**Pastor Tim’s Easter Sunrise Message 3-31-2024
Reflections of a Broken Disciple**

Hi. My name is Simon. Although Jesus also renamed me Peter. So, either would be fine.

I would like to share a story about me and about my Lord that happened, wow, it would be 20 years ago now. I remember these events like they were yesterday. Maybe you remember certain things in the same way.

So, here’s what happened. We celebrated the Passover together, Jesus and the other disciples and I. But something was very different. Jesus spoke about the new covenant that He was in the process of creating. He spoke of His body and His blood when He blessed the bread and the wine that night.

None of us knew what was around the corner. Well, none of us but Him. Yes, He had told us a few times what was about to happen. But we just didn’t have ears to hear.

Well, that night a little later Jesus had James and John and I pray with Him, while He prayed in the Garden. And in my weariness, you know what I did? I fell asleep.

But things got far worse. Jesus would be arrested. I was scared and angry. I took my sword and swung it at the soldier. He turned his head and I sliced off his ear. And then I ran. Boy did I run. And I’m not normally very good at sprinting.

And wouldn’t you know, I found out later that Jesus healed this man. Even in the process of His arrest, He demonstrated His power and love by restoring this man.

Things kept getting worse for me though. Like Jesus had told me, I denied Him 3 times that night. What a coward I was. Afraid of a little girl and trying to protect myself.

After these denials, Jesus looked at me with His loving and compassionate eyes and I just couldn’t hold it back anymore. I found an alley in Jerusalem and wept until I couldn’t weep any more.

I, whom the Lord called to be a Rock in His church, was nothing but a coward and a betrayer.

Friday and Saturday seemed to last forever, but early Sunday morning everything began to accelerate. Some of the women came to us and told us that the tomb was empty and they had seen Jesus alive.

John and I took off in a sprint to the tomb. Youthful John passed me on the way, but when we got there, I went right in. I saw the grave cloths, but Jesus was not there.

I went for a long walk that day. I was alone and trying to process my thoughts. My head was spinning. If Jesus was alive, how could I ever look Him in the face again?

But suddenly, I was not alone. I turned and Jesus was walking towards me. I was at a loss for words, which is something coming from me. But Jesus just looked into my eyes and smiled. He told me that He loved me and will always love me. And then He said, I will see you soon. Before I could say anything, He was gone.

He was seen later that day by Cleopas and his friend on their way to Emmaus. And then, that evening, he appeared to the 10 of us and some of his female followers. Only Thomas was not with us.

Jesus appeared to me several other times before He returned to Heaven. On one of those occasions, He asked me 3 times if I loved Him. I told Him that I did and He told me to feed the lambs. He was telling me that I was to lead others in His church. I knew that not only had Jesus forgiven me, but He also called me to be a leader in His church.

Jesus also told me that one day I would suffer and die for my commitment to Him. If it would bring God glory and have others come to know and love Jesus through my sufferings, so be it. It is all worth it for the privilege of following the One who gave me eternal life.

And until that day comes when I am led away by those who oppose the gospel, I am choosing to live every day offering my life to share the good news of Jesus.

And so, I share with you today. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is risen. Follow Him. Submit to Him. Be willing to suffer for Him. He is our humanity’s only hope and the One savior of the world.

And know that if you follow Him, He promises to be with you every day until the end of the age. Amen.