

God Allows U-Turns

Easter o April 3 & 4, 2010

Drama, Intro:

Our theme for this service is that God allows U-turns. That's good, because it's human nature to head the wrong way in life. Some of the mistakes people make are pretty funny - not to the people who make them, but to those who see the results of these bad turns. **Pictures here.**

There is *a cost* to mistakes like these. The person who wrecks his car *has to buy another one* or might even go to jail. But some mistakes can't be corrected with *money* or *time*. We *take wrong turns* not only in our cars, but also with our *lives*. We end up *alienating people* and *wrecking relationships*.

I won't show you a picture of Tiger Woods, you've seen too many in the news recently. His familiar face reminds us of *the consequences of our choices*. Even the people who seem perfect have secret flaws that don't stay hidden forever. Every mask eventually comes off. **Is 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...** When the sign says, *One Way*, we stubbornly go the other. *What I've been saying is that...*

1. People take wrong turns.

There's an old hymn that includes the admission that *we are prone to wander*. Whenever I sing that, I think *how true!* We tend to get lost in life and we're too proud to ask for help and follow directions.

I've been teaching from 1 Peter in our current series of messages. So I figured I'd take a look at Peter's experience of Christ's resurrection that we celebrate on Easter. The story starts with *a very bad turn* on his part.

oPeter made a terrible mistake.

He actually made quite a few. Like us, he was known for that. We'll zero in on what Peter did *after Christ's arrest*. **Luke 22:54 Seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.** Okay, *we've got a problem already!* It's good to

follow, but don't *follow at a distance*. How familiar that sounds. **55 But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.**

Peter, what are you doing there? Who are you hanging with? Who do you identify with? **56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." 57 But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. Are you that concerned about yourself? So intimidated that you would deny knowing Jesus when asked?** **58 A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. 59 About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."** They recognized his northern accent - like a Canadian - *aye*. **60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!"** And he cursed (Mt). **Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.** All this was happening while Jesus was being tried by Caiaphas. Just as Peter denied Christ the third time, Jesus was hauled out through the courtyard to stand before the Sanhedrin. **61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."** He had been bragging to the others that he would never leave Jesus. **62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.** Some of us can relate. We know we've let Jesus down. We've denied Jesus as well, maybe not with our words, but with out actions.

oWe, also, take missteps and end up way out of bounds. Like Peter, we end up in *places we don't belong, trying to fit in where we shouldn't!* When we get that far off the straight path, we often get *stuck* with disastrous results.

I was talking with a guy who broke down into tears. *I'm afraid I'm going to lose my business, my house and my marriage.* His response was reasonable - his life really is imploding. And the evidence indicates that he is *no innocent victim*, but that he has *brought these*

consequences upon himself. Maybe the path you've been on is not such an obvious dead-end. But most of us can admit that we *take enough wrong turns to get lost in life*. The paths *don't look like dead ends* - they promise pleasure, but lead down. They're *mismarked*. When we do fail, we need forgiveness and restoration.

R - People take wrong turns. Peter did and so do we. Fortunately...

2. God allows U-turns. *He's the God of second chances.*

If Jesus had stayed dead, that would have been the last time Peter saw him. Of the 12 disciples, only John was present at the crucifixion. Peter would have had to *live with his regret, never being forgiven and restored*. But Peter got another chance because of the resurrection. There would be *no second chance for anyone if Jesus hadn't risen from the grave*.

The last chapter in John tells us that Peter had gone back to his former way of life, fishing, but Jesus approached him with the challenge to *re-enter a relationship* and be in the business of caring for Christ's people.

oPeter was challenged to live life Christ's way. I'll pick up the reading just after they finished fish tacos on the beach. This passage is known as Peter's re-commissioning. **Jn 21:15** *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"* What is he talking about? We can't see what Jesus was gesturing toward, but we can picture what was surrounding them when we read this in context. It says Peter had just pulled his boat up on the beach. So as Jesus waved his hand, he passed by Peter's boat and fishing equipment - all the tools of the trade. These were the trappings of his former life. The boat was nice, better than his neighbors - he got the V-8 model and of course he had his new SUV to tow it, the nice rods and reels, the cooler of cold brews. Jesus asked, *where am I on*

the heierarchy of what is important to you? Which life do you want to live - the old way or the new way? When Jesus originally called Peter, he said, *"Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men."* It's all about people now, not just running your business and making money. **"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."** Jesus said, **"Feed my lambs."** 16 Again Jesus said, **"Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"** He answered, **"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."** Jesus said, **"Take care of my sheep."** 17 The third time he said to him, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, **"Do you love me?"** This time Jesus used a different word for love, the one Peter had been using.

He said, **"Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."** Jesus said, **"Feed my sheep. ...** Then down in 19 he seals the deal: **Then he said to him, "Follow me!"**

These three questions and the three-fold commission contrast with Peter's three denials. Jesus restored Peter: *You can serve me again. Follow in my footsteps. Show your love for me by caring for people. Do my work.* Peter was challenged to rededicate his life to Christ and to Christ's mission.

oWe, also, are invited back into the family of God.

No matter how clearly you have wrecked your life, there is forgiveness available because *Jesus didn't stay dead*, but rose to give you another chance. He bore your sin and empowers you to experience similar victory. He's giving you a chance to say to him, *I do love you, and I will be about your business!* Jesus calls us to care about what he cares about, to do his will. *To love God and love others.*

Living life Christ's way, according to his values, may not be the way you've been headed recently. You may need to make a U-turn. That starts with the admission that you took the wrong road and ended up lost. **Prodigal son.**

You might be thinking, *what will I experience if I come back?* Let me cast a vision of what you will see back here. I'll do so using a word-picture: people are thinking of health plans these days, let me share *Dayspring's health plan.*

Just as a plan for achieving *health in your physical body* is *simple*, so is the plan for achieving *health in the body of Christ*. Now, when I say *simple*, I don't mean *easy*. What is *uncomplicated* may be *difficult*. For instance, if you're aiming at *physical* health, you probably already know *the principles to practice: Choose nutritious, natural foods and don't consume more calories than you burn*. That's simple, but it's not easy.

Health in the body of Christ can be spelled out just as simply, but it too can be hard. It's **as simple as ABC**.

oThe A of our health plan is to...

Align all activities toward the goal. Ministries and events aren't haphazard, but aligned toward a common goal. What goal? *Do it all for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31)*.

oThe B of our health plan is to...

Believe that God is alive and active. He's *ready and willing and able*. We can have faith that he *will* do something significant in our midst. *It will be according to your faith (Mt 9:29)*. Since he's alive, let's pray and expect answers!

oThe C of our health plan is to challenge each person to...

Commit to take the next step toward Christ. No attender left behind! We're going to challenge you to get right with God, get in a group, and grow in your faith.

That's what our church needs to do. It won't be easy, but it is simple. What do you need to do? What's your health plan? Consider what this vision says to you as an individual. Think of it:

Align all that you are and all that you do toward honoring God. Don't let anything *derail or distract* you. *Focus your aim*.

Believe that God is real and that he can and will take you to a new place. Don't let next year be the same as last. And...

Commit yourself to take the next step toward Christ, whatever that is. What is it for you? Getting in regular fellowship? *I'll see you next weekend!* Joining a growth group? *Sign up today*. Men's support group? Women's Bible Study? Trust in Christ and come back to God through him.

Christ's resurrection gives you that chance. He's here right now and he wants to come into your life and grant you forgiveness. Let me lead you in a **Prayer** that you can make your own as you take your next step today.

Rom 10:9 - If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.