

So my name is Ashlee Alley Crawford. And my husband Todd and I have been a part of this community for two and a half years, and I am a pastor, but I'm not a pastor who serves in the local church. I work with Methodist Church and all over Kansas and Nebraska doing some things related to helping people hear God's call and also kind of know how to respond to that.

So it's my we worship here and we're here most every Sunday. And it was a joy to be able to preach today. I don't know if you all were here last week or if through the power of the Facebook, you were able to watch the stream of the video. But Derek preached a really powerful sermon and I just would invite you all to hear it.

Things he said he'd done his research and he's a great communicator. But what was so powerful to me. Oh, yeah. Now you're getting a glimpse of Derek. I asked for him to send me pictures, and then I think somebody found some more. So you may not even know all these were submitted. And what was so powerful to me, I was sitting and thought over here last week and I just heard Jesus's words that a tree will be known by its fruit.

It will, you will know a tree by its fruit. And Derek is without him getting a big head about it. Derek is the fruit of horizons his family has worshiped here. You can see Little Derrick here. I met him as a full grown adult, but he was a kid who grew up here in this church and the message that he gave last week was one where he was inviting us, I think, to live in to our core identity of who we are as Horizons.

You see it on the walls over here behind this of rock formation, about, about and about pouring into the faith of other generations of children and youth. And Derek is the lived sermon of that lived embodiment of that sermon. And so, again, we don't want to give him a big head about it. But for this church has been around for two and for 25 years.

And this is the fruit of who this church is. And I just think that's helpful for us. Piper referred to in her prayer in the song we sang was about our identity. And I think churches have an identity, too. And I think this is a core to who we are and as the body of Christ of Horizons.

Well, I think it's helpful for us to think about identity every now and then, especially in times of transition or disruption or in times of where things are changing and we are as a community, we are changing. We are going to have a new pastor here next week. You've seen the signs, you've heard the stories. We've gotten to celebrate and say goodbye to beloved pastor Jason.

And we've been able to welcome and prepare for and for Pastor Mandy, who's coming. And so and as I was thinking about where we are as a church, I was drawn to one of my favorite stories in the Bible. So today I'm going to tell you about Mephibosheth. Just kidding. I'm just kidding. Then we even know who Mephibosheth is.

Okay, I see one. Not here. Second, Samuel. It's actually a super interesting but pretty small and insignificant story. I'm not going to

talk about Mephibosheth. I'm not going to talk about Derrick either. You can take that slide down and talk about Peter. Peter, you probably know who Peter is from the Bible. He's one of the big New Testament characters, apart from Jesus.

He's a fisherman and he is one of the early leaders in the church. He was a kind of a feisty and bold guy. And he has some really great shining moments and some difficult moments as well. And but I think that Peter's like Peter's somebody I've been studying Peter in the Bible and his writings for two and a half years just can't get away from him.

So I suppose it's pretty natural for, for me to be thinking about him in terms of who we are as a community right now. But we are in the middle of some changes. And my guess is that the for some of us here in this community, it's not the change of the church is not super significant to you, but maybe you've got some personal life changes.

Maybe you're about to become an empty nester. Or maybe your family is preparing to welcome a new member in the family. Maybe you've got a new job that's coming on the horizon, or maybe you are going through a really difficult season in your marriage or with a family member. My guess is that for all of us, we may find ourselves in the midst of an in-between in a bit of a turning point season in our life.

And it's turning points are hard and they're good. I actually was reading a book that talked about how we want to start or stop a habit, one of the best times to do it, to make it stick is in the midst of transition. Who would have thought? But turning points transition provide us an opportunity to take a step back to look at our story, to see who we are, see who we want to be, see who God's calling us to be.

And then step into that. And I think Peter's story gives us some good handles for that. Sometimes that chapter that we are living in, that you may be living in, may be really uncertain, or it may be really, really, really hard, and it may be sunshine and rainbows and roses and unicorns and all good things, but regard lists of the season that we that you may be living in, that we as a community are living.

And Peter's life gives us an ability to navigate how to how to move through the pain, move through success, move through do overs, and help us answer the question what helps us to live a life that's going to emerge in victory on the other side rather than tragedy? Well, when I started the very beginning of Peter's story, and it is I call this chapter one and it's his call story, we meet Peter very early and Jesus's ministry.

And we meet him and his brother and they're two they're two fishing buddies on the seashore. And I want to just read this scripture here. Peter isn't even known by the name Peter yet. His name is Simon. But here these words about Peter's call one day as Jesus was standing by the lake of Nazareth, the people were crowding around him and listening to the Word of God he saw at the water's edge.

