

## Part 79: New Hope, New Hearts, New Hostility

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My wife and I found a reoccurring charge on one of our credit cards a while ago and we had a hard time trying to track down what it was from. We were caught surprised when we found out what it was—it was a reoccurring subscription tied to a toothbrush we bought one of our kids.

We live in a world where increasingly we are offered great prices, but with a catch. In the fine print we see we are on the hook to be billed monthly. For many of us, when it comes to how we ourselves think, or what we encounter when we share the gospel with others, we too may be caught off guard by the perceived fine print.

Eternal salvation? Great! Forgiveness? Wonderful! But what's the catch? That I'm now part of God's church? You mean I'm supposed to live with broken people, who say and do dumb things, and labor for the mission of Jesus in a world that often seeks to oppose him?

Yes. But the church is not the fine print of the gospel. In fact in our passage today we read of Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, and his comments concerning a drastic change in the disciple's ministry. At this Last Supper, Jesus has been powerfully reframing the disciples understanding of their entire life. In light of Jesus, there's new feast—The Lord's Supper, with Jesus at the center. There's a new authority and greatness—humble service of others, with Jesus at the center. And now there's a new people, and a new mission—the church, with Jesus at the center of it.

In today's text, we see three realities: Jesus' heart for his disciples, the heart of his disciples, and the heart of the mission of the disciples. That is to say for us this morning we see all these things in both Peter and the 12, in our own hearts, and in the general life of the church as well.

Jesus' love for his disciples saves them, assures them, and sends them out into the world as the church.

This is our main point this morning: **The church is a repentant people, on a dangerous mission, sustained by a gracious Savior.** We are going to see this in three ways this morning. First we are going to see the church as **Sustained by a Sovereign Hope**, second the church is **Resilient in Repentance** and finally the church is **Militant in Mercy**.

Right after the disciples argue about which of them is the greatest, Jesus pulls back the curtain to reveal how small we are in comparison to the spiritual battle at play right before our eyes. Jesus says, **Luke 22:31-31**, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen the brothers."

You'll notice that while Jesus singles out Peter here, he's assuming a trial for all of the disciples. First, the "you," Satan demanded, was a Texas "y'all" it was plural. He didn't just want Judas, he didn't just want Peter, he wanted all the disciples. And also we see that Jesus says assumes that all the brothers will need to be strengthened.

The Bible generally presents a three-fold challenge Christians face in their walk with Jesus: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is all that is external to us (natural disasters and other sinful humans), the flesh is that which is internal to us (our own hearts), and the Devil is the spiritual enemy at work all around us.

In two weeks when we see Peter's denial happen, we will look more at his heart, but Jesus draws out attention today in specific to the Devil in verses 31 and 32 and the world in verses 36 and 37.

As Jesus is about to leave, he's giving some marching orders to his followers to prepare them—and he doesn't want them to be unaware of the immense challenges they will face. But notice how in the face of such opposition, before Jesus calls his disciples to do anything, he draws their attention to what he has already done: Jesus has prayed for them.

This is our first point this morning: The church is **Sustained by Sovereign Hope**. Now, I do realize that Sovereign Hope is the name of our church, and I don't mean to say that any of us are sustained by Sovereign Hope Church but I do mean to say that we are all sustained by the church's sovereign hope: Jesus our great defender.

The cosmic battle around us is real. Satan is active today, he is powerful, he has authority and influence in this world and if we face him on our own in the field of battle—we will lose. But we are not left alone.

Martin Luther captures this well in the hymn we will sing together later today: "For still our ancient does seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, were not the right man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. You ask who that may be, Christ Jesus it is he! The Lord of Lord's his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle."

Without Jesus we are in a losing battle. But because of Jesus, we have hope. Our surpassing hope in Jesus is revealed in two contrasts in our text today.

First, notice how Satan makes requests, but it is Jesus' will that rules. Jesus tells the disciples that Satan "demanded" them. Like a petulant child, or an offended ego-maniac, he raised his voice, he stomped his feet, he made his will known—but at the end of it, all it is, is a request.

