

The Sting of Remorse & the Power of Hope

If you have a bible, turn with me to the end of [Matthew 26](#). As you do that, I've got a [question for you](#). And fair warning: it's sort of a complex one. Here's the question: is *shame* a bad thing? Is *shame* a *bad* thing, or a *good* thing? Any guesses? Okay, I set you up for failure with that one. The truth is that it's sort of a trick question. Because I think the *answer* to that question largely depends on how we *define* the word shame, and *who* we're asking the question *to*. I think at least a lot of people today would say that shame is nearly always a *bad* thing. That it's sort of this relic of the past, and that we've moved past the need for it. And therefore, that any amount of "shame" someone feels is self-inflicted and is a sign of some type of religious or moral trauma that they need to just let go of.

But here's the problem with that answer. In my experience, [a lot of those same people](#) would say confidently that certain people in our world *should* feel *bad* about certain behaviors. [They would say that politicians in our country should feel bad about their obsession with power, and their misuse of power to harm others. They would say that CEOs in our country should feel bad about making approximately 400 times more than their average employee does. They would say that men in our country should feel bad about how they treat, mistreat, and denigrate women.](#) So people do believe, at least at *some* level, that something *like* shame can be an appropriate and *correct* response to wrongdoing—they just may or may not use that *word* to describe it.

So we find ourselves in [a bit of a pickle](#). We tend *not* to like the idea of shame (and especially the *experience* of it). But at the same time, it *does* seem like we need a category for a person feeling *remorse* or *regret* over decisions that negatively impact others. So we're right back to our question: is shame a *bad* thing or a *good* thing? I would submit to you that [the Scriptures actually give](#) us a refreshingly *nuanced* answer to that question. **Shame**—or, if we wanted to use a less loaded term, sorrow or **remorse**—**can be a good thing or a bad thing; it largely depends on what you do with it.** To me, one of the clearest places to see this tension teased out is in [2 Corinthians 7:10](#), where Paul says this:

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.¹

So according to Paul, [there are two different types of sorrow](#), or remorse. One kind that is *good*: that brings "repentance to salvation and leaves no regret." And another kind that

¹ v. 10

is *bad*: that leads to “death.” In other words, **whether remorse is good or bad depends largely on what you do with it**. That’s *Paul’s* answer to the question. But that’s still fairly *conceptual*. The question I’m particularly interested in is what do those two different types of remorse *look like* out in the wild? How do we distinguish, in everyday life, between the first kind of remorse, and the second? And *that*, I believe, is an answer we find in our passage for this morning.

In today’s text, we are going to get an up-close view at the *remorse* of two different characters in the storyline of Matthew’s gospel: *Judas*, and *Peter*. They’re both coming down off of significant *failures* in their life: *Judas* has just betrayed Jesus over to the authorities who will have him killed. And in *today’s* passage, *Peter* is going to deny even *knowing* Jesus, despite spending the better part of the last three years as one of his closest disciples. *Both* characters in the story fail in significant ways; and we’re going to see *both* of them come to a place of *remorse* over those failures. But **what they do with their respective remorse could not be more different from one another**.

So **let’s dive in** and see what we can learn together. We’re going to be in **chapter 26**, starting in **v. 69**. Remember, Jesus has just been taken into custody by the authorities. He’s now going through a sham trial where the chief priests are doing anything they can to find a charge that will stick, in order to have him executed. At which point Matthew pans the camera over to what *Peter* is up to while all of that happens. Follow along with me, starting in v. 69:

[69] Now *Peter* was sitting out in the courtyard, and a **servant girl** came to him. **“You also were with Jesus of Galilee,”** she said. [70] But he **denied** it before them all. **“I don’t know what you’re talking about,”** he said. (Remember—Jesus has just been arrested and carted off, so Peter likely fears that he’s been *outed* publicly as one of Jesus’ associates, which he knows may not go well for him. So he denies it). [71] Then he went out to the **gateway**, where **another** servant girl saw him and said to the people **there**, **“This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”** [72] He denied it **again**, with an oath: **“I don’t know the man!”**

