



Pastor Kyle Mercer
Jesus & Rejection

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Series: Unexpected
Mark 14:26-72

BIG IDEA – JESUS WAS REJECTED SO YOU COULD BE ACCEPTED

Everything stands or falls on leadership. Right? We know this. What happens when a team is doing terribly? We hire a new coach. What happens when a nation is falling apart? We get a new prime minister or a new president. What happens when a business is collapsing? We find a new CEO. Everything stands and falls on leadership.

We've been asking a question, as a staff, for a long time: How do we invest in more leaders? How do we invest in the leaders of tomorrow today? One of our answers, at least right now, is the Residency. I just want to take a moment and tell you about it.

Here's what the Residency is. It's a two-year experience where we want to deepen and develop and deploy more leaders. We do that by investing in three areas. We invest in their *head*, their *heart*, and their *hands*. *Head* is theological education. Everyone who comes through the Residency has an opportunity, in two years, to get a master's from Southeastern Seminary. So, that's amazing.

On top of that, it's heart. We want to do spiritual formation. We want to help them. A lot of times, we're getting people right out of college. It's their first job. It's their first time in the "real world." We want to invest in them. Then ministry experience. They get to be behind the scenes, behind the curtain, see everything we do, and get hands-on supervision and shepherding as they're doing it. So, we're really excited about it.

If you're in here, and maybe you have a nephew or a niece or a brother or a sister, or maybe it's you, and you're about to graduate from college, and you're thinking, "What's next for me?" would you consider two years for the Residency? This is what we call the *Mormonization of the church*. We're pulling the playbook from the Mormons. They ask for two years. We're asking for two years.

Here's why this is so exciting. You've been hearing us talk for the last few weeks about Hold the Rope. We talk about local partners. We've done that. We talk about global partners. We're going to talk about them as well. But we also talk about our national partners. All of our national church planters went through a residency. In fact, this is really personal for me.

About eight years ago, my wife and I were wrestling with calling. We were kind of in a cul-de-sac of life. We weren't sure what to do. I was wrestling with whether or not I was going to stay in full-time ministry. I was wrestling with whether or not I was going to go into business with my dad and my brother. I was wrestling with all of these different things.

For me, the Summit Network (now Summit Collaborative) residency made a massive difference. It took me from kind of being in a cul-de-sac to... It was really a catalyst for future ministry. Over the last six years, we've helped to plant 10 different churches. All of those church planters went into a residency. So, as we think about how to strengthen and secure the church of the future, we think we do it through our residents.

I want to tell you about one guy we're going to be supporting through Hold the Rope this year. That's our end-of-the-year annual offering where we ask you to give a one-time gift above and beyond normal tithes and offerings. We're going to support Josh Miller. Let me show you a picture of his building. Josh Miller planted several years ago right next to UVA in Charlottesville, Virginia, and they just got into their brand-new building. It took all their time, all their energy, and all their money.

We want to bless them as they head into 2023. They don't know this is happening. Here's how we think about investing. Sometimes you invest in need. "There's such a need here. I have to do something." A lot of times we invest in relationship. "I know them, so I should probably give something to them." My favorite thing to do is to invest where we see the kingdom advancing, and that's what we're seeing with Josh Miller. That's what we're seeing with Center Church.

So, here's our ask. Would you and your family give a one-time gift above and beyond normal tithes and offerings before the end of the year? Our goal is not a financial goal but a participation goal. We want to see 100 percent of the people who call Two Cities Church home do this together. I would encourage you to talk to your kids about this. we're doing this in my family. I have three young kids.

Here's what I love about that. When you're raising kids in a Christian home, it's a temptation for them, especially as they get older, to view their Christianity as all of the things they don't get to do. "My friends get to do this, but I don't. Is Christianity about all of the things I don't get to do?" "No, no, no. Christianity is about a generous

God and an exciting mission, and we want you to taste generosity and mission from an early age." My kids are arguing over who's going to give the biggest gift, so we'll see. Let's pray, and then let's dive into Mark.

Lord, we just pray right now for our church planters, 10 of them, all up and down the East Coast, particularly for Josh Miller, that he would be encouraged, that this financial gift at the beginning of 2023 will be a way to say, "We believe in you. We're proud of you. We're excited. We want to see you continue to do more and more ministry, mercy, and mission in your city."

