

Introduction:

- People respond to Jesus in many different ways. The skits you see today are just a few but in content the truth remains the same though the situation may be different. Can I give you the bottom line of today's message? God loves you too much to leave you the way you are! We stay the way we are mostly because of the lies we believe about God. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus is the most vivid demonstration of God's love towards us. He gave His Son that we might live and not die.
- Three lies the devil tells and tries to get us to believe. But the cross and resurrection destroys them.
 - First lie, God can't forgive me.
 - Second lie, God can't possibly love me.
 - Third lie, God can't possibly care about me.
- God's heart in response to those lies.
 - God's response is: I Can and I Do forgive you, I Can and I Do love you and I Can and I Do care about you.
 - All we need is the "Ah-ha!" moment. When we actually see how much God loves us. It is what the Passion of the Christ and the Resurrection of Jesus is all about. HE LOVES US!!!
 - Let's look at some people today who had the "Ah-ha!" moment.

1. Peter Discovered: God Can and God Does Forgive

- a. Luke 22:60-62 *But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." ⁶² And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.* NLT Peter left and Peter wept. In Jesus' greatest time of need Peter failed to come through.
- b. Peter's Perception was this: God can't forgive me. You see, he failed Jesus. Big Time! This is a common lie that many people have to overcome in order to get to Jesus. What would cause a man to turn away from Jesus when he had been following so close. It was fear and it was failure.
 - i. Most people think they are basically good people. Peter thought that. After all, he walked with Jesus for over three years. Yet in the moments when it counted he failed. Not only did he fail, but he failed while Jesus was looking. Truth is, when we all fail...Jesus is looking.
 - ii. Sometimes we think we have done something so bad that God would never forgive us. Other times we feel like we have let Jesus down so bad that He will never forgive us. Both have to do with a sense of failure.
 - iii. For Peter not just failure, but a failure in light of boasting that he would never fail. Peter failed Jesus and Peter failed himself.
 1. You can be close God but not connected. So many people live deceptively close to Jesus. What I mean by that is that they live close enough to spiritual activity to think that their heart is o.k. with God. But in the moment of testing they fail. Like Peter, they deny Jesus.
 - a. If you are not anchored you will drift/or turn away
 - i. *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,"* (Hebrews 6:19, NKJV)
 2. Others have done things so bad they don't think that God can forgive. Many veterans who have fought in battles struggle with this. I.e. I was witnessing several years ago to a man who taken another man's life. He was struggling in coming to Christ, because he couldn't see how God could forgive him. The truth is God gives us what we don't deserve. Another chance at life. Another chance at living. Peter's story does not end at his denial of Jesus. Peter's story does not end at his failure.

c. Peter's Recognition -

- i. The resurrection changes everything! Not only did Jesus rise from the dead but he showed Himself to Peter. He recognized Jesus and he recognized Jesus loved him!
- ii. I note in the Gospels that when Mary realized that the gardener in the garden was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "*Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.*" (Mark 16:7, NLT) Make sure that he hears that I sent you to tell him that I am alive! Something important happening there. Jesus wanted Peter to get the message that He was alive! It starts to open the door as Peter would see Jesus reaching out to him. You are not here by mistake this morning. Jesus is reaching out to you.

d. Realization - He is Alive!!!

- i. The "Ah-ha!" moment is what gives you a story to tell. When Jesus appeared to the disciples in the room as they were hiding. They now know He is alive. John records them fishing and when John says that is Jesus on the shore, Peter jumps in and swims to shore to greet Him. He is alive!
- ii. Denial is not the end of the story! Jesus recommissions Peter to not only follow Him but to "Feed my sheep!" Not only do I trust you Peter but I entrust you with others who are important to me, like you! The "Ah-ha!" moment for Peter was that he was forgiven! Now he had a story to tell!
- iii. Satan will lie to you and have you believe that you are a failure beyond forgiveness. But Jesus says, "I took your punishment! You are forgiven!" We just have to see him as a God who forgives because He loves! When you have that "Ah-ha!" moment you will have a story to tell!

