

The Semicolon Moment

Peter: Luke 22

- How many of you like movies? You would say you are movie people?
 - Rachel and I love to watch movies, we don't get to as much as we used to anymore, but we were the ones that would go get popcorn from the movie theatre and then take it home to watch a movie
 - But I'm the type of guy that can get emotionally invested into a movie
 - And not necessarily through crying, im not a big cryer. Not like the pastors that I used to work for who could cry like 5 times a sermon, that's not me...I guess im not that spiritual yet
 - But there are other ways to get emotionally invested, namely like yelling at the tv
 - Ive been known to do this, especially during sporting events.
- But im the type of guy that can be watching a movie that I've see 100 times before and still find myself so caught up in it and yelling at the tv.
 - For example. Remember the Titans is the greatest movie of all time. I would say that it's my favorite movie of all time, but I don't think that would be doing it justice. It is the Best Movie Ever Made
 - However, within the greatest movie of all time, we have one of the worst scenes of all time
 - If you're not familiar with the story, it's based in 1971, TC Williams High School in the state of Virginia has just desegregated their school for the first time, which is causing a lot of social and cultural unrest in the town.
 - However, the football team, the Titans, are leading the charge toward unity.
 - They have been having an incredible season of bonding, coming together, and they're winning a lot of games.

- And at one point in the movie, they are still undefeated and have just won the game that punched their ticket to the 1971 Virginia State Title game
- And after their victory, they get back to the school, and they get off of the bus to see the entire town out there to celebrate them
- For the first time, this town, with all of the social and racial unrest that they had been experiencing, they set all of that aside, to rally around their Titans.
- And it's this heart warming scene of everyone coming together. And Gary Bertier, the all-american, team captain, star linebacker is taking in the entire scene. He had just made amends with his girl friend. We have James Taylor playing softly in the background
- And he decides to take a drive around to just soak in the unity and everyone celebrating.
- And as he's cruising along, he see's one of his buddies. And they start pointing at each

other, saying, "You man! No, You man! No You!"

- And Gary goes to do one of these dramatic spin offs, and this is when I yell at the TV... GARY! LOOK TO YOUR LEFT!
- And by the time Gary finally listens to me, a truck comes barreling into the drivers side of his Camaro, leaving him paralyzed from the waste down.
- It's one of the most heart wrenching, gut wrenching scenes in all of cinematic history.
- However, some of the greatest scenes of the movie come after the worst one. The way they rally in the hospital, the way they play through the adversity in the state title game... Actually the horrors of that scene is one of the things that propels the story to be even greater...ITS THE BEST MOVIE EVER MADE!!
- You see, we all are going to go through some tough scenes in life at one point or another.

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- And we have a tendency, to want to give up, throw in the towel, and just roll over whenever those difficult scenes come.
- However, we need to know that just because a scene is difficult, that doesn't mean that the story is over.
 - Just like we celebrate during this time of the year, during Holy week, yes Jesus died on the cross, but the story wasn't over!
 - The only reason we can call it GOOD Friday, is because Sunday was coming!
 - The day that would change the course of History! When He got up out of that grave, and defeated sin and death forever!
 - It's the greatest news ever known to man, and it's the hope that we cling to, in the midst of this dark, chaotic, confusing life that we are living in that still comes with some difficult scenes!
- Now, these difficult times may be due to our own mistakes, or they may be due to circumstances outside of our control
- And some of us might be in the midst of one of those scenes of life right now but I want to encourage you today:
 - **YOU MAY NOT LIKE YOUR SCENE, BUT GOD IS NOT DONE WITH YOUR STORY**
 - And to illustrate this, I want to look at the story of a man named Peter.
 - The night that Jesus was arrested was one of the darkest days for Peter and probably the worst scene of his life.
 - Because he had always been Jesus' most outspoken and most enthusiastic follower!
 - It all goes back to the day Peter first met Jesus...
 - Peter was a regular guy, a blue collar worker. He was a fisherman, and had just gotten done workin the third shift. And he had a frustrating night. He had worked and fished

all throughout the night and didn't catch a single thing.