Lord, I pray for people all across our city, across the Triad, and maybe otherwise connected to our church who are trying to figure out... They're questioning calling. They're desiring more theological education, spiritual formation, and ministry experience. I just pray that our church would be a place where we invest in the church of tomorrow today. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Have you ever experienced rejection? Of course you have. You're human. Rejection is a part of life. Now, for some people, rejection is very deep. For some people, you get to meet them, and rejection defines their whole life. It's usually something like, "Why wasn't my dad around? Why couldn't my parents stay together? Why did my dad marry someone half his age and move across the country? Was I not valuable enough?"

So, sometimes rejection goes really deep, like, "What's wrong with me with this rejection?" But there are stages of rejection in life. Remember going to elementary school? What's the first rejection you experience? Friends. Like, what friend group. When you don't get invited to the birthday party, it hurts. When you don't get to sit at the lunch table, it hurts. You have to deal, and your parents try to help you.

You're in second grade, third grade, or fourth grade. You're trying to deal with rejection. You finally get over it. You make your friends. You're like, "Praise the Lord." Then you get to middle school. Then you experience even a deeper type of rejection. You know what that is: opposite sex rejection. Every guy never wants to hear these words: "I just want to be your friend," which means, "I have zero romantic interest in you."

Here's the thing about rejection: every time you experience rejection, you ask this question: "Is something wrong with me?" The answer is normally *yes*. Yes, there *is* something wrong with you. In fact, rejection is normally a wake-up call. "Okay. Maybe I need to change. Maybe it was them, but it might be better for me to start thinking it's me."

Then you get to high school, and it's rejection from sports. Then you get to the end of high school, and you have that conversation with yourself, or if you have a good relationship with your parents, like, "How smart am I? What school can I get into?" Then we all have the safety school. The *safety school* is a school you don't think is going to reject you. So, rejection is a part of life. Now, here's what's interesting: rejection is at the very center of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Turn to Mark 14. We're going to be in verse 26. On the screen behind me, though, I want to take you to the hinge verse in Mark. It's Mark 8:31. It says, "**And he [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man...**" That's his favorite designation for himself. "**...must suffer many things...**" We talk about that all the time. Oh, here's the word. "**...and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**"

Now, when we talk about what Jesus did, we often talk about his suffering. We often talk about him being killed on our behalf, his death. We often talk about his resurrection. The only thing we forget is the longest part of that, which is his rejection. Here's what we're going to see today. This is where we're going. We have a lot of verses to cover. I'm going to try to go quickly and summarize and simplify some of them.

Here's what we're going to see today. Jesus is forsaken by his Father in the garden. It's the beginning of Jesus' suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. He is betrayed by Judas in that same garden. He is condemned by culture, and he is denied by Peter. That's where we're going. Jesus experienced rejection. Now how does this hit us? I'm going to try to do a good job of explaining this.

The center of the gospel is that Jesus is our substitute, he lived the life we should have lived but have failed to live, and he lived for us and died for us. So, here's the big idea today: *Jesus experienced rejection so you could be accepted.* Jesus was condemned by culture so you can be invited into the kingdom. Jesus was betrayed and denied by his friends so you would know he would never leave you.

With that said, let's go to Mark 14. We're going to pick up in verse 26. Remember, they're finishing the Lord's Supper. (Spencer did a great job last week.) They were at the Lord's Supper, or you might call it the *Last Supper*, or you might call it the *final Passover meal*, whatever you want to call it. They leave there, and verse 26 says this: "**And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**"

That's interesting. We know from another account that Judas has already left. Judas leaves, so there are 11 guys. They don't have any instruments. They decide to sing a hymn. I want us to understand that Jesus was a man, and he sang. Now, who's the most unlikely person to sing in church? A grown man.

Listen. The women in your life, the children in your life, your brothers in your life... They need to hear you sing. Jesus sings a song. By the way, that's partly how you comfort yourself: through singing. You think of Jesus teaching. You think of Jesus preaching. You think of Jesus praying. We don't often think of Jesus singing. Here's one of the verses we get about Jesus singing.

01 JESUS TELLS THEM THEY WILL FORSAKE HIM AND HE WILL GO FIND THEM

He goes to the Mount of Olives. Look at verse 27. ***"And Jesus said to them [the Eleven], 'You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"*** He's quoting Zechariah 13:7 there. ***"But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."***

Here's what Jesus is doing. He's doing what every great leader does, what every great parent does, what every great teacher does. He tells people what's going to happen as much as he can. Now, Jesus knew everything, but as much as we understand, we tell people, "This is what's going to happen, so that you have the right perspective and expectations and you're not surprised."

