

Mark 14:22-31

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- [0 : 0 0] Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning and we admit that even on our best weeks, there are times where we think of ourselves in a way that makes you look small, that we put ourselves ahead of you.
- We put our own will ahead of your will, our own desires ahead of your desires. And Lord, we humbly confess that we want to walk in your ways and live under your word and bend a knee to your kingship.
- Lord, we are frail and we need your strength. And as we open your word, pray that you would bolster us, that you would build us up, that you would encourage us and help us to grow in you and to love you in deeper measure and to know your will and by your grace have the strength to walk it out.
- So Lord, we ask that you would bless us as we open your word this morning. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. At any time, there should be some Bibles at the back.
- If you want to get up and grab one, that would be terrific. I'd encourage you guys to follow along if you can. Amen. Chapter 14.
- [1 : 2 5] It is the single largest chapter in Mark's ancient biography of Jesus' life. And we enter into the portion, well, I'll just say that chapter 14, it's really funny, I mentioned this last week.
- Mark takes the first two-thirds of his gospel account and he packs three years into it. And the last third, it's the last week or so of Jesus' life.
- And chapter 14, by and large, is about 12-ish, maybe 24 hours of Jesus' life. And Jesus here is in Jerusalem partaking of the Passover celebration.
- And as we will see this week, Jesus takes this beautiful celebration of the Passover and he will apply it, in a sense, to his own life, showing how he is the fulfillment of that.
- But also we see something else happen in this text. And namely, it helps us to be very honest about who we are and the nature of humanity. And the nature, actually, of free will.
- [2 : 3 2] And how that interacts and intersects with God's sovereignty. And then it will help us to have an honest look at what true mercy and true grace is all about. So three things we'll look at.
- And we'll kind of jump around the text. So we're going to look at verses 17 to 21 first. And that will help us to have a really honest look at what free will is. And what sovereignty is. And how the two interact.
- Then we're going to actually jump from verses 21 to, we're going to jump to verse 26 to 31. And we're going to take an honest look at human nature. What it means to be human.
- And the things that we're kind of disposed to. And then we're going to finish off looking at what true mercy and grace really looks like in verses 22 to 25.
- So let's jump right in. Verse 17, take an honest look at free will. And really, we addressed a bit of this portion last week. I'll read it, but we're going to just spend a bunch of time on verse 21.

[3 : 33] This is what it says. And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me. The disciples, they began to be sorrowful.

And to say to him, one after another, is it I? And Jesus said to them, it is one of the twelve who is dipping bread into the dish with me.

Verse 21, the son of man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. Who would have been better for that man if he had not been born?

That person, the betrayer, is Judas Iscariot. And he, we found out a couple weeks ago, that he betrayed Jesus.

He was indignant at Jesus because a woman came, an unnamed woman came, and took a very, very expensive bottle of perfume and anointed Jesus for burial.

[4 : 33] And it said some of them, they scoffed, they were angry because that perfume could have been sold and given to the poor. And immediately after, Judas goes out and he conspires with the religious leaders on how to betray Jesus, and they pay him for it.

Jesus here, knowing everything, he addresses this. And it is a bit cryptic for the other disciples. Nevertheless, it is about Judas.

But it will be about the other disciples. And we'll see that in this next section, verses 26 to 31. But looking at verse 21, we have to ask a question.

Is it fair for Jesus to say what he says about Judas, specifically, woe to that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

Is it fair that Judas is held responsible for something that was God's will? We see in verse 21, just the beginning, for the son of man goes as it is written of him.

[5 : 38] Multiple times we've seen thus far in Mark, that Jesus, he foretells his passion and death on the cross. Jesus knows he's going to the cross.

In fact, it is God's will. There's many allusions throughout the gospel of Jesus fulfilling the scriptures, and yet Judas here is the vehicle by which that will happen.

And you think, okay, Judas is, you know, he is participating in this. Maybe, you know, definitely not maybe, not in the best way. But if it's still God's will, why is he held to personal responsibility for betraying Jesus?

If he has free will in this, then sure. But it seems that he is a pawn in God's divine plan. And if so, is that fair?

And it raises a question about what the relationship is between divine causality and personal responsibility. It's a very interesting question. It has divided the Protestant church in a big way.

[6 : 46] And it is still a very live issue today. I don't... We're going to walk towards it. We're not going to walk away from it. But we're not necessarily going to exhaust everything that the Bible has to say about free will and God's divine sovereignty.