- So the next morning, he's packing up the boat, and cleaning the nets, minding his own business, trying to get everything done so he can go home.
- And then all of the sudden there's this Guy, who just lets Himself on to Peters boat
 - And then Peter just hears this Guy ask him, "Hey, you mind pulling out from shore a little bit?"
 - And Peter who's already at his wits end after his frustrating night, turns around so annoyed, and realizes that it's Jesus.
 - Peter had heard about Jesus, never met him yet, but he knows that Jesus is a local celebrity.
 - He looks past Jesus and sees that there's a crowd of a couple of hundred people there, and so he's like, "Uh, sure. Yea, I can pull out a bit..."
- So he pulls the boat out a little bit from the shore so Jesus can have a bit of a platform to teach from and that His voice would carry better for the crowd to hear.
- And Peter continues to do his thing and clean his nets, but he's hearing Jesus teach in the background.
- And after Jesus gets done teaching, and dismisses the crowds, He turns and says to Peter, "Hey, let's go out into the deep for a catch. Let's go fishing"
- Peter smirks a bit, he's like, "Jesus, I'm the professional fisherman here, there's actually no fish out there, we had been out all night... but you know what, let's have fun with it, You're a local celebrity, i'll take you out for a little tour give you some insight into what he do and how the boats are run, things like that."
 - It'll turn into a good story for the guys at the bar later.

- So they go out into the deep of the water, and Peter is showing Him the ins and outs of the fisherman business, he casts the net out lets it sink, and says, “You see you do it like this and if there were any fish you would pull it in like so....
 - And then he tries to drag the net into the boat, but the net starts dragging him!
 - And there ends up being so many fish in this catch that the nets start to break and he has to call to another boat near by to help carry all of these fish that are caught in his net!
- And then something happens to Peter, and He gets overwhelmed by the presence of God in this moment, something clicks in him, understanding Who Jesus really is
- And he gets down, and falls on his face before Jesus and says, “Get away from me! I’m a sinful man!” He says, “We shouldn’t even be in the same vicinity as each other!”
- But then Jesus says, “Get up...I want you to come follow Me. From now on, I am going to make you a fisher of men.”
- Then Peter Begins this journey of following Jesus
 - And over the next 3 years, He would see Him heal countless people
 - He would see Him leave the smartest religious leaders speechless
 - He would see Him feed thousands of people with a few scraps
 - He would see Him walk on water
- And would even walks on water toward Him
 - Yes, a few steps in Peter takes his eyes off of Jesus and begins to sink and Jesus has to save him
 - But can we still appreciate the faith that it took to step out of the boat in the first place!

- We condemn Peter for his lack of faith and for getting scared, but how many of us would have even stepped onto the water??
- Peter, in spite of all of his flaws, he was confident and believed that Jesus was exactly who He said He was and had the power to do whatever He wanted to do
- A few chapters later in Matt 16, Jesus asks “Who do you say I am”
 - Peter doesn’t hesitate...”You are the Christ, Son of the living God!”
 - Jesus smiles and says:
- **“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” -Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**
 - Peter is feeling himself!
 - He got a gold star, gave the right answer
- Jesus goes on to tell His disciples He is going to have to die, at the hands of the Pharisees, but

on the third day, He would rise from the dead...

- And Peter, because he’s feeling himself and Jesus’ star student of the moment, he feels confident enough to:
- ***“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”***
-Matthew 16:22-23 (ESV)
- What a quick turn around here!
- How do you go from I’m going to use you to build my church..to 4 verses later...GET BEHIND ME SATAN! You’re a hindrance to Me??
- Peter had confidence in who Jesus was, but has his own idea of what Jesus was supposed to do...

- In Peter's mind...Jesus was supposed to overthrow the Roman government
- He was supposed to assume the Throne in Jerusalem and make Israel a leading world power once again!
- This is why Jesus said "you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."
 - You see, the disciples, no matter how many times Jesus told them, couldn't understand that Jesus had a much bigger enemy that He had come to overthrow
 - The enemy of sin and death, everything that separated mankind from God
 - His weapon would not be a sword, His would not fight with politics or anything of the like....His weapon would be a cross
 - And whenever He set His face toward Jerusalem, He knew He was facing certain death
- On that Palm Sunday when He rode into town, all of the cheers and excitement were coming from those expecting Him to take the throne in Jerusalem and lead the rebellion against Rome
- But Jesus knew all of that excitement would change, because He wasn't doing what they expected Him to do
 - And also He knew that those closest to Him would abandon Him as well
- *So Jesus knowing everything that's going to happen to Him. He gathers His disciples together, the 12 closest guys to Him on the planet, so observe the passover meal together.*
- *This is famously referred to as "The Last Supper"...He wanted to have one last meal with His guys before He goes to the cross.*
 - *After the meal, Jesus turns to Simon Peter:*
- ***"And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and***

when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers.”- Luke 22:31-32 (ESV)

