

## Investing In People

Isaiah 25:6-9  
Mark 16:1-8

10:00am Easter April 1, 2018  
Faith Community

The Call to Worship had just been pronounced, signifying the start of the Easter service. The choir began its distinguishedly rhythmic processional, singing "Up from the Grave He Arose" as they marched in perfect step down the center aisle to the front of the brightly decorated sanctuary.

The last lady in line wore brand new shoes with very slender heels. Without a thought for her fancy footwear, she marched toward the grating that covered the hot air vent in the middle of the center aisle. Suddenly the heel of one shoe sank into a hole in the register grate. Not wanting to hold up the processional, without missing a step, she slipped her foot out of her shoe and continued marching down the aisle, a bit hobbled but distinguished nonetheless.

The processional continued to move with clock-like precision. One of the men following her spotted the shoe and, without losing a step himself, reached down and pulled it up; but the entire grate came with it! Surprised, but still singing and marching, the man kept right on going down the aisle, holding in his hand the shoe along with its corresponding hardware. Everything still moved like clockwork.

Still in tune and still in step, the next man in line suddenly disappeared from sight. The service took on a special meaning that Sunday, for just as the choir ended with a majestic, "Alleluia! Christ arose!" a voice was heard from under the sanctuary shouting, "I hope all of you are out of the way 'cause I'm coming up!"

The little girl closest to the aisle shouted down the register, "Come on, Jesus! We'll stay out of the way."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever felt like that last guy? Have you ever hoped that there's a special place in heaven reserved for the unintended klutzes of the world? Maybe there's even room for well-meaning sad sacks, you know, those people who mean well but go from one train wreck to another.

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<sup>1</sup>Bob Hager, SermonCentral.com, as cited in PreachingNow, Vol. 8, No. 14, April 7, 2009

Show business gets a lot of mileage from folks like this. Whether it's Lucille Ball, Kelsey Grammar, or even British television's gift to the world, Mr. Bean, we love to watch these people. After awhile we realize we're not laughing at them as much as we're laughing with them, and in the process feel that maybe we're not so bad after all.

With that in mind, join me in giving thanks for Peter, in some ways the most loveable and most human of all the disciples. If Curly was the universal favorite of the Three Stooges, Peter surely took first place among the disciples, at least in part for similar reasons.

The more Jesus shared his mission of hope and new life, the more Peter's energy amped up. He wanted to count, he wanted to make a difference, but there always seemed to be an open vent to fall into.

He'd make a slam dunk proclamation of Jesus' identity and get a new name in the process. Jesus changed it from Simon to Peter, Petros, a 'rock' right there in front of the whole team, but then he blew it all by letting his enthusiasm have its own way.

While the other guys were afraid to give it a try, he walked on water just like Jesus, but ended up sinking fast and had to be rescued, dried off, and put back together.

For all his bravado he never forgot that dark night when he pretended he didn't even know Jesus. And when they came to arrest him, Peter whipped out his sword only to be scolded for what he thought was bravery.

But he was a disciple. And disciples mess up. They even look silly sometimes. In the process, however, they become more like Jesus.

Friends, here's my first point: When Jesus chooses disciples, he doesn't look for perfection. Instead, he wants very ordinary people who are willing to be challenged, broken, and recreated so that they come to look more like him. Peter fit the bill just fine, thank you very much. He was a work in progress, but that's what disciples are.

My second point is that when Jesus chooses disciples, he wants people who are not afraid to take a risk every now and then, even when there's a price to be paid.

"On June 4, 1783, at the market square of a French village, a smoky bonfire on a raised platform was fed by wet

straw and old wool rags. Tethered above, straining its lines, was a huge taffeta bag thirty-three feet in diameter. In the presence of a cheering crowd the balloon was set free to rise majestically into the noon sky. Six thousand feet into the air it went- the first public ascent of a balloon in the western world, the first step in the history of human flight. It came to earth several miles away in a field, where it was promptly attacked by pitchfork-waving people and torn to pieces as an instrument of evil.”<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus chooses disciples, he wants people who are not afraid to take a risk every now and then.

Peter was all over that, and in the process people would complain about him. He would be criticized. He would be stretched in ways he never even dreamed could happen. But:

**Disciples are people who are becoming more like Jesus in their character and emotional and spiritual development.**

My third point is that when Jesus chooses disciples, he’s looking for people who are not afraid to fail.

Peter was a master at failure. And Jesus loved him every step of the way. And each time he embarrassed himself, when he fell on his face, when he blundered his way to humiliation, another piece of unhealthy pride, arrogance, and attitude got chipped away.

And ultimately, friends, maybe that’s why the angel said to the women that day.

***He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’*** (Mark 16:7)

Of all the disciples, Peter needed to hear it most.

And maybe this is where it all hits home for us.

Back then it was,

***Go, tell his disciples and Peter....***

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<sup>2</sup> Craig Groeschel, It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2008) p. 100.

Maybe now it's,

Go and tell Jim.  
Go and tell Susan.  
Go and tell Val.  
Go and tell Sherry.

Tell them Jesus is alive, and he's looking for them.

When Jesus chooses disciples, he doesn't look for perfection. Instead, he wants very ordinary people who are willing to be challenged, broken, and recreated so that they look more like him.

When Jesus chooses disciples, he wants people who are not afraid to take a risk every now and then, even when there's a price to be paid.

When Jesus chooses disciples, he's looking for people who are not afraid to fail.

Part of a Franciscan benediction:

**May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.**

**May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and the exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.**

**May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, and starvation, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.**

**And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> As cited in Groeschel, p. 186.