But nevertheless, we walk... Our commitment is to walk towards the difficult scripture verses and see what the Lord would have to say to us about it. So this verse, like I mentioned, it captures a conundrum.

If it was the Father's will for Jesus to go to the cross, and it says that clearly in the first part of verse 21, like I read, why does Judas bear responsibility for being that instrument to achieve the Father's divine plan?

Is this not a grave injustice? Does Judas really have free will if he is a pawn of God? So, like I mentioned, this is a very complicated, difficult doctrine and question in scripture.

But this is where we, as Anglicans and as Christians really, have this beautiful opportunity to not have to figure out the Bible all by ourselves. We have this wonderful history and tapestry that we can have access to of what Reformers and Church Fathers and big, big, big, big giants in the faith have said before.

[8 : 08] So the Reformers and the Western Church Fathers, especially St. Augustine, they understood free will in an interesting way. They talked about free agency and free will.

And really simply, because this is above my pay grade, but in a sense, free agency is, in a sense, how God created us in his image, so that we have the ability to make decisions, and by extension are held responsible for those decisions that we make.

Decisions towards God, decisions towards fellow people. In a very real way, we are decision-making people. We don't just go on autopilot.

We're not given over to our instincts like any animals we see in the jungle, in the forest, at the zoo. But the Reformers and the Western Church Fathers, and especially St. Augustine, they understood also that there's this other aspect to decision-making, and they called it free will.

So free agency versus free will. And how? Because of original sin, because of what happened in the Garden of Eden, where our first parents sinned against God, and sin entered into the human condition, we are unable to truly discern and choose righteousness in a way that gives God glory and praise.

[9 : 34] So we have no natural, in a sense, inclination towards God, because we are, as Ephesians 2 talks about, we are dead in our sins. Our hearts, in a sense, aren't alive to spiritual things.

Martin Luther calls this the bondage of the will. It's interesting here that, well, the Church Fathers, they talked about how the will is not free unless it is freed.

Unless God Himself, in a sense, massages life back into a dead heart. So that we can then, in a sense, have spiritual discernment to know what God desires to please Him, to give Him glory.

So it's interesting that Judas' betrayal takes place at the Passover and reminds us of another figure who also opposed God, but was also used by God to achieve God's will.

If you know the Passover story, it is about the deliverance of God from Egypt, but there is this leader, this king, that looked to oppose God's people.

[10 : 42] His name was Pharaoh. And just like with Judas, Pharaoh, his heart was continually hard towards God and continually got harder and harder as the story, as the narrative went on.

So like Pharaoh, Judas was witness to the power and will of God. Judas was walking with Jesus for years. He would have seen the miracles. He would have heard the teachings.

He would have seen the man that was lowered through the roof rise up off his bed, the paralytic, and walk.

He would have seen Jesus cast out demons, the Gerizim demoniac. Incredible things Judas was witness to, just like Pharaoh. Pharaoh was witness to the plagues and the miracles and how time and again God, through Moses, proved true.

Like Pharaoh, Judas' heart was not enlivened to the ways of God and as such he did not bend a knee ultimately to the goodness of God.

[11 : 52] And it's a big, big, big pity. Judas, on one hand, is used by God to achieve God's will, but it's not like God did not expose Judas to his love and his power and his kindness and his will.

Time and again, Judas, like Pharaoh, he saw God's goodness and clearly chose not to engage with God at all.

The eyes of his heart were blind. The life in his spirit was just dormant. God did not quicken his dead heart, but instead used him to achieve his will.

So, in a sense, Judas' free will was not an illusion, yet God's sovereignty wasn't somehow downplayed. There's an interaction here.

Yet, if one's heart needs to be brought to life by God, first and foremost, to have a free will, your will needs to be freed, this still does not answer our question about Judas' injustice.

[13 : 00] Why didn't God do it? Why does God save some people and not other people? Why are people in this church today hearing even the name of Jesus when there are people in the world that never, ever, ever hear the name Jesus?

They're never exposed to the gospel. Or people that we know that have been exposed to the gospel, and yet they claim to be atheists or they follow another religion or philosophy. Why?

Why is this the case? If God is the one who saves, how can, in this sense, how can Judas be held responsible for his actions? If God chooses not to quicken his heart.