This time Peter says it even more emphatically. It says he declares an *oath* (an ancient way of saying “I swear I don’t know this person named Jesus you’re talking about.”) Then, v. 73:

[73] After a little while, those standing there went **up** to Peter and **said**, **“Surely you are one of them** (meaning, “one of Jesus’ *disciples*); **your accent gives you away.”** [74] Then he began to call down **curses**, and he **swore** to them, **“I don’t know the man!”**

“Calling down curses” was another way of doubling (or tripling) down on what you were saying—it was even *stronger* than an oath. It was basically saying “may I be condemned and cut off from God and my people if I’m lying about this.” Peter is doing everything he can to distance himself from Jesus—likely out of *fear* for what will happen to him if he doesn’t. He’s telling anyone who will listen that he has no idea who Jesus is and that he has nothing to do with Jesus. And once *that* happens, last part of v. 74:

Immediately a rooster crowed. [75] Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter hears the rooster crow and **realizes immediately that Jesus was *right***: Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before the morning came. And upon realizing all of that, it says that Peter went out and “wept bitterly.” That word *wept* describes when someone is basically sobbing loudly and uncontrollably. The word *bitterly* could be translated “violently.” A *deep, profound, violent, remorse* comes over Peter. He cannot believe that despite his *zeal*, despite his loyalty and devotion and *love* for Jesus—despite every effort he’s made to the *contrary*, he has now done the thing he swore he would *never* do: he has *failed* and *abandoned* Jesus.

I’m not sure if you’ve ever been in a place like that before, but I would imagine that at least a *lot* of us have. In this place where, despite every effort to the contrary, every bit of good intention, despite everything you believe yourself to be and be capable of, you still manage to *fail* in a profound way. You *do* the thing you told yourself and others you’d absolutely never do. You *gossip* about one of your closest friends and it makes its way back to them. You get caught in a lie, and there’s simply no way to explain it away. You fail a family member or a close friend. You give into porn, *again*. Whatever it is: have you ever had that kind of moment? The moment where you’re just so disappointed in yourself—*embarrassed*, even, at what you’ve just done. It is truly a terrible place to be. I think that’s Peter in this moment. I think that’s the type of realization, the type of experience he’s having. And the only thing he knows to do in response is to *weep*.

We’re going to come back to that in a moment. But **for now**, Matthew pans the camera over to *another* scene. Look with me at Chapter 27, v. 1:

[1] Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. [2] So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor [we’ll talk in detail about him next week. Verse 3...]. [3] When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was

condemned, **he** was **seized with remorse** (notice that language: **seized with remorse**,) and **returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.** [4] **“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”**

So **Judas, upon seeing** Jesus taken into custody and condemned to die, has his own moment of realization. *He* realizes, at this moment, at least *some* of the gravity of betraying Jesus. We’re told in the story that he is “seized” with remorse over it. He all of a sudden feels deep *regret* over what *he’s* done. So in an effort to make it *right*, he goes back to the chief priests, who he struck the deal with in the first place. He tries to *give back* the money they gave him. He tries to tell them that the man they have in their possession is actually *innocent* and doesn’t deserve to die.

But they’re not *interested* in what Judas has to say—look at the second half of v. 4:

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” They won’t take the money back; they won’t *hear* what Judas has to say. [5] **So Judas threw the money into the temple and left** (as a sort of last-ditch attempt to make up for what he did). **Then he went away and hanged himself.** Judas is so *overwhelmed* with remorse and sorrow and grief—so overwhelmed by the fact that he can’t do *anything at all* to make things right—that he decides to take his own life. Verse 6: [6] **The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.”**

Now we’re going to circle back to Judas here in a moment. But first, I just want to point out the amount of *coldness* and *cognitive dissonance* here from the chief priests—because it’s honestly quite *baffling*. They have, in their possession, an innocent man—who they plan to ensure is executed, in order to silence him. But they very quickly determine that to deposit the money *they paid* to capture him into the temple treasury would be “against the law.” *Killing a guy? No problem. But let’s not go so far as to put dirty money into our temple treasury.* That would be too far. It’s unbelievable the amount of blindness and denial that sin can create. Verse 7:

[7] **So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners.** [8] **That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day.** [9] **Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, [10] and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.”** Matthew points out,

yet again, that all of what happens in the story is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.²

// So in this story, we have **two different people** who both feel immense *remorse* over something they did. Deep, profound *regret* over their actions. For *Peter*, it's over *denying* Jesus. For Judas, it's *betraying* Jesus. They both have moments of profound failure, and then they each have moments of *realization about* their failure. Moments where they realize the *gravity* and *magnitude* of what they've done, and come to immensely *regret* it as a result. **They each feel the sting of remorse, deep in their souls.**

But right about there is where the similarities *end* between Peter and Judas. Because Judas, who is *overcome* with sorrow and his inability to make things right, decides to take his own life. The grief, the remorse, the regret is too much for him to feel like he can go on living, *knowing* what he did. His story reaches a tragic end. Things go a little *differently* for Peter. We know from the rest of the story of the bible that Peter ends up becoming a leader within the early Church, teaching and equipping others to follow Jesus like him. His life ends up in a very different place than Judas' does.

So I think *my question*, as I read through this passage, is this: **what made the difference between Judas and Peter?** What was the difference in the type of remorse, the type of *regret*, they each experienced? What made *Judas'* story end so *tragically*, while *Peter's* didn't?

And then, **what can we learn** from all of that about how we process our *own* moments of regret, when they inevitably come? Because as we said earlier, **we all will have those moments.** Those moments of remorse and regret. Maybe they're *mild*, maybe they're *severe*—for most of us, there will be some of *both*. But we *will* have those moments. Moments where we feel the *sting* of remorse. When we do the thing we swore we'd never do. When we mess up in ways we thought we wouldn't mess up. When we shock ourselves with the level of moral failure we're capable of. So in those moments, how do we process? How do we *deal* with them? That's the question I want to find an answer to.

And **to find the answer**, I think we need to **go back to the details** of the story. **For Judas, it would seem the only solution he could think of to his grief was trying to make things right.** Trying to essentially *undo* what he did. Trying to change course: give back the money, convince the chief priests that Jesus was innocent, and see if he could undo it all. The problem was that he *couldn't* undo it. Jesus was *already* in custody, he was already being hauled away to be accused, tried, and then killed. No matter what Judas

² See Zechariah 11:12,13; Jeremiah 19:1-13; 32:6-9.

did, the plan was already in motion and he could not stop it. He realizes his error, but it's too late. He can't undo it. He can't take it back. And he can't do enough *good* to outweigh the *bad*. And when he realizes all of that, he is absolutely *despondent*—as you might expect. He's grieved at the very core of his being. The grief is so overwhelming to him, in fact, that he takes his own life.

Now, **briefly here: suicide** is honestly not something that the church has done a great job discussing. Many churches refuse to talk about it at *all*, and some of the ones that *do* talk about it, end up teaching that it is some type of unpardonable sin. Which, just for clarity, is not a biblical idea. There is zero indication in the bible that suicide is the unpardonable sin. Suicide is tragic for a *whole lot* of reasons, but an automatic ticket to hell is not one of them. So I think there are some meaningful strides we could make in how we address this particular topic within the Church. And the reality is that there are *many* reasons people end up choosing to take their own life—shame and remorse is only one of them.

In our passage today, suicide is simply Judas' *particular* response to a level of remorse and shame that won't seem to go away, no matter how hard he tries. **So maybe you're here today,** and shame has put *you* in a similar type of place. and if so, we want you to know this is a safe place to talk about it, and for us to remind you that you are loved, valued, cared about. We want you to know you're not "too much" for us to handle, and we'd love to walk through that with you. If that's you, I pray that you really *hear* the rest of this teaching, because I think there's some really helpful stuff for you to know.