Jesus saw at the water's edge. Two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. Jesus got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and he asked him to put it out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and talked the people from the boat. When he'd finished speaking, he said to Simon put out into deep water and let the nets down for a catch.

Now Peter and the other fishermen had just cleaned all their nets, but here we go, Simon answered. Master, we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I'll let down the nets. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and to help them.

And they came and they filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man. For he and all his companions were astonished at the Catch a Fish that they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid from now on you will fish for people. So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. There is a ton in this story and I've preached a whole sermon just on this text here, and I think it's very powerful. The crowds are starting to recognize who this Jesus is and that he has some authority and he's drawing a drawing, a sense of curiosity.

We have these four very experienced fishermen who have been doing this for a while. They had worked really hard, come up with nothing. And Jesus, the carpenter, tells them where to put down their nets and they do it. Jesus shows up in the middle of a frustrating night of work and invites them away into deeper waters. I could preach all those things, but the thing that I think is so powerful is there is a turning point in this story.

Peter finds himself, after seeing this miraculous showing of power here, of the overwhelming number of fish that have come here, he's he realizes the truth about himself and about God about himself. He says, get away from me. I am a sinner. And about Jesus. He recognizes you are the Lord. He calls him the Lord. In this moment, Jesus calms his fears and invites Peter to consider a different vocational path.

Why don't you fish for people rather than for fish? And what's more, he and his buddies, they all do it. This is the chapter one. This is the beginning of the story. Maybe that's where you find yourself today. Are you in a place where you are seeing the truth about yourself, the truth about God? Are you sensing God giving you an invitation?

So this is chapter one. Chapter two is a different scene for Peter. And I call this kind of the roller coaster of life. This is there's lots of ups in in Peter's life and lots of downs. The ups are really up. The downs are really down. And this is real life for us to Peter and those on here to tough to follow Jesus he does indeed follow him and he becomes a witness to many miracles feeding 5000.

He even gets to take a few steps. On what? Walking on water. And he sees healing and he's a part of the healing of people body, mind and spirit. But probably the most significant up is told in Matthew 16. And in this story, it's the middle, kind of the middle of the ministry. And Jesus is hanging out with the disciples.

And He says to them, he says, Who do people say that I am? Maybe the people in the crowd's head who'd been following who the people say that I am. And they said, Well, some think you're Elijah. Like the guy that Derek preached about last week. Elijah, who left in a cherry to fire. And you've come back.

Some people think that you're John the Baptist reincarnated. Some people think you're another prophet. And then Jesus zeroes in on Peter and he says, Who do you say that I am? If this was a movie, the camera would slow and pan on Peter's face. And Peter says, You are the Messiah, you're the anointed one. You are the one that we have been waiting for.

That is the right answer, friends. Jesus is not just a miracle worker. He's not even just a prophet or a good teacher. Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one, the one that we have been waiting for, whether we realized it or not. So Jesus responds to Peter with a blessing. Blessed are you and then a promise. And He says, You are Peter the rock and on you I am going to build my church.

Jesus gave him authority and Peter, this fallible fisherman who was prone to excitement and failure, he gave him authority to be a leader of the body of believers who would follow him. So these are the ups, the downs. You may remember, Peter, for some of his failings and probably most prominently is the one where he denies even knowing that Christ, that a messiah, the one who had saved the world, he denies even knowing him in the night before.

Jesus is crucified and not only that, and prior to that, he had been Jesus had invited him and James and John, those fishing buddies show up again. He'd invited them into the late into the garden of Gethsemane, and he asked them to pray. Will you watch and pray my heart? Jesus was at his worst moment, and he asked them to pray.

So, Peter, he does. He can't. He can't keep his eyes open. He falls asleep. He falls asleep. He denies even knowing who Jesus is and it results in probably some of the most tragic words of all of history. He wept bitterly. It's possible that you are in a season of life and a chapter to that, that you're feeling the rollercoaster, the ups and the downs.

Perhaps you even found yourself in a place of weeping bitterly recently, but maybe you're feeling hope and possibility of new things to come. Chapter two is neither all good nor is it all bad. The sun will come out again for those of us who are weeping bitterly, and we have to be reminded that there may still be some darkness ahead for those of us who are feeling all the blessing and all the promise.

Regardless, this is not the end of the story for Peter, and it's not the end of the story for us. He is about to have a wake up call. Wake up calls are turning points and they are actually wonderful invitations to get us out of our slumber, to get us out of our regret and out of our pain, and to set us into a place where we can have a new sense of who we are.