Bit of a conundrum here. It seems unfair. Is this not injustice? Is this unjust? But consider this. It is only by God's sovereignty that we even have the freedom that we hold so dear.

In a sense, that it's only because a sovereign God created a world with order and beauty and goodness that we can even have a semblance of choosing anything.

[14 : 08] That God himself, in his sovereignty, gives us the very foundation for choice to exist. It is only Christianity, in the Christian worldview, that has a full and robust view of what it means to be a person.

On one hand, having agency, interacting with the sovereign God, and yet, and yet, there is an aspect of justice in all of our decisions.

That we are held responsible for the things we do. And if this still feels unjust, I think it's important how we consider the Christian understanding of free will and divine sovereignty as we consider the alternatives.

And I'll just give two examples. We see atheistic modernism throughout our systems, our government, our school systems.

It is kind of rife throughout our culture. Not to say that everybody's an atheist. But this idea of atheistic modernism essentially makes freedom an illusion.

[15 : 21] And responsibility a matter of difference in a philosophy. As we simply are subjects to our environment, we find ourselves also morally not really responsible because morality, in a sense, is relative.

So on one hand, we are the product of our homes or our environment. And on the other hand, I don't know, morality is, it can come and go.

Who's to say what is right and wrong? So how can there be, in a sense, free will if there isn't a choice to do right and wrong if morality is relative? The second example is more what we see, by and large, in our day for a number of different people.

I don't want to paint with too broad of a brush. But there's a curated kind of a la carte spirituality that we see in our neighborhoods and our workplaces that, in a sense, are desperately searching for meaning and help from the divine or spirits or mantras or mediums where there is a willingness, in a sense, to suspend our agency.

There is a desire for the spiritual, whatever it may be, to do something in us, whether we agree with it, in a sense, or not.

[16 : 53] We want, we're willing to, in a sense, suspend our agency, to be seized, to be possessed, almost, and yet, at the same time, to never fully submit our personhood or our wills to that divine power.

It's a weird contradiction. We want to have all the benefits of spirituality, but without the responsibility, in a sense.

So, last night, this is highly theological, I was driving around and on the radio, I was listening to Jan Arden's podcast, okay?

I don't know, whatever. It was on the radio. I thought it was interesting. She was talking about going to see a fortune teller or, like, a medium. And they were talking, her and her guest.

I have no idea who her guest was. I didn't even know it was Jan Arden until, like, halfway through. But she talked about how, when her mom died, she felt like her mom was watching her. And she asked her mom, in the spiritual world, for a sign.

[18 : 03] And she knew her mom loved pineapples. So, mom, if you're there, show me pineapples. This is in the podcast. And for, like, three plus months, she saw pineapples on TV.

Pineapples here, pineapples there. Her mom used to wear this apron with a pineapple every day when she was in the kitchen. And then she, Jan Arden, ended up talking with her friend about going to see this medium in Calgary.

And it was just this openness to, essentially, whatever happens, whatever is going to possess me, whatever they have for me, I am open for it. Like, basically, take me.

But then she said, but unless they say something like, you're going to die in three months, because I have no time for that kind of negativity. Bizarre. Either you're open to submit to this kind of spirituality, or you're not.

But, by and large, we have this kind of bizarre understanding of how we want to interact with the divine, if there is a divine, and how our free will, or lack thereof, or how we maintain personhood and responsibility.

[19 : 09] It's kind of like a big, giant pot of soup. Like, we can't distinguish one from the other. It's bizarre. And I'm trying to, in a sense, not straw man, but steel man, Jan Arden.

I was listening to her last night. It's kind of fresh. She has a lovely voice. But it is only with Christianity that we see a coherence in this understanding of the divine, and how we interact with God's sovereignty, and how our free will and our personhood is respected and is dignified.

How we can make decisions and be held responsible, but know that God's will is active and working to achieve his ends. So divine sovereignty neither cancels human freedom nor excuses our responsibility for immoral choices.

Because God knows all, and his will will not be stymied. Not a bit. I mean, like we talked about last week, the religious leaders have this big plot to upend the ministry of Jesus, and it gets turned on its head, and it becomes the vehicle by which God will achieve his will.

Yet, nevertheless, it's still a mystery why God gives grace to some and not others. We can know God's will only as much as he has revealed it to us, and he has not revealed to us why person A comes to faith and knows God, and person B does not.

[20 : 42] And there is a mystery within our faith that in a sense, we can reconcile with faith, but without faith, it's going to drive us crazy.