- You may fail, but your faith doesn't have to
 - Essentially, Jesus is saying that He knows that Peter is going to have a moment of monumental failure, but He has prayed for Peter, that that moment of failure would not be the end of the story.
 - That is why is not a period after fail, its a semicolon
- ***Semicolon (;): “When the author could have ended the sentence, but chose not to”***
- I don't know about you, but I have had some semicolon moments in my life. Where I thought the sentence could be over, but I realized that I am not the author of my story and God had a better plan
- No matter where you are in life right now, God's not done with your story
- No matter if we have failed or something has happened that seems to be too difficult to

ever move on from, where we would put a period, He puts a semicolon, and uses those things to strengthen us so we can strengthen the people around us

- That's why Jesus says, after the semicolon He says, “and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers.”
- ***“But he said to Him, (what do you mean, “when I return to you”) “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” - Luke 22:33-34 (ESV)***
 - And Jesus looks at Peter, knowing that Peter really believes what he is saying in his heart
 - But Jesus also, knowing that Peter wasn't there yet.
- Now, Jesus knew that Peter eventually would be in and out of prison for his faith
- Jesus knew that Peter would one day, indeed, be that rock for the church that He said he would be and ultimately give his life for Jesus!
 - But he wasn't there..

- ***Then [Jesus] said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."***
-Luke 22:34 (ESV)

- He wasn't there yet
- Peter was going to fail, but Jesus was going to use that to help him learn and grow to learn the way he needed to learn and grow

- You know, for all of us, our propensity to fail comes from thinking we are stronger than we really are

- You'll never find strength until you realize how weak you are, and you'll never gain wisdom until you realize how little you know
- As soon as you think you can handle your sin your sin will handle you

- Peter thought that he was strong enough, Peter thought he was ready

- But then a few hours later, a mob come to arrest Jesus

- ***"So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons."*** -***John 18:3 (ESV)***

- A band of soldiers could be anywhere from 300 to 600 soldiers

- ***"Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." ... When Jesus said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground."*** -***John 18:4-6 (ESV)***

- The first time I really read this, it sent a shiver down my spine
- Here Jesus is facing a mob that has 300+ highly trained, soldiers in it and by Him declaring His identity as the great I AM, He sends the whole mob falling to the ground

- Peter's gotta be watching this, and thinking, "Oh yea! It's happening, it's about to go down!"
- **"So He asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He. So, if you seek Me, let these men go." -John 18:7-8 (ESV)**
- Peter's like, "Let me go? Yea, right! It's time to fight!"
- He pulls out his sword and swings it at the closest person to him, this guy named Malchus, who isn't even a soldier, he's a servant of the high priest, he probably doesn't even wanna be there, he gets caught in the cross fire and peter slices his ear off!
- But Jesus immediately says, "PETER! Put your sword away!"
- And then He picks up Malchus' ear, puts it back on and heals him, and allows Himself to be arrested
- Can you imagine being in the scene?? Being the handcuff guy?
 - You just got knocked to the ground along with hundreds of solders just by Jesus verbally declaring who He was
 - Then you see Him put a guy's ear back on his head
 - And they turn to you and say, "Alright, cuff him"
 - Nope. I'm good.
- Peter is utterly confused! For 3 years He has seen the power of Jesus on full display and now He's allowing Himself to be arrested!
 - People had tried to seize Him before but Jesus didn't let them, why now??
 - Peter, and all the disciples are in panic mode now, things aren't going according to what he thought the plan was...they fled the scene!

- But Peter goes incognito, and he follows discretely from a distance
 - He gets himself smuggled into the court of the high priest, where Jesus is being questioned and put on trial.
 - When he goes into the courtyard, there's a fire going, so he goes and sits down around the fire
- Servant girl looks at him closely, "This is one of the guys that was with that Jesus that was arrested."
 - Peter says, "Woman, I do not know Him"
- A little later, a guy says "Yea, you were one of those disciple"
 - He says, "Man, No I'm not"
- An hour later, someone else says, "This guy is a Galilean, he was DEFINITELY with Jesus!"
- ***"But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster***

crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly." -Luke 22:60-62 (ESV)

- A few hours earlier, he was so confident in himself, and now in his panic and confusion, he does the very thing he vowed he would never do
 - He's in the darkest scene of his life.
 - I can only imagine the sickening feeling that he got in his stomach when he makes direct eye contact with Jesus after his third denial
- He had served Jesus faithfully and boldly for three years and now when times were most crucial he completely failed
- This failure would hang over him, throughout Jesus' crucifixion, even when Jesus rose and he ran to the empty tomb, and saw Him

appear in the middle of a closed room, Peter still had this sense of failure hanging over him

- But remember, where we would put a period, God puts a semicolon...and because of that, whenever we are with Jesus:

- FAILURE IS NOT A PERIOD, IT'S A PAUSE

- However long you stay within that pause is up to you.
 - This is what we would call the semicolon moment
- When there has been a failure, a setback, a disaster, or whatever else that would feel like defeat. Now the sentence is not over, but there is a pause in the action
- Now the question is, what do we do within that pause?
- So Peter, in John chapter 21, even after the Resurrection and all of the excitement of it, he is still sitting on the beach in the middle of his semicolon moment

- He's thinking about everything that has transpired, not sure what to do with himself anymore,
- And in that moment, he does what we all are tempted to do within these moments, he goes back to doing that he used to do before he met Jesus.