Or, maybe for *you*, remorse has put you in a much *milder* place than Judas in the story, but still a fairly miserable place. The *point* is that remorse and regret can put you in some pretty dark places when you don't have an outlet for *dealing* with them. So whether you're in that place or not, **let's ask how Peter's response** was *different* than that. Why was Peter's response to *his* remorse, *different*? I think we get at least *one* clue over in **Luke 22**. There, we get *another* account of a conversation that transpires between Jesus and Peter just before Jesus' death. Take a look *there*, in **v. 31**. Jesus says to Peter:

"Simon, Simon (that's Peter's other name), Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat (I don't know what that means, but it sounds intense. Sounds like something you don't want to happen to you). But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

So **Jesus is alluding** to the fact that Peter *will falter* in his faith (otherwise, there would be no need for him to "turn back"). Peter *will* fail. But at the same time, Jesus is predicting (and really, *prophesying*) that Peter *will* in fact turn back *to* faith. That he will own his

failure, and be restored to his place among the disciples. Jesus tells Peter *all* of that is going to happen.

So **we could say the difference between Peter's remorse, and Judas' remorse, is one word: hope**. Peter has *hope*. Now, I want to be really clear on what I *mean* by that word *hope*. Because I don't really *mean* it in the way that most modern Americans use that word. If you've been around our church for very long, you've heard us talk about this distinction before. But *culturally*, when we use the word "hope," I think we really mean something more like "wish." "*I hope I get a raise soon*"—that's really a *wish*. We're really saying "*I want this to happen, but I have no guarantee or assurance that it actually will.*" "*I hope Tennessee wins the National Championship in football next year.*" That's really a *wish*. Depending on who you ask, you might say it's an outright *fantasy*.

That's generally what we mean when we use the word *hope*, right? We mean "*I want this to happen, I wish that it would, but I honestly have no clue whether it will or not.*" And it's fine for us to use that word that way in conversation...just so long as we realize that's not at all what the *bible* means when *it* uses the word *hope*. Not at all, in fact. **When the bible talks about *hope*, it doesn't mean "wish." It means *expectation*. It means *future certainty***. I think one of the clearest places to see this is in **Romans 5, v. 5**, where it says this:

*This hope will not disappoint us (it's not wishful thinking), because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*³

"This hope *will not disappoint* us." This type of hope is **not wishful thinking**—it is *certainty* in who God is and what he *will* do. **When the bible talks about God's people having *hope*, it doesn't mean we're all sitting around crossing our fingers that things will all work out in the end. It means we *know* things will work out in the end. We *know* that because we *know* the guy that runs and orchestrates history. *Hope* is a *certainty* we get to have about the future—and about *our* future—when we follow Jesus.**

So when I say Peter had *hope*, I don't mean he had some type of vague *optimism* about the future. **I mean that he had just heard, from the mouth of Jesus, that he would be restored, even after he failed.** Do you see that? He knew with *certainty* that *his failure* would not be the end of his story. He *knew* that *after* he had just done the thing he *swore* he would never do, that Jesus would be ready to forgive him and take him back. He had *certainty* that Jesus would forgive, heal, and restore...because Jesus *told him* that would

³ CSB Translation

happen. Does that make sense? Peter knew something about *failure*: **that failure is an opportunity to run towards Jesus—not to run away from him.**

// **And I know that because** of what *happens next* in the story. What happens the next time Peter sees Jesus. I want us to jump ahead in the story just a few days, *after* Jesus' resurrection (spoiler alert). But at *this* point, the disciples have all heard rumbles that maybe—just *maybe*—Jesus has come back to life. But they are equal parts confused, skeptical, and terrified at what that means (as you might expect). Many of the twelve disciples, at this point, have *not* seen Jesus for themselves yet. That's where we are in the story, when *this* happens. And I want you to pay careful attention to *Peter* in this story. This is from **John 21**, which we'll put up on the screen:

*Afterward Jesus appeared again, to his **disciples**, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened **this way**: Simon **Peter** (there's our guy), ~~Thomas (also known as Didymus)~~, Nathanael ~~from Cana in Galilee~~, the sons of Zebedee, and two **other disciples were together**. "I'm going out to **fish**," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you."*

So remember: **several of the disciples were fishermen** by trade, *before* they became disciples. So Peter very well might be thinking at this point, after Jesus is crucified, "well, I guess the following *Jesus* thing didn't work out—I suppose I'll try my hand at fishing again." So they go out in the boat to fish. Continuing in the passage:

*So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught **nothing**. Early in the morning, **Jesus** stood on the shore, but the disciples did not **realize** that it **was Jesus** (which is at least *partly* because the last time they saw Jesus, he was *dead*. Just saying, we can cut them some slack here seeing as how resurrection is a fairly rare occurrence). **He** (Jesus) *called out to them* (from the shore), "Friends, haven't you any **fish**?" "**No**," they answered. **He** said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to **haul the net** in because of the **large number** of fish.*

Okay—this is crazy, because if you know the story, this is **quite similar to what happens the very first time** the disciples *meet* Jesus.⁴ They're out fishing, not catching anything, and Jesus gives them fishing advice, and then they catch *everything*. It happens *again* here, after Jesus' resurrection. Which clues at least one of the disciples in that this isn't just *anybody* standing on the shore—it's somebody they *know*. Keep reading on screen with me:

⁴ See Luke 5.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved (which is what John calls himself—different story for a different day—but *he, John...*) *said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”* Now, **do not miss this next part: As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.**⁵ In other words, he dives in and swims to shore to greet Jesus.

Peter **doesn't even wait to pull in** the fish, doesn't help the other disciples row to shore—he literally dives into the water and Michael Phelps his way to Jesus. // Now do not overlook the *power* of this moment. The last interaction Peter had with Jesus was Jesus telling him he was going to fail: telling him that before the rooster crowed three times, he would deny knowing Jesus. Then, Peter tries to keep Jesus from being arrested by chopping off a guy's ear, to which he gets a rebuke from Jesus. And then Peter *fails*, three times, in precisely the way Jesus told him he would.

So **here's my point.** After all of *that happens*, I would almost expect Peter to be embarrassed to see Jesus again. Right? I mean, I would be! Maybe even *ashamed* to show my face. Maybe he stays on the boat and rehearses his apology speech. Maybe when they get to the shore, he stays at a distance, hiding behind the other disciples, *nervous* about what Jesus is going to do and say when he sees the guy who denied ever knowing him. But in the story, we see nothing like that from Peter. Peter *dives in the water* and *swims*, as fast as he can, to get to Jesus.

No doubt, Peter is still keenly **aware** of his failure. There's no *denying* what happened just three days ago. But **at this point in the story, the thing ringing the loudest in Peter's ears is not “you will deny me three times,” but rather Jesus' promise to restore him.** Jesus' *promise* to take him back. Peter is *banking* on the *hope* of the resurrection. Which for *him*, is the hope of *restoration*. And because of that, **Peter does not run from Jesus in his failure. He runs towards him** (well, technically, he *swims*—but you get the point). **Peter has his eyes on Jesus, not his own failure. He has his heart reinforced with hope, more than it is wrecked by his sin.** And because of that, he gets himself to Jesus as fast as he humanly can.

So **can I just ask you:** is this *our* inclination after *we* fail? When we've just done the unforgivable. When we've done the thing we swore we would never do. When we've done the thing *again* we told God we'd never do *again*. Once we've failed in any number of ways, do we think to ourselves, “I've gotta get to Jesus”? “*He'll* forgive me.” “*He'll* restore me.” “*He'll* take me back.” “*He'll* make it right, *he'll* fix what I broke—I just need to

⁵ John 21:1-7

run, swim, fly, crawl—whatever it takes—as fast as I can, to him”? Are those the thoughts that run through our minds, in those moments?

Because **if so, that’s a good sign** that we understand the true nature of our relationship with God. We grasp the *hope* that God has given us as followers of Jesus: not just wishful thinking that things will get better one day in the future, but the utmost *confidence* that things *can* be better, right now—if we can just get ourselves to Jesus. You see the hope of the resurrection, the hope of restoration after failure, wasn’t just for *Peter*—it’s for *us*, too. In our darkest moments, in the aftermath of our biggest, most spectacular failures, I want *us* to think like *Peter* thinks.

I want so badly for us to realize that Jesus is this close to us in our failure. I want so badly for us to know that this is God’s posture towards us when we royally screw up. **I can’t help but think that many of us spend more time *running from Jesus in our failure than we do swimming towards him***. And some of that is understandable; it’s *human*, right? It’s *human* to think that someone wouldn’t want to see us or interact with us after we’ve just failed them and failed others in really significant ways. It’s *natural* to be unsure of where we *stand* with someone after moments like that.