Because in the end, we relinquish control and say, not my will be done, Lord, but your will. But we do know that God's heart is to restore and to redeem. That he takes no delight in the death of a sinner, but rather that that person would repent and change their ways and come to him.

We know that that's God's heart. Nevertheless, we don't know why some people receive that grace and others do not. So another thing that is important to consider in all this, and we're still on verse 21, is how we are all too quick as human beings to downplay or excuse evil and sin in our own lives, and yet quick to point it out in others.

We are entitled to think that we are different than other people, that we are more worthy of salvation. So we see somebody like Judas, and we get frustrated in a sense that he is being used as a pawn by God, that his free will is somehow suspended because we might find ourselves in the shoes of Judas.

What happens if that happens to me? Is it fair for Judas? It might not be fair for me. And we somehow think that we can downplay our own sin and our own evil, that somehow we are the eternal exception to the rule.

[22 : 14] But the reality is sin is real and it is crippling. And evil is real and it is destructive. And we are prone to both. And this is where we'll go to our next section where the Bible is very helpful in helping us understand just an honest look at human nature and what it means to be human, prone to sin.

So jump with me to verse 26 to 31. Verse 31. And when they had sung a hymn, that's Jesus and his disciples, they went out to the Mount of Olives and Jesus said to them, You will all fall away for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to him, Even though they all fall away, I will not. And Jesus said to him, Truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

Verse 31. But he said emphatically, If I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same. Jesus speaks of the falling away of the twelve.

So we have Judas who is betraying the remainder of his disciples. They will abandon him. And Jesus speaks of them as falling away.

[23 : 42] And he says it, in the falling away, it carries with it a passive sense, which is to say that these external forces and factors will cause them to stumble.

There will be pressures and temptations that they'll experience that they will not be able to stand with that weight over top of them. Jesus, his capture, his torture, his crucifixion, being associated with Jesus will be too much for them to bear.

And because of this, they will fall away. Nevertheless, it's still a failure to heed Christ's call to watch and wait. If you remember, chapter 13 was all about watching and waiting.

Knowing God's, that God's plan will come to pass, and trusting that he will do the things he's called to do. And here, they are failing at that. Still, they think they are strong when they are really weak, especially Peter.

Peter, once again, this isn't the first time, he boisterously flexes his spiritual muscles and he has none. He has no spiritual muscles. Pounding his chest, I will never deny you.

[24 : 58] Never. Jesus says, before morning, three times, buddy, you will deny me. Three times. And he goes, I'll die before that happens.

I swear to God, I will never leave you. Can't really swear to God, to God, if you're not going to follow through. Bit of a problem here. You just, I can picture Peter, like, he is, his voice is raised, I mean what I'm saying.

But then he, he throws his buddies under the bus. And he says, these guys, they'll fall away, but not me. I will be with you to the end, even to the grave.

And you just think, my goodness. Peter, he has this inflated view of himself. And it's easy to just rip on Peter, but really, Peter is us.

Because all too often, we are quick to downplay our own sin. our own shortcomings, to not be real about ourselves, and to point to others and say, hey, look at them.

[26 : 03] We are, we do not give people the benefit of the doubt, yet we demand the mercy and understanding to be extended to us without reservation. I'll give an example.

And, you know, hopefully you can understand this in your own life. I'll give an example of my own life. A while ago, I, my brother, he, he was making fun of me and, um, it was behind my back and I, I got, I got frustrated at it.

And I was incensed and he was just joking around. It was harmless. But for whatever reason, I was just bent that day. I was so angry and all of a sudden, I start hashing out things and his behavior that he used to do when we were kids and all throughout and no grace extended to him and then, maybe it was God's, God's spirit at work, but he, uh, I just remembered two days before I did the exact same thing to him, behind his back, just ripping on him.

He was the butt of the joke and I think, if my memory serves me correctly, my dig at him was worse than his dig at me. And nevertheless, I still, after thinking about that, justified, well, it wasn't as bad what I did.

It was way worse what he did to me. And I was, and all of a sudden, I started living in this, just, gross attitude for a period of time where, obviously, my stuff doesn't stink.

[27 : 37] His reeks and I extend grace to myself, but he doesn't, he gets a short end of the stick. How often are we people that we downplay our own sin?

We're not real about who we are and evil that lurks in our heart, but we are so quick to point it out to other people. Peter, I'm not at all going to betray you.

