

Note: The following message will be shared by Reverend Caleb Kim this Sunday, October 4, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. for the congregation of St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls, and our community on Zoom.

Title: God's Mercy and Our Failures (The Miracle of Mercy Series 2)

Last Sunday, we began a new sermon series titled The Miracle of Mercy. Today, we will explore our second message, focusing on the relationship between God's mercy and our human failures. Once again, every single one of us needs God's mercy because we are imperfect and experience many faults in our lives.

Throughout today's Gospel reading, we learn about Peter—one of Jesus' primary disciples—who failed miserably on the night Jesus was arrested, right before He was crucified on the cross the following day. Peter had boldly vowed to follow Jesus no matter what it cost. He kept telling Jesus that he would never deny Him, even if everyone else abandoned Him. However, Peter could not keep that promise for even a single day. He ended up denying Jesus three times that very night. At one point, due to overwhelming fear, he even cursed and swore in front of bystanders, claiming he had never even known Jesus.

Because of his painful betrayal, we might think Peter was finished—no longer fit to be used in God's ministry. However, despite his enormous failure, the resurrected Jesus later showed Peter overwhelming mercy. Jesus visited Peter first and shared a meal with him and the other disciples on the beach. Because of Jesus' unchanging love, Peter was fully restored—becoming not only a grateful disciple, but also a courageous apostle of God.

This morning, as followers of Christ and as the church of Christ, I want us to reflect on God's steadfast mercy by observing both Peter's failures and our own. Our prayer is that we will experience God's grace anew in our journey of faith, growing to become a more loving people and a more compassionate church.

First of all, Peter grieved deeply over his failure and shortcomings. As soon as he denied his identity as Jesus' disciple for the third time, a rooster crowed in the morning air. That sound immediately brought back the words Jesus had spoken to him earlier: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times" (Matthew 27:75). Peter had spent more than three years learning Jesus' teachings and witnessing His miracles. Yet, once again driven by fear, Peter betrayed Jesus again and again. In that single moment, he seemed to lose all his distinction as a loyal and faithful follower of Christ.

What did Peter do after he stumbled? The Gospel of Matthew describes it this way: “He went outside and wept bitterly” (Matthew 27:75). He honestly and humbly admitted his big stumble and cried out to God. This honest grief is a crucial starting point for overcoming failure in life.

When we think of the great figures in the Bible, we often assume they were always fully qualified, perfectly holy, and ready to be used as God’s instruments. But when we look closely at their life stories, we discover that every one of them made mistakes and experienced shortcomings—just like we do.

In looking at the faith journeys of prominent biblical leaders, I have noticed that whenever they encountered the holiness of God, they went through a season of grieving over their sins. Think of King David’s repentance for a moment. When David sinned, the Prophet Nathan confronted him. David didn’t make excuses; he admitted his failure and desperately cried out for God’s mercy. He poured out his heart because he knew he had done evil, yet he trusted that God would not despise a broken heart. Peter’s response before our merciful God was very similar to David’s. I can’t help but think that for the rest of his life, every time Peter heard a rooster crow, he was reminded not just of his failure, but of God’s extraordinary grace over his shortcomings.

Pastor Rick Warren points out that when people fail, they usually choose one of three paths. The first option is to ignore or minimize the failure... The second choice is to beat ourselves continuously... The third method is to bring failures to Jesus... When he repented and mourned his misconduct, God immensely blessed him and used him powerfully for Kingdom ministry.

Friends, we all serve the very same God as Peter served. The Lord says to each of us today: “Come to Me as you are, and cast yourself upon My mercy.” All of us have things in our lives that trigger painful memories of past mistakes. We may not be able to erase those recollections completely, but through Christ, we can strip them of their power to harm us. Our enemy, Satan, knows our triggers well and will try to attack us by bringing up our past again and again. But our Lord Jesus cleanses us whenever we come to Him with open and repentant hearts. On the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sins and saved us from the ultimate consequences of our failures. When we put our trust in Him, He restores our true identity as beloved children of God.

Now we face a daily choice: Will we keep reminding ourselves of our failures, or will we focus on God’s incredible mercy for us? Let us approach God’s throne of grace with confidence (Hebrews 4:16) and receive His love anew, while confessing our sins and

remembering—through the guidance of the Holy Spirit—who we truly are in Christ. That is the essential first step in overcoming failure through our Triune Lord.

Secondly, Jesus continued to believe in Peter and showed him ongoing mercy when Peter was discouraged and filled with despair. Interestingly, Jesus was not surprised by Peter's mistake.

As we heard in our Gospel text, Jesus knew in advance what Peter was going to do. In Luke chapter 22, verses 31 and 32, Jesus says to him: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail." Jesus asked God specifically to grant Peter the strength and courage to stand back up after he stumbled.

Proverbs 24:16 tells us, "For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes." In Scripture, the number seven often represents a complete cycle or period. Just as our lives move through seven-day weekly cycles, "failing seven times" can describe persistent, recurring struggles we face due to our human weakness.