Here's what he says. This is the gospel. "You're going to fall away. You're going to forsake me, but afterward, I'm going to come and find you." This is what makes Christianity different than any other religion in the world. Every other religion basically says, "God, I have to find you." Maybe it's the five steps of *this* or the eight pillars of *that*. "God, you're hard to find. You're running away from me, and my goal in life is to follow after you."

Actually, the Bible says, no, we've all failed, we've all fallen, we've all forsaken, and Jesus is committed to running after us. That's the gospel. Let me just encourage you. If you're running away from God, all you need to do is turn around. He'll be right there. He's fast. He's very fast. He's following you.

So, he says here, "You're going to fall away." But look at what happens here. Verse 29. Here's Peter. We're going to pick on Peter today. ***"Peter said to him, 'Even though they all fall away, I will not.'"*** "I'm unique." ***"And Jesus said to him..."*** Jesus is like, "This is going to get awkward. I didn't want to bring this up. I wasn't going to single you out, but I'm going to have to."

"And Jesus said to him, 'Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice..." We're going to return to that. Why doesn't Jesus say the rooster just needs to crow one time? Why does he say twice? Why is it not twice in a row? Why is it one

time and then a little bit later? We'll see that. But he's telling him the rooster is going to crow twice.

"...you will deny me three times.' But he [Peter] said emphatically, 'If I must die with you, I will not deny you.'" Before we're too hard on Peter, do you see what it says? **"And they all said the same." Peter always speaks first and for the other disciples. Here's what Peter is doing. Peter doesn't understand Christianity. Christianity is not about the promises we make to God. Christianity is about embracing the promises God has made to us.**

Have you ever made promises to God? All you have to do is be a Christian for probably a month and you've made a couple of promises to God. A lot of times, we make promises to God when we think things are going really well. You're at a retreat. You're at a conference. You're feeling pretty good about yourself. You're feeling pretty good about your walk. You're maybe having a mountaintop experience.

Or what's more common, probably... Have you ever made promises after you've really messed up? You wake up at 3:00 in the morning, and your conscience is condemning you, and you slip out of bed on your knees. Those promises are normally "I will never..." Remember those? "I will never text him again. I will never look at that again. I will never drink that much again. I will never smoke that again. I will never go there again."

Have you ever had the experience of you prayed that, and you believed it for that moment... You were like, "I'm doing this." You wrote it down, kind of coded in your journal so no one would ever read it in case they found it, but you wrote something down about you made promises, and then the most humiliating thing, for most of us, is you broke it immediately.

I bet there are times you make promises *here*. We have a response at the end. You make a promise, you get home, and before the next day, you break it. The biblical image of this in the Proverbs is, it says, "A dog returns to his vomit," which is kind of a gross image. Basically, what it means is what a dog will do is a dog will throw something up, leave the room, come back, and eat his own throw-up. What an image of what we do.

Now, let's not be too hard on Peter. What does Peter do well? Peter wants to be loyal. Do you want to be loyal? If you want to be loyal, if you want to do the right thing, you're probably doing better than, let's say, maybe half the people. That's good. You'd like to do the right thing.

I think he makes several mistakes. The first mistake he makes is he speaks more than he listens. That's a little thing. He speaks. He hears Jesus. He responds. Probably the

second mistake he makes is he argues with Jesus instead of asking for help. What are all possible futures? How could this story have ended differently if Peter responded differently?

I don't know what could have happened, but is it possible that there would be a way where Peter could say, "Well, Jesus, is there anything I could do that this wouldn't happen? Could we pray about this together? Are there some things I need to do? Do I need to just leave so I don't do something sinful or stupid?" He doesn't ask that. But here's his main thing, and I said this earlier: he thinks he's unique.

Do you ever feel like there are certain temptations or certain sins you would never give in to? I think we tend to see that. We tend to watch if someone else's life falls apart. Somebody else has an affair. Somebody else gets into some kind of gross sin or some addiction. You watch it from a distance, and you think something like, "I don't think I would do that."

I don't think that's a good way to think about yourself. I think a better way to think about yourself is given the right situation, you could do the wrong thing. I mean, what if you're hungry and you're angry and you're lonely and you're tired and you drank too much? I mean, who knows what we're capable of? Given the right situation, we could do the wrong thing.

I grew up in a ministry that always warned us, "You're two weeks away from wrecking your life," which is not encouraging to think about. Maybe two weeks is too quick, but I think there's something in there. Whenever somebody gets to a place where they cross the line, whatever the line is, they always ask themselves this question: "How did I get here?"