These guys, they, they're like half of me. They're nothing compared to me. And, and they say, no, no, we'll follow you to the grave too. Like, they're just as kind of lost, but we do this.

We're not honest about ourselves, but the Bible is very honest about the human condition. It's like a sword. It really, it really cuts right to the heart of the matter. The Bible is honest with us about the nature of evil.

And on one hand, evil is a mystery. It really is. Because it's not merely the result of someone being ill-formed in a bad family. There's a lot of people that come from fantastic families that do evil things.

[28 : 41] And people that come from maybe not the greatest families that are really well-to-do, courteous, kind people. In a sense, evil's a mystery. But on the other hand, the Bible is clear that evil finds fertile soil in the inclinations of the human heart.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, he was a political prisoner in the 80s in the USSR. And he spent a lot of time in the Gulag.

And he wrote a book called The Gulag Archipelago. And it's a very famous line. This is what he says. And he was himself a Christian. If only it were so simple. If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds.

and it were necessarily only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

I think it's just a beautiful line that captures the reality of the human condition. That the human heart, if we are honest with ourselves, it is prime time soil.

[29 : 57] It is fertile soil. For evil to germinate and to take root and to grow. Yet, yet, even in this, Jesus gives assurance that the lapse in devotion of his disciples that will lead to their defection, even Peter, will not be the final word.

Look with me at verse 28. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. It was at Galilee where Jesus called the twelve.

It was at Galilee that he invited them into his inner circle and where they first met Jesus and they grew in their knowledge of God through Jesus.

And it is at the Galilee where Jesus, the risen Lord, will visit them again to restore them. And it is a beautiful picture of the truth in Scripture that the work that God starts, he will see it to completion.

He finishes what he starts. It is Christ's great joy to forgive and his great glory to restore. And I'll just say this.

[31 : 11] I didn't know if I was going to include this but I think I will. I don't want to grade sins. I mean, sin is sin.

Okay? The disciples didn't tell a dirty white lie. They didn't steal a loaf of bread from the market because they were hungry.

This little tiny thing that they did wrong. They betrayed Jesus. One, in the most egregious way and the others, they abandoned Jesus. It was a type of betrayal.

In Dante's Inferno, not the Bible, so I'm not saying it's the Bible, but in Dante's Inferno, the lowest rung of hell has Judas and Brutus in the mouth of Satan for eternity.

That is to say that there is not much more of an egregious act, an egregious sin than betrayal. And yet, Jesus promises restoration and forgiveness.

[32 : 16] And I'm not too sure that any one of us has gone to the lengths of the disciples. And even still, you'd have to think the grace of God is bigger even than that. And this is a wonderful truth that we're going to see next of what pure and true mercy and grace look like because a betrayal and defection and abandonment right in between these two terrible, terrible, terrible evils is the Lord's Supper.

This beautiful picture of mercy and grace, love abounding. And remember, in verse 21, Jesus says, for the Son of Man goes as it is written of Him.

And then down in verse 20, in 27, Jesus said to them, you will all fall away for it is written. That is just to say that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen.

He knew that Judas was going to betray Him. He knew the disciples would defect and abandon Him. And yet, even with that knowledge, He takes them to the table in the most intimate, deepest way to express friendship.

And He has a meal with them. It's this expression of mercy and grace. Look with me in verse 22. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to them, the disciples, and said, take, this is my body.

[33 : 45] And He took a cup and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them and they all drank of it. And He said to them, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Nestled in between these two egregious acts of betrayal and abandonment is the institution of the Lord's Supper. This is precisely what Mark is doing here.

It's a, it's, in a sense, it's the most scandalous thing. Why on earth does Jesus extend this kind of mercy and grace? For the last supper isn't just a meal, but it is a gift of God's very presence to His people.

On one hand, it looks backwards. It looks to the Passover. Jesus is taking the Passover meal which was the high point in the calendar for the Jewish nation where they were rescued out of slavery and bondage to Egypt.

The high point, and He says, it's about Me. I am the real Passover Lamb. But also, it's about the present. So it's about the past, but it's about the present. Because Jesus is there present with His people and promising them that where they gather, He will be there.

[35 : 06] And He gives of Himself in the meal. But it's more than just the past and the present. It's the future as well. Because if you look at verse 25, truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

It envisions the culmination of all of redemptive history where God, the Son of God, Jesus the Bridegroom will sit at His marriage supper with His bride, the church.

