

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

27 April 2025

When You Leave Too Soon

Text: "Don't be alarmed, he said. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." *Mark 16:6-7*.

There is a Baptist Pastor in Austin, Texas, who is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. This pastor loves football and is an ardent fan of the Baylor Bears.

To his great discomfort, he serves a congregation in Austin, which is the hometown of the University of Texas and the famous Texas Longhorns.

As one can imagine, he has, at times, fallen on some lean years in that situation.

In fact, at one time it had been eighteen years since the Baylor Bears had beaten the Texas Longhorns

But this pastor faithfully bought season tickets each year and drove from Austin to Waco to see every home football game.

He and his wife attended the Baylor-University of Texas game on November 9, 1974, which played in Waco that year.

At halftime he decided that enough was enough.

The old nightmare was recurring, with Texas leading 24 to 7.

So he threw one more handful of ashes upon his sackcloth and left for home.

Baylor rallied in the second half and won by a score of 34 to 27, winning the Southwestern Conference football title for the first time in fifty years.

On the next Sunday morning he told his congregation that he had waited eighteen long years to see his dream come true.

He had always believed that it would happen, and it did happen the day before.

But the sad news is that he did not get to see it because he gave up thirty minutes too soon.

How often have we left too soon?

How often have we turned away too soon from that which we desperately hoped to see come to fruition?

Look at Simon Peter.

He had hitched his wagon to Jesus' star.

Jesus had crossed his path near the Sea of Galilee and said, "Come, follow me."

And follow Jesus he did.

Things went well for a while; then things began to slip.

Jesus' opponents closed their ranks against him.

After that memorable Thursday night supper in the upper room.

Peter had tried to help Jesus' cause by the swift use of his sword in the garden of Gethsemane, but all he got for his trouble was a rebuke and a demonstration of Jesus' healing mercy.

Then came in swift succession the traitor's kiss, Jesus' instant arrest and his trial before the high priest Caiaphas.

The big fisherman saw the handwriting on the wall.

The record tells us that he "followed at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

While Peter was warming himself around a fire in the courtyard, a young woman questioned him about being a follower of Jesus,

Peter denied Christ, three times.

Then came Jesus' crucifixion.

Jesus was dead.
It seemed to Simon Peter that the curtain had come down with a thud.
But Peter left too soon.
Had he stayed with Jesus for three more days, he would have seen the resurrection.
In his despair, disappointment, and disillusionment, what he thought was the end was not.
It is significant that on the resurrection morning the message given to the disciples was not only that Jesus would meet them in Galilee, but that specifically he would meet Simon Peter with them.
The only one specified by name was Simon Peter.
He who had left too soon would be included with the other believers in seeing the end of the story.
On this Sunday following Easter, when we are so aware of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we can see what happens when we do not leave too soon.
If we do not leave too soon, disappointments can be changed.
Great expectations bring great disappointment.
This is one reason Simon Peter was so disappointed that fateful day.
He had expected so much.
The ideas of love, hope, and faith had crept into the burly fisherman's heart.
But it seemed that they were all dashed with the death of Jesus.
Disappointments bring a mood of despair.
With the great disappointment, Peter sat in the courtyard waiting for the end.
It looked as though all had failed.
A mood of despair, of waiting for the end, had fallen on him.
But Christ can change disappointments.
Against all our disappointments is the message of Christ: disappointments can be changed into victories.
In the midst of Peter's great disappointment came the message of the resurrected Christ: he would meet Peter in Galilee.
That one who was most disappointed in his own actions as well as in the turn of events saw his disappointments changed.
Christ's message to us following Easter is that disappointments can be changed.
If we do not leave too soon, we can have that assurance.
If we don't leave too soon, defeats can be overturned.
Death seems to be the greatest defeat, but even it was overturned.
For Simon Peter, Jesus' death was the greatest defeat.
It seemed to Peter that the end of his dream had come.
But that defeat was overturned by the resurrection.
The lesser defeats can be overturned too.
If death is the greatest defeat we face and it was overturned by the resurrection of Jesus, we have the assurance that the lesser defeats in our lives can be overturned also.
We can go about the Father's business here on earth with this principle firmly entrenched in our minds.
Remember what Paul told us in *2 Corinthians 4: 8-9*: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."
In spite of these things, we know that we have been given another day, another opportunity to overturn defeat and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.
If we don't leave too soon, destiny can be rerouted.
We wonder about our destiny.
Don't you think Peter wondered about his destiny?
Sitting in the courtyard waiting for the end, he thought he saw Jesus' destiny stamped out.
But what about his own destiny?
He had followed Jesus, but he had also denied Jesus.
What would happen to him?
Peter found out later.
In three days all of his hopes were realized.

In three days not only was Jesus raised from the dead, but he also was sending personal messages to Peter.

Peter had a destiny after all, and it rested with Jesus.

We find our destiny with Christ.

Three days later Simon Peter found out that his destiny had been rerouted.

He had a destiny as a leader in the early church.

He had a place within the circle of Christ's followers.

He was still accepted and loved.

And God had something yet greater for him to do.

He had a destiny far greater than he had ever imagined.

In Christ he found his destiny.

And so do we.

Do not leave too soon.

What may seem to you to be the end may be, instead, only the prologue to the beginning.

You can have a new beginning in Jesus Christ.

God's grace can be known and his acts seen.

If you don't leave too soon you may see God act in your life in ways that you had never dreamed possible.

Follow His lead through His Holy Spirit and see what he has for you!