If they ask it honestly, they'll get the answer. It's usually a long answer, but the very short answer is "One step at a time." They normally have to go back to the first thing they allowed into their life, the first time they didn't tell somebody, the first time they almost got caught, and the first time they didn't confess it when they could have.

02 JESUS IS FORSAKEN BY GOD IN THE GARDEN

Well, I want to see what happens here. You'll notice Jesus doesn't even respond to Peter's spiritual pride and overconfidence. Peter doesn't understand yet that he needs grace. From here they leave. Let's see where they go. Verse 32: ***"And they went to a place called Gethsemane."***

I told you a couple of weeks ago that three or four weeks ago I was in Israel. I don't want every time we come to a passage to say, "Hey, I was there," but I *was* there on

this one. I was in the garden of Gethsemane a couple of weeks ago. It was pretty cool. The garden of Gethsemane is at the very bottom of the Mount of Olives. There's something called the *Hosanna pathway*. You walk down it, and you get to a flat area at the bottom of the Mount of Olives, and it's Gethsemane.

All *Gethsemane* means, literally, is oil press. It makes sense. The reason it got called *Gethsemane* is they would take all of the olives from off the mountain, and they would bring them down into the valley area, the flat area, and they would press the olives, because how you got the most value out of the olives was to crush them. Interesting symbolism here for Gethsemane. Jesus is about to be crushed in the garden of Gethsemane.

Now here's what's interesting. Gardens are a big deal in the Bible. We're not a generation... Americans don't think a lot about symbolism, but the Jewish people did. The Hebrews did, for sure. The Old Testament and New Testament are full of symbolism. So, where does the Bible start? A garden. Where does the Bible end? If you read it carefully, a city with a garden in the middle of it.

One of the other accounts of the resurrection... Remember? He rises from the dead. Do you remember who Mary thinks he is? "Are you the gardener?" Interesting. Why would you say that? Because he was in a garden. He rose in a garden. What's interesting here is our first father, Adam, failed in a garden. He disobeyed at a tree. The second Adam, Jesus Christ, is going to obey in a garden.

Let's see what happens here. Verse 32 continued: **"And he said to his disciples..."** He's about to go through some enormous suffering. I'll show you this. **"And he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.'" He doesn't even tell them to pray. "And he took with him Peter and James and John..."** This is his DNA Group. These are his closest friends. **"...and began to be greatly distressed and troubled."**

Theologians ask, "When did the suffering of Christ begin?" There are a lot of answers. Some people say, "Let me tell you when the suffering of Christ began. It began in his incarnation. The whole idea that he emptied himself, that he took on human flesh, that he lived a human life...that's suffering." Yes, but when did the intensity and the frequency of his suffering really begin? It was at the garden of Gethsemane.

When Jesus is suffering... Do you see the two things he needs when he's suffering? They're right in the text. You need a lot of things when you're suffering, but the two things Jesus needs (I think they're the same things *we* need) are *people* and *prayer*. Now, people are always suffering. People reach out to us all the time when they're suffering. There are practical things you can tell someone when they're suffering.

The most practical thing you can tell somebody when they're suffering is "Shorten your time frame." Say someone breaks their leg. We've gotten this phone call before. "Pastor Kyle, I'm going to be in this cast for four months, and I just can't even think about all of the things I can't do for four months." The answer to that is "Well, then you need to shorten the time frame. Let's think about the next day. Can you think about a day? Can you think about a week?"

So, there are some practical things you do in suffering, but what do you need? You need people and you need prayer. So, he needs these disciples. He doesn't even say, "I want to talk to you guys." I think this is why we're not good at what's called... This is called the *ministry of presence*. The *ministry of presence* is I'm just there when someone is hurting.

Sometimes we don't do that because we're like, "What would I say?" I've felt that. "What verses would I tell them? What questions should I ask them?" No, the ministry of presence is, literally, we just need you to be there. The greatest example of the ministry of presence is the apostle John next to Mary at the cross of Christ. He's just there. He's there for Jesus. He's there for Mary in the time of need.

But he doesn't just need people. He needs prayer. What he does in the garden of Gethsemane is he prays three times earnestly. How do you process your pain? What do you do with pain? A lot of us don't like pain. I'm a Seven on the Enneagram, so I don't like negative emotion at all. Most people feel pain, and it's like a tub of Blue Bell ice cream for you. It's drink too much. It's entertain myself. A very common one is just sleep a lot because it's too painful to be conscious.

Jesus goes, and he processes his pain through prayer. Prayer is really the one place you can be honest. You can close the door. You can unplug Alexa. No one is listening. You can get on your knees, and you can just say to God things you would never want to say to another person. "Why did I marry him? Gosh, did I marry the wrong person?"