Does this sound familiar? Have we ever made a firm decision that we would never repeat a mistake, only to find ourselves falling right back into it? Friends, are we tired of struggling with the same habits, hurts, or hang-ups that have weighed us down for years? When we look back on our walk with God, we often find that we trip over the exact same areas of shortcomings time and again. It is no coincidence that the most frequent command in Scripture—appearing over 365 times—is "Do not fear" or "Do not be anxious." God knows our ongoing struggles. Please understand this. I am not offering an excuse for sin. As God's people, we are all called to actively resist temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit. What I am saying is that even when we mess up over and over again, we must keep getting back up and returning to where God calls us to be. That is what Jesus prays for us to do.

That divine resilience is the mark of a righteous person. A genuine believer is not someone who never fails or makes mistakes; a genuine believer is someone who, by God's grace, stands back up every single time they fall. When we fail, God does not eliminate us from His ministry or say, "I told you so." Instead, He offers us encouraging words from Scripture and comfort through His people. That is the mercy of God. He believes in us and empowers us to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1). Through His love, we can be set free from every spiritual bondage holding us back and keep moving forward no matter the challenges we face today or in the future.

Thirdly, Jesus uses our failures to build His Church. In the second half of Luke 22:32, Jesus tells Peter, “And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Jesus invited Peter to take his redeemed shortcomings and use them to encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ—the family of God, the Church.

In chapter 21 of the Gospel of John, we find that loving conversation between Jesus and Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. To recall this account, Peter and the other disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing. In the morning, Jesus called out from the shore, telling them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. When they obeyed, they gathered such a large catch of fish that their net began to tear. Jesus then invited them to sit down for a warm breakfast He had personally prepared for them on the beach.

During that meal, Jesus asked Peter the same question three times: “Do you love me?” Why three times? Because Peter had denied Him three times. By asking three times, Jesus gently helped Peter process his past and realize just how deeply he was loved and forgiven. Jesus did not just restore Peter’s identity; He reaffirmed his original calling. Earlier in Jesus’ ministry, when Peter declared, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus responded: “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church.” In Greek, the name Peter means a small stone or rock. The Rock—spiritually speaking that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior who rescues us from all our failures—is the true foundation of the Church.

Returning to that beach conversation in John 21, each time Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you”, Jesus recommissioned him: “Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep.” Let us pause and think about that! Jesus was telling Peter that though he was weak in himself, he would become a faithful shepherd for God’s people. Humanly speaking, if someone betrayed us repeatedly, we might remove them from leadership and take away their responsibilities. But Jesus does the opposite: He not only restores Peter as a disciple, but entrusts him with the spiritual care of His flock. Jesus gave Peter the confidence and courage to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.

And remember what happened on the Day of Pentecost, just fifty days after Jesus’ death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter stood up before a vast crowd in Jerusalem and boldly proclaimed the Gospel. That day, about three thousand people repented, believed, and were baptized—making the birth of the New Testament Church!

...Almost everyone worshipping here in our sanctuary today—and those joining us online—carries hidden burdens, failures, shortcomings, or regrets. Many people around us feel like their lives are falling apart when they dwell on those painful memories. However, God wants us to be open about our weaknesses so we can minister to others effectively. The most powerful response we can offer a hurting soul is often not a complex theological explanation, but four simple words: "I have been there." God calls us to share how His mercy was shown to us in our lowest moments.

Let us consider the famous promise in Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." Do we notice what this verse does not say? It does not state that "all things are good." Many things in this fallen world are evil and broken. Rather, Scripture promises that in all things, God is actively working to bring about good. He takes our mistakes, our struggles, and our pains, weaving them together to accomplish His holy purposes in our lives. God is continuously working for the benefit of all of us who love Him in our journey of faith.

As a congregation, we experienced God's rich blessing upon a wonderful project when we replaced our church's front and side entry doors back in 2018 and 2019, I believe. Our old doors were worn out, stiff, and difficult to open, particularly during cold winter months. Through your generous gifts, dedicated efforts, and faithful prayers, God abundantly blessed our "New Door" undertaking. That project was about more than just changing our physical appearance—of course, the new entrance doors are bright from the outside and convenient to access—it was about defining our spiritual heart as an inclusive, welcoming faith community.

Have you ever noticed the difference between residential doors and church entrance doors? Most front doors on private homes open inward. But our sanctuary doors open outward toward the steps, the sidewalk, and the street. Why do they publicly open outward? Because our church doors are designed to reach out to our neighborhood, serving as a merciful bridge between God and our community.

Today, as we gather around the Communion table, God reminds us of our sacred identity and mission. Our church is made up of diverse people from different walks of life—people, including myself, who have tripped, fallen, and experienced failures and shortcomings. Apart from God's grace and love, our church would be incomplete, no matter how hard we try to build it on our own.

As we receive the bread and the cup today—both here in the sanctuary and those of us joining online—remembering what Jesus has done for us and our loved ones on the

cross, we are renewed in our mission statement: “To communicate faith, hope and love by supporting and serving our congregation and local community, and communicating our excitement in praising and worshiping God with our friends and neighbours.”

What failures or shortcomings in our lives is God calling us to surrender this morning? How might He want to use our restored stories to glorify His name, serve His people, and build His Church?

Through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may we—like the Apostle Peter—continually attempt great things for God and expect great things from God. Amen.

*In this sermon, thoughts and material were adapted from Rick Warren’s Series “The Miracle of Mercy” and various messages on John 21:10-19 and Luke 22:14-34.