giving us hope, that with your spirit, we can do the same. **Amen.**