"Why do I have cancer?"

"Why am I so angry at my one son all the time?"

"Why can't I say no to this addiction?"

"Why do I hate being single so much?"

I don't know. You just pour your heart out to God. In the process, you learn more about yourself. Now, a lot of us don't know how to pray and express emotion. This is

why the Psalms are helpful. In the Psalms are all of the experiences and emotions of the human life.

Well, let's see what Jesus does. He continues to pray here. Verse 34: **"And he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.'"** Again, he doesn't even ask them to pray for him. This is something Jesus has to deal with himself.

"And going a little farther, he fell on the ground..." Literally, in the Greek, *collapsed*. This isn't getting down nicely on his knees to pray because it's a good position to pray in. This is "I'm overwhelmed by the weight of what I'm about to do, and I collapse."

"...and prayed that, if it were possible..." Here are the key words we're going to look at. **"...the hour might pass from him."** That's the first word: *hour*. **"And he said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.'"** That's the second thing we'll look at.

Here's what's interesting. Critics of the Bible... There are a lot of critics of the Bible, but a lot of critics of the Bible don't read the Bible. Critics of the Bible who read the Bible (those are a different type of critic)... One of the things they have said is it's hard to see Jesus as divine in this passage because he seems so afraid of death.

People have wrestled with that, because if you think about Christians (or non-Christians, but let's start with Christians)... Christians have faced death joyfully. There are stories... When you read them in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and other places, you're really surprised by them. You'll hear stories of men and women singing on their way to the lions' den.

I remember reading a story one time about a guy. He was about to be burned at the stake. When he got up to the stake, he hugged it and said, "I'm almost home." Peter, who was crucified... Church tradition tells us he said, "Don't crucify me like everybody else. Crucify me upside down." He faced the cross with confidence and lack of fear.

Then there are non-Christians. Socrates drinks the poison, puts his house in order beforehand, won't recant. William Wallace. We love the movie *Braveheart*. He's yelling, "Freedom!" So, they ask this question. If other Christians and non-Christians are able to face death with such confidence, why couldn't Jesus? It's not that Jesus was afraid of death. He was afraid of the wrath of God. You and I should be as well.

We get it in those words the *hour* and the *cup*. A careful reading of Jesus' ministry... He'll say things in the Gospels like, "My time has not come. My hour has not come."

The *hour* was the moment where God was going to treat Jesus like sin. That's what happened at the cross. Jesus never sinned, but at the cross God treated Jesus as every person's sin all at one time.

I'm not a huge student of revival, but as I've read about revival, there's a famous revival that happened in Ireland several decades ago. They said the revival was so big that when ships would pull in from other ports, the sailors would come under conviction when they pulled in. They'd immediately feel like they were sinners.

When they've interviewed people about this revival... One of the guys interviewed said something very interesting. He said what would happen during this revival... All a revival is is an acceleration of the work of God in one place. He said here's what would happen during a revival. He said you'd get there, the pastor would start to preach, and it would be as if every sin you ever committed was right in front of you.

Imagine that. Just think about the last week or maybe, if you can remember, the last month, and just think about what you would consider your bigger sins. Then imagine them all being in front of you all at once. Then imagine you having to pay for them all at once. Jesus is saying, "Every person who would ever believe in me... I am going to suffer the wrath of God. I'm going to experience, basically, hell on the cross for three hours straight." He was afraid of that.

The illustration of the cup is... What's the cup? It's something you drink. So, he basically asks the question, "Is it possible for this hour to pass and for this cup to not have to be drank by me?" We've said this before, but this is the question, "Is there another way for people to get to heaven if I don't go to the cross?" God's answer is "I can't save you and save them."

This is why I do get frustrated at that question, because if you understand... No, there's only one way sin can be dealt with. There's only one way forgiveness can be given, and it was so terrifying that Jesus himself had to wrestle with this. He gets to a point where he says this famous prayer. Verse 36: ***"Yet not what I will, but what you will."*** This is the picture of submission. This is the picture of surrender.

This is the moment where, finally, our salvation was decided and cemented for good. Jesus decides, "Not what I will, God, but what you will." This is a picture of submission and surrender. Let me ask you this: Where in your life do you need to submit and surrender? This is such a hard... Every time I teach on submission, it feels like I have to talk about it for 10 or 15 minutes because we have such negative connotations with the word *submission*.