God flexes his power over his creation in **Job 38:11** saying to the ocean itself, "Thus far you shall come and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed."

Take comfort little flock, for Satan—who himself is created, is also under the control of this God. As Martin Luther says, "Even the Devil is God's devil." He can make a lot of noise, he can rattle the cage, but he cannot take any of that which Jesus wishes to hold.

That's because Jesus doesn't make requests. He rules. He prays, because he is on earth and not in heaven, but notice how Jesus already assumes his prayer comes with ruling might—it will be answered. He gives Peter instructions on how to act when his prayer proves effective. Satan is loud, but dear church, Jesus is Lord.

But we don't just see a difference in power, we see a difference in quality. Satan wants to desecrate, sift and destroy, Jesus wants to consecrate, save and endure.

The Devil wants to use trials to discredit you—he wants to use hard things to convince you that you don't have what it takes—or to convince you that Jesus doesn't have what it takes. He says, "Run to me, run away with me and you'll find peace." But he has no compassion for you.

But notice on the other hand, Jesus overrides and uses those same trials—but he does so to bless us, to assure us, and to prove himself to us. In the midst of trials, Jesus is after our good.

But isn't it all too easy for us, when times get hard, to ascribe to the Devil the character of Jesus and to ascribe to Jesus the character of the Devil? We think that in the midst of hardship, Jesus is trying to harm us, telling us we don't have what it takes, asleep at the wheel. But Satan, offers us the escape of sin, and that's is what we need, that's where we find hope.

But see how drastic the heart of Jesus is vs. the heart of the Devil. Satan wants you to give up, Jesus wants you to go on. Jesus is a good king—so good that he uses hard things to make us who we otherwise could never be.

And how does he do that? By using all his heartfelt affection and all his sovereign prayer to keep our faith. He prays that Peter's faith won't fail That word fail is a terminal word. In the engineering world it would be called a catastrophic failure. A catastrophic failure is defined by one source as, "a sudden and total failure of a given component," it is "a failure that cannot be put right."

When your rubber gasket fails on your garden hose, that's a common failure, and you get a little wet. When your rubber gasket fails on the international space station, that's a catastrophic failure and you die. That's what Satan wants to do, and that's what Jesus is praying against.

The church is first and foremost a community whose faith is sustained by the sovereign power of Jesus. Notice how Jesus doesn't say: I'm praying so your health won't fail, I'm praying that your friends don't fail, your finances don't fail, or even that you won't fail. Instead he's praying that in all things—including that which comes to test us—our faith will not fail.

Paul tells us, "I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (**Philippians 1:6**). Jesus himself says in **John 6:37**, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

What trials, temptations and traumas have you had lately? In the midst of those realities, it is Satan who wants you to see those and think yourselves a failure. But your sovereign king has chosen to use those same trials to show the Devil, yourself, and the watching world—that you are no failure—because Jesus does not fail his people. Keep the faith, because you are kept by a sovereign and good savior.

We must begin with a sovereign reliance upon Jesus because life quickly shows us that we cannot rely on anything of our own. This is our second point this morning: the church is a people **Resilient in Repentance**.

You'll notice how Jesus here is trying to affirm Peter by pointing Peter to Jesus' work. But Peter's confidence is not in Jesus, it's in himself.

Like most of us when we sit on a plane and hear the safety presentation, Peter zones out thinking that this isn't for him. Jesus says, **Luke 22:31-33**, "Simon, Simon behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."

Peter is still caught up on the argument of greatness. He says to Jesus, "Don't waste your prayers. Pray for Thomas over there, he might need it, but I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." In fact, it's important to note that Jesus words actually weren't so much for the benefit of Peter as they were for the rest of the disciples. Jesus is telling Peter this why? So that he might strengthen his brother disciples.

But he is so blinded by his own sense of infallibility that he can only think of himself. And then Jesus brings the heat: **Luke 22:34**, "I tell you Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me."