And it's in seasons of wake up calls that it is important for us to know our stories, to know our identity as Christ's beloved, to know who we are as a community, as a church. There's a before and there's an after in turning points, and there's an invitation for us to have clarity. For Peter, that invitation was actually fishing again.

It's interesting. I think sometimes God keeps bringing us back to places where we have encountered him before, where we have heard his voice, where we have recognized it, where we have said yes once before, and he gives us another invitation. And that's what it was like for Peter that day. We read about it in John Chapter 21. He and his fishing buddies were at it again and they had another miraculous haul of fish and this time Peter didn't respond the same to all that.

You read it in John 21. He didn't respond the same. He didn't follow his feet. He actually was quiet and he didn't say a word. So it was like being called to the principal's office and Jesus called him to a little corner of the beach here, and they had a one on one. And then this one on one.

Jesus said to Peter, he asked him three times, Simon, he called him. Simon has given name Simon, do you love me? And three times Peter said convincingly, Yes, Lord, you know I love you. And three times he gave him another new job, not just to follow him, and not just to fish for people. But this time he said, Feed my sheep.

But just to make sure that Peter had truly been changed and learned his lesson from the first experience of failure. Jesus says, By the way, when you do this, it's going to be terrible. You are going to suffer. You are going to have to go to some place that you don't want to go. And yet I'm going to ask you again, will you follow me?

So Peter is on the stand in this one on one, being given another invitation to follow, except this time he knows where he's going. This is the turning point. This is the thing that determines the whole end of the story. Maybe you're feeling a turning point in your life right now. You're on the edge. I can do this and go back to the way that I've the ups and downs here.

Or maybe you're you are sensing an invitation into an unknown future. That's kind of us as a community right now. Maybe it feels exciting. The turning point does. Maybe it just feels scary or something in between. And yet clarity is the gift that Jesus gave Peter that day. It's going to be hard, but I want you to follow me.

So, chapter three, we see Peter actually saying yes to this and we see the bold testimony that Peter enters into. We can read about it in the

Book of Acts and lots of things happen real quickly. And Acts Jesus ascends to the Father and Pentecost comes and the Holy Spirit is given to all, to all of the Church and boldness results.

So Peter, this guy who fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jesus most tender hour and denied even knowing him, we see him and John the fishing buddy, doing things like healing people and speaking words with authority. And we actually hear him in chapter four. We hear him defending to all the religious establishment who this Jesus was, the name that they had healed people in.

And he explains exactly who Jesus says. He says that they had crucified him. God risen from the dead, but Jesus was the one who was the Savior. Now, the religious establishment was shut up. They were quieted. And I love these words in in chapter in chapter four, verse 13, when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

I think that's so powerful. You may feel totally ill equipped for something. You may feel like an unschooled, ordinary person. And yet the distinguishing characteristic, the thing that sets us off to a new ending, is whether or not we've been hanging out with Jesus. I love it. There's no earthly reason that they should have had the bold confidence to speak up like they did, and yet they had been with Jesus.

Friends, we have that exact same invitation every single day. We are invited to spend time with Jesus through his word, through prayer, through paying attention. I call I have a definition for prayer that it's paying attention with God to our life, to those around us. Anything becomes an invitation for prayer to be able to hear and ask Jesus, what is it you want me to do in this circumstance?

Maybe He's going to give you a specific instruction about where to cast your net or how to spend your time, where, what to do with your vocational life. But regardless, he's going to invite us to follow him. We get to hang out with Jesus. Peter in this moment and these experiences, he is bearing the fruit of the seeds that were planted in Chapters one and chapter two, chapter one, where he got honest, knowing who he was and knowing who Jesus was in chapter two, where he was able to pay attention and to to the to the UPS and downs, to the rollercoasters of life.

And here in chapter three, he is experiencing the joy of the companionship of Jesus. Well, chapter three for us may be a long haul, but wouldn't it be awesome if people would say the courage and the boldness that we have? People can attribute it to the fact that we've been hanging out with Jesus. Well, in a move to Chapter four and here we're going to take a look at Peter's own words in scripture.

Peter first. Peter, there's two letters. My first, my favorites first. Peter, there's tons of really great things in it, but all through first. Peter He is absolutely living those words that Jesus had give him, You're going to suffer. It's going to be hard. The whole the underlying theme of

first Peter is suffering, but the second underlying theme in all of it is the glory that results from suffering with Christ.

And He says some words that I think were birthed in his failure in the Garden of Gethsemane and chapter four, verse seven, Peter says These words Be self-controlled and alert so that you can pray. Now, I think there's a footnote that should be there. I know it says not to add words, the scripture, but I think this is the footnote.