And He will enjoy fellowship and she will enjoy fellowship in the deepest, most loving way for all of eternity.

And this is what the table envisions. So it is more than just a remembrance because Jesus Himself here, what does He say? He says, take, this is my body.

And He takes the cup and He says, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. What it's not saying is that these elements literally become the body and literally become the blood of Jesus.

[36 : 16] But it is to say that God is communicating to us as we partake of the bread and the wine grace that bolsters our soul.

So, what's helpful to understand in all of this is that we gather at the table in the same way that the Israelites gathered in their homes on Passover.

In Passover, the Israelites, they put their faith in God's Word that the blood that was smeared on their doorposts would save them from death.

Whether their faith was a little bit or a lot, it doesn't really say. It says that their faith, in a sense, as they gathered in the home, they trusted that God's Word was true and death would pass over.

And likewise, we come to the table by faith, trusting that God has done everything He has promised to do, defeating sin and death forever in His Son, in the broken body and the shed blood of His Son.

[37 : 20] And we partake it by faith, trusting that God is going to complete the work He started in our lives. We call this a means of grace.

grace given to our souls and a helpful way to understand it, at least in our perspective as Anglicans and in the Reformed understanding of God's sacrament, the communion, is what the minister is to say as he is distributing the elements in the Book of Common Prayer.

Now, I don't say this. We've kind of incorporated it into various parts of our liturgy for communion, but it says this. If this was a traditional service, I would give you the bread and I would say the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you.

Preserve your body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on Him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

And it's very similar to the cup. And it's just to say that the meal doesn't save, but it is for the saved. The meal doesn't become the literal body and blood of Jesus, but it is, in a sense, a very real communication to us of the presence of Jesus right now, here.

[38 : 46] And that builds up our soul. It is a gift of God to build up our soul. So like I mentioned, the past, the Passover, the present, the presence of God, but the future is the marriage supper of the Lamb and that is every time we come to the table, every single time.

So when we come today, we're going to come humbly. We're going to search our hearts for sin and confess it to Almighty God. There will be a time of confession. And we act in faith that Jesus will certainly forgive our sins.

Why? Because he has forgiven our sins. And that we are saved, we are being saved, and one day we will be saved when we dine with him as his bride.

He is our bridegroom in the age to come. All because of the cross of Calvary. I'll close with this. In the second century, early on in the second century, a church historian, a church father, suggested that Peter was the source for Mark's gospel account.

I have no reason to not believe it, but if it truly was Peter, I'll say this, if I was telling Mark the gospel account, I would scrub, I would scrub verses 26 to 31.

[40 : 19] You know, we'll leave that part out, okay, Mark? I, you know, it makes him look terrible. And yet, it's there. And if it was Peter, then it is a testament to a man who fell in a most egregious, terrible way, but who has been restored to even greater heights because of what Christ has done.

A man that knows grace and love and mercy deep in his soul. A man that is, in a sense, is willing to just be open and honest about his shortcomings from the past because they are buried with Christ forever.

forever. And it is a great hope for us when we consider that that same grace and mercy is extended to us today.

What, what have you done that is worse than Peter? And even if it is worse than Peter, what have you done that is, is too big for God's grace and love and mercy?

to bury it and for you never to see it again and to live in true freedom. Tell me what's more free than that. This has been offered to us today and it is a reminder every single time, every time we gather around this table that our sins are dealt with, gone, we are restored, that Christ has begun something, that he will finish, and he is extending grace upon grace upon grace.

[41 : 59] Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this table and how this table is a gift to us and that we need to receive in a worthy way by faith with thanksgiving but all we can do is receive.

We don't bring our own merit to this table. The institution of the Lord's Supper was done with betrayal and abandonment bookending it.

Lord, help us to come throwing ourselves at the mercy of your blessed Son knowing that he will not scoff at us, he will not hold our shortcomings in front of us to shame us.

In fact, he bore the shame on our behalf. Lord, help us to constantly embrace that, to look to Christ, to thank him and to live a life empowered by his spirit doing what he has called us to do out of joy in our hearts.

Lord, help one of us, each of us to encourage each other in this. Lord, this Christian life is not easy but it is full of joy when we walk with you.

[43 : 17] Help us, we pray. In Christ's name. We pray to God in our hearts to prevail. Amen. Thank you.