The language of Jesus' prediction here is brutal. The tense of the Greek is a tense that communicates a full and total denial. In two weeks we will see that denial, and to human eyes, it seems like a catastrophic failure. Yet the same Jesus who predicted Peter's denial is the same Jesus who here prays for Peter and predicts his restoration.

How would Peter respond to this? Look at verse 32. He would "turn again." While this isn't the same word for repentance, it's the same idea of repentance. Repentance is when we turn away from sin and turn back toward Jesus.

And remarkably Jesus here is showing us that turning away from sin and to Jesus is not only the doorway into faith with Jesus, it's the seatbelt that keeps us there. Peter's confidence failed, Peter's obedience failed, but Peter's faith would not. And how does that faith show itself? By turning again, back to Jesus.

For many of us we can bristle at this idea in one of two ways, both of which are arrogant. We can be like Peter here in verse 22, who thinks he's too good to sin. Or we can be like Peter as we will see in verse 62, who feels like he's too broken for grace. The first sees their own goodness as too great, and the second sees Jesus' grace as too little—both are man centered views.

But the church is made up of sinners. Jesus' words here assume that all the disciples, including Peter will momentarily fall away—it will look like Satan is sifting—but Jesus is working in the midst of it to sure up the church. Faith only fails when it fails to return. The gospel is not for those who never wander, but for those who always come back.

When we sin, even when it seems we've sinned in irreparable ways, what are we to do? Turn again. And why will you turn again? Because Jesus has worked to assure it. He will not let your faith fail.

It's all too common for people to call the church a group of hypocrites, and maybe you feel that way. But it's not the presence of sin that makes a hypocrite, instead it's the lack of repentance. No one comes into God's grace apart from those whose faith turns them around.

The door to the church is shaped like a U-turn, there's no straight sticks in here. So when we fail, when we fall, what do we do? We do what we did in the first place, we turn. John reminds us of this in **1 John 1:9**.

And what do redeemed, turned, and forgiven sinners do? They strengthen other redeemed, turned and forgiven sinners with humble mercy and full hope. Jesus says to Peter, **Luke 22:32**, "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

We remind others that what gets us through life is not our success, but Jesus'. It's actually the call to strengthen the brothers that is the imperative in this text. There are certainly sins which the New Testament show may disqualify people from vocational ministry, but there is no sin that disqualifies any saint from Christian ministry.

We are going to baptize people here in this church, who will at some point sin again. And in those moments, God has chosen for other redeemed sinners to hold out again the ministry of grace. There's a meme I've often seen from a movie I haven't where the actor James Franco is standing the gallows with a noose around his neck and says to the guy standing next to him, "First time, huh?"

That's what we do for our brothers and sisters. We run to them out of the hope that we have, we call them to Jesus, and we help them apply his grace and strive in the power of the Holy Spirit. So I want to ask you, has Jesus given you the gift of repentance? Has he given you the gift of faith? Then he has called you to strengthen those around you.

The ministry of the church is in this manner, inward. And we must learn how to strengthen each other, because this inward ministry is only half of Jesus' call to the church.

We are, in the words of Jesus, to "teach all that Jesus has commanded us," but we are also to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This is where Jesus turns next in what is a little bit of a peculiar passage: **Luke 22:35**, "And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing."

So Jesus here is calling back to two experiences the disciples already had in the book of Luke. In chapter 9 he sent out the twelve to preach the gospel and provides them with a list of supplies they were not to bring, and in chapter 10, Jesus did something similar but with a broader group of 72 disciples.

Jesus has this second mission in mind because the supplies he mentions here are identical to those used in chapter 10. It's relevant to us that Jesus keys on this broader mission because it accounts for the unique role the apostles have, but it's also reinforcing that this is the broader commission of the whole church—not just the apostles. We are all sent out.

But Jesus points out one big difference in this mission: it's going to be more difficult. He says, pack a lunch, and bring a hard hat, because the work is going to get real once Jesus leaves. This is our final point this morning: the church is **Militant in Mercy**.