- He says, "***Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing***" ***-John 21:3 (ESV)***.... He was going back to something he knew he was good at and could handle on his own

- But then he gets out there, fishing all night, catches nothing
- In the semicolon moment, you will be tempted to go back to whatever you used to find comfort in before Jesus, whether it was a certain hobby, substances, a toxic relationship, whatever it was that used to be your go to for relief and satisfaction.

- But since you have come to know Jesus and you've walked with Him, and you've experienced Him, you realize that those things don't have the same effect on you as they used to
 - They don't satisfy, even momentarily, the way that they used to, and really, and they only make you even more frustrated and bitter
- After fishing all night long and catching nothing, morning came, they're still empty handed and they hear a Guy from the shore yell to them
 - "Hey! You guys got any fish!"
 - Frustrated Peter... "No..."
 - "Try casting the net on the right side!"
 - *Like telling a pro football team...*
 - In their frustration, they cast the net on the right side...then he goes to drag the net back into the boat, but then the net starts dragging him
- Then Peter thinks to himself, "Oh I've seen this movie before..."
 - Johns says "It's Jesus!"
- So Peter drops the nets, dives into the water, and takes off swimming to the shore!
- The other guys stay in the boat, and probably pass Peter swimming like a mad mad in the water, and get to the shore first...but you can at least appreciate Peter's enthusiasm here
 - He gets to Jesus, now soaking wet and out of breath, and Jesus has a fire going, He's cooking, and tells Peter and the guys to come have breakfast, to come sit around the fire
 - And Peter thinks, "Oh, I've seen this movie before too..."
 - The last time Peter was around a fire...he was completely failing Jesus and denying Him
 - Its almost as if Jesus is recreating the scene

- ***“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”...***

- Peter is grieved because He knows that Jesus knows that he denied Him 3 times.
 - And now He's asking Peter 3 times if he loves Him
- It hasn't been talked about directly, but they both know

- They both remember that moment in the court yard when they locked eyes after the rooster crowed.
- ***...and [Peter] said to Him, “Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.” -John 21:15-17 (ESV)***
- Jesus wants Peter to confront his failure, but Jesus also wants to cover His failure.
 - Jesus wasn't trying to rub Peter's nose in what He has done. But Peter did need to face and realize his wrong doing. But Jesus didn't want Peter to stay in that guilt, Jesus didn't want him to stay that shame
 - Jesus was wanting to pull Him out of that Semicolon moment!
- Ok, you denied Me three times? Well I'll give you an opportunity to tell Me you love Me three times...and three times, I am going to reiterate the mission that I am entrusting you with!

- Jesus is giving Peter instruction in how to move forward,
- The way that Jesus tells him to move forward is to, love Me and serve other people
- And now Peter's got to be remembering Jesus tell him, ***“when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers.”***
- *You see, so many people miss out on all that this Christian life has to offer because we focus on what Jesus can do FOR me, rather than what Jesus can THROUGH me*
 - *But the reality is, there is no room for consumerism when it comes to having a relationship with Jesus*
 - *We are blessed to be a blessing*
 - *It is more blessed to give than to receive*
 - *We are filled, so that we can pour out*
- But what the enemy wants to do, is get you to stay within a semicolon moment, focusing on your failures, shortcomings, and inadequacies
- And get you to believe the lie that you can't help anyone else until you first help yourself
- But the reality is we can't even help ourselves, that's why we need a Savior, that's why we need Jesus!!
- To make something of me that I could never make of myself, despite all of the ways that I fall short....
- IF you're human, you will fail on one level or another
- But because of the Presence of Jesus in your life...Failure is not the end of the story, its just a pause in the action
- No matter what ways you have failed, or how other people have failed you, or how difficult life has gotten, God is not done with your story!
 - Failure is not a period, it's a pause
- ***“Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again” -Proverbs 24:16***