The difference is that when it comes to our relationship with Jesus, we’re not dealing with an *ordinary human relationship*. We’re dealing with something altogether different. We’re dealing with someone who *knew* about our failures well in *advance*, and chose to *deal* with them ahead of time. Who chose to make *provision* for them, to be dealt with and forgiven. We’re dealing with someone who could tell Peter that he *would fail*, and *in the same breath*, that he would be *forgiven* and *restored*. We’re dealing with someone who could tell the *disciples* that they would *all* fail him, and *also assure* them that the cross meant their failure wasn’t the end of their story.⁶

The gospel is a message tailor-made for moments of *failure*. And more than that, for *failures*. So much so, that if you don’t think you’ve *failed*—or that you will ever fail—you’re going to have a hard time truly *appreciating* the gospel message. But if you *know* you’ve failed, you’re closer to grasping its power than anyone else. As Paul put it in 1 Timothy, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*—of whom I am the *worst*.”⁷ **Paul was convinced that part of the reason God saved *him*, is so that everybody might *know for certain* that God doesn’t ever run out of grace.**⁸

⁶ See [this teaching](#) from a few weeks back.

⁷ 1 Timothy 1:15

⁸ See 1 Timothy 1:16

See, **this is what the cross** was all about. The cross *assumes* that you and I *will* fail, and that we will need some way of knowing that we can still approach God directly *after* we fail. It operates on the *assumption* that we will need a *reminder*, in those moments, of how God feels about us after, and even *while*, we fail. A *reminder* that God's affections for us have not, and *do not, change* based on our performance. He does not *need* us to prove ourselves. He does not need us to grovel with him or pay penance to him. He does not need us to pay him back for what we've done. He does not need us to prove that we've *really* changed, just so that he will accept us back into relationship. That's what the *cross* is for: **God proves his love for us—not the other way around.**

To **put it very bluntly**, **Jesus died so that Judas didn't have to.** Judas was carrying the *weight* of what he had done, and thought he had to *keep* carrying it. He could've given it to Jesus—Jesus *wanted* him to give it to him—Judas just didn't realize that. And I say that in part because some of you here this morning are carrying around the *weight* of something you've done. Some of you are carrying the shame, and the condemnation, and the *burden* of your sin. Maybe it hasn't gotten you to a place like Judas was in, or maybe it *has*—I don't know. But either way, some of you—some of *us*—have gotten very used to carrying that burden *ourselves*. **And I'm telling you this morning: there's someone who is ready to carry it for us.** In fact, he *died* to carry it for you. And I think sometimes it takes time to learn how to give those things over to him. But I'm telling you he's ready to carry it.

And I'm telling you **he's not waiting on you to figure it all out** in order for *him* to start helping. He is as *available* to you as he's ever been. He's as close to you as he's ever been. All he asks is that we turn from our sin, and turn *towards* him. As followers of Jesus, we have a word for "turning from our sin, and turning towards Jesus." We call it *repentance*. Remember 2 Corinthians 7? "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to *salvation* and *leaves no regret...*" I want us to become a community of people that run *to* Jesus in our failure, and not *away* from him. A community who realizes that all the work of restoration has already been done. A community who realizes that the only thing ever standing between Jesus and us...is *us*. *That's* what it means to follow Jesus.

So **this morning, we're going to practice** just that. We're going to go to the tables all around this room, and take the bread and the cup: the most *tangible* reminder of the cross that we participate in as God's people. The most tangible reminder of God's willingness to forgive and restore. The most vivid way to go and approach God after and in the midst of our failure. So I would ask you this morning to examine yourself—see if there's anything you need to own before God. See if there's any burden you need to hand over to him. And if so, go to the tables and figuratively lay that down before him. And then pick up the bread and the cup as a reminder of what he did in order to carry

that for you. He's already done everything that needs to be done to take you back. So go to the tables, lay down your shame, pick up your hope, and let's all be restored to Jesus.

Let's pray together.