Be self-controlled and alert so you can pray and you won't fall asleep when your best friend, who's also the savior of the world, asks you to stay awake and watch and pray. I'm pretty sure that that's in there too. So Jesus teaches him a lesson and plants these seeds in the first part of his life. And those seeds bear fruit.

And Peter grows intimate surety so that he himself can offer that confidence. So the new Peter, at the end of Chapter five of First Peter, he gives a promise that, frankly, friends, is for us as well. He says this he has confidence and he says this. He says, After you have suffered a while, the God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore and support and strengthen and establish you for His Glory.

The God of All Grace will Himself, Jesus, the one who walked the Earth, who resurrected, who ascended, who we can encounter as well. He himself will give us the strength in the midst of the suffering. This is the gift of what it means to be a Christian. We don't have to walk our lives alone. Sometimes we take it for granted.

We just forget. We are so busy going about doing our things and we forget about the joy of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. But we are not left alone in our uncertainty or in our transition, in our pain, in our joy. We in Chapter four, when we're living with the mindset of Peter in Chapter four, we're able to receive the gifts that with the suffering also comes the glory.

Well, this really is the end of Peter's story. We don't get to see all the details. And there's definitely tradition about the end of his life. But there's but for our story, we really are somewhere in the middle of the things that God is doing in us as a community and in you in your own life.

But I just want to recap for us in chapter one, it's Peter's call, and he receives an invitation to humbly obey. And he does. He goes and he follows in chapter two, in a roller coaster, the ups and the downs of life. Peter is invited to slow down and to pay attention to the places where Jesus wants to be present to him.

There is a turning point, and in that turning point, it's an invitation to be honest. It's a moment of clarity emerging. We get to see Peter's bold testimony, which points to nothing more than hanging out with Jesus, learning to be a companion of his, and letting him letting that rub off on us. We get to receive Jesus's gifts, which are the confidence of and encouragement and support.

So this is as we see Peter's story, I just want to remind us that I want to clear up one important thing. I've been calling this Peter's story, but it's actually not in our stories are actually not our stories as well. The lead actor, if we were to identify that is actually God himself, God. Everything changes when we see that that God is actually the lead actor in our own lives.

God's the lead actor here at Horizons Gods that wants to be the lead actor in your family, in your personal life, in the work that you are called to do. This is Christ's church and we are God's people. We definitely have important roles. But the hero and the one who gets to steal the scene in every circumstance is actually God himself.

And it is by His grace that He chooses us, that he wants to bless us, and that He sustains us, and that he brings us to a place where we can have clarity and where we can know that it's his story that that he wants to invite us into. And it's Christ who gives us the grace to be aware of his presence and that he himself will restore us and strengthen us and establish us and support us.

Well, he started out this sermon by referencing Derrick's sermon from last week, and he invited us to pass on the gift of faith to the next generation. And I really think this is the same invitation that that Jesus gave to Peter first to become a fisher of people and then to feed his sheep. But I want to introduce a different metaphor, and it's that of planting seeds.

You see, I think that there are seeds that are planted, that grow into maturity that that we are doing now, that we will never see until generations long in advance. This week, Todd and I went camping at that in the Honey, and on the last day we were there, we were sitting kind of under these very tall oak trees.

And Todd said, I wonder how long ago these were planted here. And I wonder if there's new seeds, new trees that are planting that that will be able to provide shade long into the future. And I think that's exactly where we are today as well. We are certainly receiving the shade of seeds that were planted 25, 20, 15 years ago.

But I think it's an opportunity for us to allow God to plant new seeds that are going to bear much fruit long into the future. The trees of tomorrow are planted from the seeds of today. May you and may I allow Jesus to do the work, to plant the seeds, to bring us to a place of awareness that we may have clarity that we may say yes, despite suffering to receive the joy of his presence here with us.

Will you pray with me? God, we thank you so much for an awareness of who you are and for your invitation. We thank you that you do like with Peter. Invite us to see the truth of who we are and the truth of who you are. We thank you, God, and that you give us the grace to ride the roller coaster.

That you help us pay attention to your invitations. And we do pray that we would each have an awareness of the turning point. What is it that you want to speak to us so that we may follow in, in more faithful obedience to the joys you have ahead of us? Bring us deeper to be your companions. Rub off on us, God, that others may know that we have been with you and may we truly rely on you and you alone to establish us, to strengthen us, to support us, to empower us, to be the people that you have called us to be long into the future.

Thank you for planting your seeds in us and in this community. We put all of this in, Christine. Amen.