- Now you may be thinking, “Well, who exactly are the Righteous?”
- Well the word “**Righteous**” literally means “**To Be Right-With-God**”
 - And there’s only one way to be right with God...and it’s not ideology, it’s not philosophy, it’s not doing more good deeds and less bad deeds or some sort of glorified self-help program.
 - There is only ONE WAY to be Right With God! And that is to accept Jesus Christ!
 - Who through His life, He lived the life you could never live
 - Through His death, He paid the price for your sins, that you could never pay
 - Through His Resurrection He provided the way for Salvation that you could never provide for yourself!
 - It’s HIS work that takes precedent above all. Because:
- You cannot pull yourself out of a semicolon moment, you cannot work your way out of it!
- But too often we buy into this thinking that if we can go to church enough, or do enough good things, then we might get God’s attention and He’ll be pleased with us...and then things will turn around!
- It’s as if we think we can impress God somehow!
 - But the only thing that impresses God is His Son. That’s why it’s impossible to please God without faith, because it’s impossible to please God without Jesus. And Colossians says that whenever we put our faith and trust in Jesus, our lives are then hidden in Christ
 - That means when God looks at you, He doesn’t see your sins and your faults and your failures, all He see’s is the perfection of His Son...and THAT is what makes you Right-With-God. That is the reason you can be declared Righteous! THAT is what the resurrection made possible!

- AND THAT is why, even whenever you fall, get beaten down, or find yourself in the midst of a semicolon moment...you can rise again!
 - And when the proverb says Seven times, that doesn't mean a 7 strikes and you're out kind of thing
 - No, 7 in the bible is the number of perfection or completeness
 - Which is to say...*"You can completely fall or make a perfect mess of your life, but because of the righteousness of Jesus, you can rise again"*
- No matter how detrimental this life may get, God is not done with your story and He wants to use you to change lives
- It doesn't matter what we think we can do or what we have done, the only thing that matters is what God has done and what He wants to do through you
 - There is NOTHING too difficult for Him
 - There is NO ONE that is too far off that He cannot redeem
- We see it all throughout the Bible
 - Where the rest of the world would have ended the sentence, God put a semicolon
 - Where we would have put a period, He made it only a Pause
- ***Abraham was too old to have children; God made Him a Father of millions***
- ***Moses had a speech impediment; God used him to be the voice of a nation***
- ***Joseph was sold as a slave; God used him to save a Kingdom***
- ***David's mistakes caused a broken family; God used it to produce the wisest man who ever lived***
- ***Paul hated Jesus and persecuted the church; then he met Jesus and started planting churches***

- ***Peter denied Jesus 3 times; 50 days later he preached and 3000 got saved***

- And Peter would start the next chapter of his journey
- And he would indeed strengthen the brothers, and be an example of bold and courageous faith for the new, young, growing Church
 - Because not but a few months after cowering in fear in the court of the high priest around that fire...he finds himself back in that same court
 - This time, he, along with John, were the ones that were arrested and being questioned.
 - And instead of denying Jesus, this time he preaches Jesus
- And he boldly declares to the most powerful religious leaders in their era the truth that:
“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” -Acts 4:12 (ESV)

- There is only ONE NAME in which we are Saved: and that’s JESUS
- There’s only ONE NAME, in which we find Healing: and that’s JESUS
- There’s only ONE NAME in which we find Hope: and that’s JESUS
- There’s only ONE NAME that Restores: and that’s JESUS
- There’s only ONE NAME that Redeems: and that’s JESUS
- There’s only ONE NAME that can turn a period into a pause: and that’s JESUS
- Because even though Judas turned on Him, His disciples left Him, and the Romans killed Him:
 - For Jesus: Betrayal wasn’t a period; it was a pause
 - For Jesus: Abandonment wasn’t a period; it was a pause

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- For Jesus: DEATH wasn't a period; it was a pause
- And when the enemy had thought they put an end to the sentence on Friday....it really was just the beginning of a new chapter
- And on that Sunday morning, all of the hell shook and trembled, when that stone was rolled away and Jesus stepped out of that grave!
- Completing everything that was required for you to be able to experience forgiveness, salvation, and an unhindered relationship with the God who made you.
- Now, I don't know where you are in your spiritual journey right now. But I do know that God is not done with your story
- And because of the Resurrection, there is nothing that is keeping you from being pulled up out of your semicolon moment, there is nothing keeping you from having a relationship with God or being used by God in powerful

ways....the only thing that can hold you back is yourself

- Fear no longer has power over your life
- Satan, the enemies of hell, have no power over your life
- Failure has no power over your life
- Because there is nothing more powerful than the love and acceptance that Christ provided by defeating the grave
- And because of His work, I echo Paul who says, I am convinced that neither death or life, nor anything in or out of this world will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.