

SERMON - PASTOR GREG
Easter Sunday 17.4.2022

NO REGRETS. How many times have you thought: "I wish I had of done things differently?" How many regrets do you carry around in your life? In recent times I have heard people being asked, "What would you like to say to yourself when you were younger? What tips would you give to your younger self? What would you do differently if you had the chance?"

On Thursday night we remembered and celebrated Jesus last meal with his closest disciples. Simon, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Thaddaeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot. With them, Jesus had his last meal on earth. To them he gave the command: Do this as often as you eat the bread and drink the wine- for this Bread is my life and this wine is my blood. For three years he had been with them, teaching them as he spoke, as he worked miracles, as he healed, as he cast out demons and as he walked on water. He had told them that he was going to be put to death. And he had told them that they would all fall away on account of him (Matthew 28:31. In response: Peter replied, "*Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.*" *And all the other disciples said the same.*

But they did. Peter denied him three times. Judas betrayed him. And before that, James and John had quietly- secretly- come to Jesus asking to be on his right and left when he finally took the throne. Martha was too busy in the kitchen to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him. Mary accused Jesus after he brother had died: *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.* In different ways at different times it seems that most of Jesus disciples had said and done things which in hindsight they regretted. But of course we usually focus on two of them- Peter and Judas. Both shared an intimate meal with Jesus on that last night, both shared that intimate time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Both had promised to stand with Jesus even if it cost them their lives. But when the pressure came, both of them denied/betrayed Jesus.

All of us have regrets. All of us wish we had done things differently. In our personal relationships, in our careers, in so much of our lives. And maybe in our relationship with God. I recently spoke to a Lutheran pastor who is soon to retire. He made a comment something like this: I could have done more.

So what do we do?

If we have made a mistake that can be rectified- rectify it. If we have hurt someone- if it is possible- admit wrong doing and seek forgiveness. Pretty obvious isn't it?

But there are so many things that we cannot change- we cannot undo the past. But we can let go. We cannot forget but we can forgive. And that includes forgiving ourselves.

This is one of the wonderful consequences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are forgiven. We are redeemed. We have the opportunity of a second chance.

Judas gave up on Jesus and died in his sin. Peter did not give up and Jesus restored him- for all eternity.

Regrets- yes. Mistakes- yes. Sinful words and actions to others-yes. How many times am I reminded of past failures? Often. Sometimes I am reminded by God and other times I am reminded by Satan. God seeks to challenge and change me. Satan seeks to condemn me and have me overcome with guilt and despair. What do I do?

I pray. Often I pray the Jesus Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. And I pray for the people involved in my memories.

And I remember God's word:

Psalm 103: 12: As far as the east is from the west, so far has (God) removed our transgressions from us.

Isa 43:18: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. Behold, I am doing a new thing.

Lam 3:23: Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness (O'LORD).

2 Cor 5:17: Therefor, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone- the new has come!

Philippians 3:13: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The Lord has risen! He has risen indeed! Amen.