Notice the change of tone Jesus has while also promising the same provision they have already experienced: **Luke 22:36-37**, "He said to them, 'But now let the one who has no moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what was written about me has its fulfillment."

So what is going on here? Well, when Jesus first sent the disciples out they were told not to bring anything—this is probably because the physical provision of God was already there in Jesus Christ.

But preparing his disciples for life after his death and resurrection, Jesus says, "Pack your things. It's going to be different now." The commission to go out and preach the gospel is the same, but the circumstances are going to be a bit more difficult. You see, while Jesus was on earth most of the opposition and hostility was targeted on him. But Jesus makes it clear in the book of John that once he leaves, they are going to hate the church in the same way they hated him.

But did they lack anything before? No. Will they lack anything now? No. Why? Jesus ties their hope in evangelism to their very hope in redemption.

He says this opposition is part of the fulfillment of Isaiah's suffering servant. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 53:12 saying, "he was numbered with the transgressors." This is a text which brings light on the very heart of the gospel: Jesus' substitutionary atonement for sinners. Jesus was numbered and counted among the sinners so that he might save sinners.

So what does that mean in context of the mission of the church? It shows us that because Jesus came to save a mess like you and me, our ministry on behalf of Jesus is in and among messy people too.

Because Jesus was numbered among the transgressors in order to be the exclusive means of salvation, we will be among the transgressors in order to be the messengers of salvation. We are to gird our loins, as we live out the mission that Jesus has commissioned for the church.

Just as Jesus showed us last week that the true motivation for Christian greatness was tied up in himself, so too is the motivation for the church's mission tied up in Jesus. He sought us, we will seek others. He entered into our hostile world, and so we live faithfully in ours.

Jesus does not only send us to each other to strengthen them, but he sends us to the lost to bear witness to the God who accepts all who repent and come to him in faith.

One big question remains though, what are we doing with our swords? After calling his disciples to a war time mentality they respond saying, **Luke 22:38**, "Look, Lord here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

You have to imagine Jesus at this moment. To quote Harry Dunne, "Just when I think you couldn't be any dumber...."

Now Jesus does tell them to buy swords, and here he tells them two swords are enough. However, I think the context shows us how foolish the question and how non-literal Jesus' answer is. In a few hours the disciples will draw swords, and Jesus rebukes them. Moreover the idea that Jesus thinks the triumph

of the gospel will only take two swords makes no sense at all, unless that's the point. I believe it's Jesus saying here, "Yeah, I think that's enough swords fellas..."

You see there will be opposition, and Jesus does call for war, but just as we rightly understand his call for moneybags, knapsacks and sandals to be representative of preparedness, so too must we understand the sword to be representative of the offensive nature of the church.

But this battle is not physical. When we encounter the world, we will want to respond physically, we will want to vindicate ourselves and vanquish others with the weapons of the world. But Jesus calls us to lay those down.

Paul reminds us in **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**, "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

Notice how Jesus' message comes full circle here. What are we to do? We take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are to strive for a faith that, by the power of God, will not fail. And what else are we to do? We are to wage war against unbelief.

We destroy strongholds of darkness by preaching Christ and him crucified to those who crucified him, and those who might crucify us. I don't want you to think that this life style of reliant, repentant and militant faith is easy. It is hard, you will not want to do it, you will often lose friends in the midst of it, but we ought to make sure that's because the gospel is offensive not our tone or our words.

There will be times where all you want to do is retreat back to the barracks of the church, and that is a beautiful refuge. But what is the role of the church? To strengthen you and send you back out. We are sent back out because if Jesus was numbered for our sins, he was numbered for the sins of others too.

There are more souls for Jesus to save, so we move forward with his work.

But look again how full circle Jesus bring this here. Here's the full context of **Isaiah 53:12**: "...because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

Do you see that?

The same Jesus who prays for us to keep us, is the same Jesus who prays for us in our ministry among the lost. Jesus seeks and saves the lost, and he equips those repentant, once lost losers, to seek others with the same message of salvation.