I think submission to God looks something like *this*. There's a power in this. "God, I want to do what your Word says in this area of my life." I actually think that's the

heart of prayer. Someone told me one time 90 percent of prayer is getting neutral before God. "God, this is my marriage. I want to do what you said in it. God, these are my kids. God, these are my finances. God, this is my stage of life. God, this is my health." There's power and grace that comes when we submit.

Well, Jesus has to go back and forth and pray multiple times about this. Look at verse 37. ***"And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words."*** If you ever feel like, "I'm praying the same things the same way," Jesus did as well.

"And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come.'" There's that phrase again. ***"The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."***

So, he comes to the disciples, and he finds them sleeping. He warns them. He both challenges and encourages them. He warns them to pray. Again, I wonder this. I wonder if Peter would not have denied Jesus if he would have stayed awake and prayed. We don't know. The same thing with *your* life. What are all of the good things that haven't happened because you haven't prayed? Maybe God will tell us in heaven.

03 JESUS IS BETRAYED BY JUDAS WITH A KISS

Then this scene ends. He's forsaken by God the Father. He gets silence from heaven when he asks, "Is there another way?" Now he's about to be betrayed by Judas. Again, Spencer did a great job last week introducing this. I just want to talk about betrayal for a moment.

What makes betrayal so hard on us is it's always done by a trusted person. That's the definition of betrayal. Betrayal is something like a sense of harm done to you by the intentional actions of someone you trusted. The common illustration we have today is "You stabbed me in the back."

If you think about that illustration, it's a perfect illustration of betrayal, because the only person who could stab you in the back is somebody who was able to get close enough to you to do it who you didn't expect to do it. That's why you were able to turn around and look in a different direction, because you didn't ever see it coming.

Betrayal is an interesting thing because there are different types of betrayal. We're going to look at Judas' in a minute. All of us will have to deal with betrayal. Sometimes someone has betrayed us. Once somebody betrays you (I'm speaking psychologically for a minute), it's almost impossible for you to see them the same again. It takes a lot of work.

When someone betrays you, it makes you ask a lot of questions about the past that you never asked. "How long were you planning this? Did you ever love me? Who else have you told?" There are different types of betrayal. The most common type of betrayal is what's called a *harmful disclosure*.

A harmful disclosure is you shared something... I gave you the fine china of my life, and you shared it. Normally, we share it with somebody else because it makes us feel good that we have insider information, or it makes us feel good to destroy somebody else's reputation to elevate our own.

The number-one way people betray is harmful disclosures. The second way people betray, they say, is dishonesty across time. It's usually the hiding of something. What I've seen in my ministry experience is that when a sin is sometimes confessed, but certainly when somebody is caught with a sin, most times the spouse or the dad or the mom or the friend is much less upset about the sin.

It's much more about the betrayal. It's much more about the hiding. It's much more about the lying. Then you have to decide, "How far back do we need to go? Is this years? Do we need to go months? Do we need to go years?" In some cases, "Do we need to go decades and talk about something? Is the entire past a lie in our relationship?" It's very hard on people.

Then, of course, the most graphic type of betrayal is actually infidelity itself. You had the emotional affair. You had the physical affair. Then they ask, "Why do people do this? Why do people betray?" I mean, the theological answer is *sin*, but under sin is it's two things. It's narcissism and an opportunity. That's what betrayal is. "I'm only thinking about myself, and I see..." This is what Judas did. "I see an opportunity for me. I'm going to have to put somebody else down for me to get this opportunity."

The problem with betrayal, outside of it being a sin, is it's always a short-term gain. Betrayal works... It doesn't work, but you know what I'm saying. It works one time, and then that person doesn't trust you ever again. Here's what I've seen in our church and in our ministry. A marriage can... And I believe in the grace of God.

A marriage can usually handle one betrayal of a serious nature. Hopefully, that doesn't ever happen, but I've seen marriages handle one betrayal. There's confession. There's repentance. There's restoration. I have seen it very hard, almost impossible,

to make it through two or three betrayals because of the amount of work to re-see the person who betrayed you in a new light, for trust to be re-extended and re-earned.

Let's look at what happens with Judas. Verse 43: ***"And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs..."*** This is also a sign that Judas didn't understand Jesus' mission. Jesus said he was going to go willingly. He brings all of these guys with swords and clubs.

"...from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer..."

Interesting. That's now how he's known. ***"Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man.'"*** By the way, this is where we get the phrase *kiss of death*. It comes from this passage.

"'Seize him and lead him away under guard.' And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear."

This is really interesting. We find out from another account who this is...Peter. We actually find out from another account that Jesus heals the man's ear immediately after it's cut off. We may go, "That's a really cool miracle, and it's really cool to see Jesus doing miracles even while he's about to go to the cross," but that's not the reason Jesus healed his ear.

The reason Jesus healed his ear is because you cannot attack a Roman soldier, and if he had not restored his ear, there would have been four crosses at Calvary. What a powerful picture. Jesus is saving Peter's life even as Peter is about to deny him and leave him. Look at what happens.

"And Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.' And they all left him and fled." Look at verse 51. ***"And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked."***

You're like, "I know all Scripture is inspired by God, but that's a little strange." Here's what that is. Tradition tells us and most commentaries say this is Mark. Mark is doing what Stan Lee did, if you know Stan Lee. Stan Lee would put himself in all of the Avengers movies at a weird scene. Alfred Hitchcock did the exact same thing. He was in 36 different movies he put himself in. This is Mark putting himself in the movie, per se, saying, "I was there."

04 JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY HIS CULTURE (RELIGION, POLITICS & PEOPLE)

Now here's what happens. Jesus is forsaken by God. He is betrayed by Judas. Now he's about to... I don't have time to read it all to you. It's found in verses 53-65. He's going to be condemned by every leader and institution in the culture. I wish I had more time to get into this. I'm going to get into this next week when we look at Pilate. You have to understand that Jesus is going to face six trials. Three of them are more political. Three of them are religious. He keeps going back and forth.

He is condemned by culture. We need to think about this for a moment. This would almost be like if your nation was against you and you had to go to the Supreme Court and, also, at the same time, your church excommunicated you and told you they didn't want you to come back and, at the same time, everybody on Twitter was tweeting about you negatively. You got the Twitter mob.

I'm being kind of funny here, but that's what it would feel like. It's very hard. If you've ever just had someone say a negative comment on your Facebook page, it hurts. Right? Yet alone having everybody and every respected institution come against you.

05 JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER IN A COURTYARD

What you see in this trial is that it is an unjust trial, but here's what I want us to see. Go down to verse 66. I'll show you this. This is what Mark wants us to understand. There are actually two trials going on. The one trial is the trial we all think of: Jesus before the high priest being asked if he's the Son of God, being accused of blasphemy, having false witnesses...all that. But there's a second trial.

Look at verse 66. ***"And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came..."*** Now, when we think courtyard, we think, "Oh, courtyard. That's like a nice garden area." That's how we think of it today. If you have a larger home or a larger estate, you kind of have this opening courtyard. Well, look at the literal words there. That's what it was back then. It was a court yard. It was where court was held for lesser cases.

Here's what Mark wants us to see. Jesus is on trial. He's faithful in trial. Peter is also on trial, and he is unfaithful. Jesus is going to be accused of blasphemy, and he's not a blasphemer because he is the Son of God. In a moment, Peter is going to call down

curses. Most people think he's using the Lord's name in vain and blaspheming God to show that he's not part of Jesus' tribe. Jesus doesn't blaspheme; Peter does.

Jesus is able to stand up to the high priest of the day and give an account. Peter crumbles when a servant girl asks him a question. That's what we're supposed to see here. I'll show you. Verse 67: **"...and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you mean.' And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed."**

I mentioned this when we first read the story. Jesus said the rooster was going to crow twice, but here the rooster just crows once, meaning, the rooster is going to crow one more time. This was a warning crow. Has the rooster ever crowed once in your life? Let me give you some examples of the rooster crowing once in your life.

Have you ever almost gotten caught? You were like, "Oh man. That was close. Maybe I shouldn't be doing this." Have you ever had a health scare where you were like, "I think this is maybe connected to some addiction in my life"? Have your kids ever gotten a little bit older and a little more sophisticated, and they asked you about something in your life that's not right, and you went, "Man, maybe this is the rooster crowing one time in my life"?

Has your spouse ever brought up something in your life that you knew was an issue? Your own conscience was already condemning you. This is a warning. Now, here's what tends to happen when the rooster crows once in our lives. We have two options. First, which is the option I hope we'll choose, is "I need to repent. This is God's grace in waking me up. I didn't caught, maybe, but this is the time to repent. My health hasn't completely failed, but it's starting to. There's still grace. There's still time."

But a lot of people, when the rooster crows once, go, "That was nothing." Or if they have a negative view of themselves, maybe they think, "I already did X, Y, and Z, so I might as well just keep on. I already gave in. I already messed up. I might as well keep going." We'll see what happens with Peter.

Verse 69: **"And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.'" Now, how would they know that? He would have had an accent. He would have had a uniquely Galilean accent that would have let them know he was from that area.**

Here it is. **"But he began to invoke a curse..."** Probably using the Lord's name in vain. **"But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know this man**

of whom you speak." I just want us to understand. This is going to be the leader of the church, the leader of the other disciples when Jesus goes to heaven.

One of the reasons I believe the Bible... There are supernatural reasons and there are natural reasons. One of the natural reasons I believe the Bible is it was written by people who are not the heroes in the story but the villains in the story. Here's Peter. I'm trying to not overstate but not understate the gravity of what Peter does.

This is a grievous sin. There are different types of sin. All sin deserves punishment. I get that. But there are uniquely grievous public sins, and that's what Peter did. He did a sin repeatedly, again and again and again on the same night. Have you ever done that? It's like, "This is bad, so I'm just going to indulge in it." It's public. This is hard to recover from. He temporarily ruins his public witness.

This is going to be the leader of the church, the guy who's afraid of the servant girl? This is who it's going to be? He's not with Jesus, helping Jesus, standing up for Jesus, in Jesus' greatest time of need. But watch what happens. Verse 72: ***"And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept."***

What brought conviction in Peter's life was the Word of God. This is what we see. I've seen this again and again and again, usually from people who grew up in Christian homes. They go and live a rebellious lifestyle for a season, and then something happens. Maybe they go to a church, and they hear a sermon, and they hadn't heard the Word of God in a long time.

Maybe it's Scripture memory verses their parents made them remember, and all of a sudden they remember. "Oh my goodness. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." They remember some portion of Scripture, and they feel conviction.

What happens with conviction is when your situation and the Scriptures come together, where what's going on in your world and the Word of God come together. What's powerful about this story is... In some ways, this is the beginning of Peter's restoration. Peter is going to be restored.

If you want to look fully for his restoration, it happens in John 20 and 21, but I want to show you something. Mark 16:6-7. This is the next chapter. Look at what this says here. This is as soon as Jesus rises from the dead. ***"And he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed.'"*** He says this to the women. This isn't Jesus; this is the angel.

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him." Then look at what he says. ***"But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."*** Jesus rises from the dead, and the first thing he does is what he said he was going to do at the beginning, which was he was going to go back after them, and he especially names Peter.

See, I think what made Peter the right leader for the church is he was going to, from that day on, lead with a limp. The best leaders are the leaders who have experienced the grace of God in their own life, who have had the troubles in their marriage, who've walked through difficulties with their kids, who've had to break addictions in their own life, and who don't just extend the grace of God to other people but have experienced it, who don't just preach repentance but have, in their own life, practiced repentance.

The sad story, as the narrative closes (we don't get this in Mark's account, but we get this in other accounts), is the difference between Judas and Peter. What happens with Judas is Judas experiences what we call *worldly sorrow*. *Worldly sorrow* is "I'm sorry for the effects of my sin." Judas ended up taking his life. *Godly sorrow* is "I'm sorry for my sin." It's the difference between remorse, which is what Judas felt, and repentance, which is what Peter felt.

As we close, if you'll close your eyes and bow your heads, I just want to give us an opportunity to think about something and respond and just pray about this moment, as we look at the first leader of the church failing. We want to be a church where we don't want anyone to fail, but where someone *could* fail. We want to be a place where a person's life can fall apart.

We want to be a place where people can come and be healed and set free. We want to be a place of grace. We want to be a place where people get second and third and fourth chances. The truth is Jesus wasn't just rejected so that you and I could be accepted. He was rejected so we could be restored.

I just want to ask you, as we close, just before you and the Lord, not before anyone else...Has the rooster crowed once in your life? Has there been a warning call that says, "It's time to wake up. It's time to repent. It's time to clean this area of your life up. It's time to reconcile this relationship. It's time to confess this sin"? Would you just take a moment and ask God for the strength to do that, to heed the warning of the first rooster crow?

For others in here, this will just be personally for you. Some of you have felt in this room like the rooster has crowed twice. "Kyle, you don't know what I've done. You don't know what I did in high school. You don't know what I did when I was single.

You don't know what I did in college. You don't know what I did on vacation." Peter is a picture that there always can be restoration. Restoration includes two things. It includes, first and foremost, being restored to Christ and, after a time, restored to ministry.

Lord, we pray that that's what would happen in here. There are too many things to do, too many people to reach, and too much ministry and mission to be done for anyone to sit on the sidelines because of something they did in the past, so would you give us grace? Would you give us community? Would Two Cities be a place of healing, hope, and restoration? We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.