2. **The Adulterous Woman Discovered: God Can and God Does Love**

- a. The adulterous woman's perception. This is a second common lie that the devil throws at people: God can't love me. This is a mis-perception. Let me give us some insight to this. When people say, "God can't/doesn't love me." They are literally declaring that they see themselves as unlovable. Demons torment us with such thoughts but not God. Lets look at this woman found in John 8:1-11.
 - i. This woman is caught in the act of adultery, dragged into the streets for all to see and hear of her sin, then sentence by popular opinion to die. This woman because of her sin may not necessarily feel like a failure but the shame of her sin being publicly exposed had to be great. Because she felt unloved she went seeking 'love'.
 - ii. I do not deserve to be loved. It's another common lie that the devil gets many people to buy into.
 1. It comes from the place of seeing yourself as one who has no worth/no value. Peter saw himself as a failure the adulterous woman sees herself as worthless.
 2. This perception usually comes from being wounded by rejection. When someone rejects you it has opportunity to wound you in the heart. That wound festers with the lie 'I have no value/or worth.' When it take root people see themselves as unloveable because they have no worth.
 - iii. Most of us have felt this way at one time or another. What makes the Good News the good news is that we are offered what we don't deserve. And we are offered what we don't deserve because in the eyes of Jesus we have incredible worth!
- b. The adulterous woman's recognition
 - i. What do these words mean to the woman at the feet of Jesus? vs 7. "*All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!*" NLT
 1. First it meant that the 'playing field' was level. All have sinned. Ro 3:23 We are all worthless!
 2. Second it meant that she had worth. Jesus was pointing out that we have all sinned but that we all have worth. Ie. In Luke 7 a woman of the night falls on Jesus feet and is crying. The

Pharisees are indignant that Jesus lets her touch Him. Jesus looking at the woman says to Simon the Pharisee, “Do you see this woman.” Jesus is always restoring worth to people.

ii. Jn 8:10-11. *Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?”¹¹ “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”* NLT

c. The adulterous woman’s realization

i. The adulterous woman has an “Ah-ha!” moment! I have value! In a moment those words of love and forgiveness from Jesus bring healing to her heart!

ii. I do not condemn you! You have worth! You have value in the eyes of God! Love is what gives us that worth!

iii. The “Ah-ha!” moment for the adulterous woman was that she has value! You too, can have that “Ah-ha!” moment today!

iv. The cross and the resurrection gives us worth! God is reaching out to you to help you. Everything around us would say we are worthless but God says, “I love you! You are of great worth! I will die for you.” Love did that! Peter’s Ah-ha moment was I am forgiven! The adulterous woman’s “ah-ha!” moment was I am loved therefore valuable!

3. **Lazarus Discovered: God Can and God Does Care**

a. Lazarus’s Perception: A common mis-perception that can be found in the Lazarus story is this: God doesn’t care about me. We see it more clearly in Martha and Mary’s words: *Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.* NLT John 11:9-44. Outside Lazarus’s grave Martha pleads that they not roll the stone away because he has been in there for days and surely stinks.

i. When our heart experience disappointment in God the most logical lie the devil tries to get us to believe is that God does not care.

ii. Men look to Jesus for a number of different reasons but most often they look when they are at the end of their rope. They have tried everything they know to do with no success.

1. IE. Like the woman with the issue of blood. She had spent everything to get well but in her last ditch effort said, “If I can just touch the hem of His garment I will be healed.” Ie. Like the adulterous woman, she was about to be stoned by the people because of adultery.

iii. This person lives with the mis-perception that everything in his life is in shambles and all is lost because God does not care. We don’t know Lazarus’s thoughts while he was sick. But I’m pretty sure that if he knew he had a sickness that would end in death, that he would be looking for Jesus to come heal him; just like Martha and Mary his sisters.

iv. When you are in that situation, you can easily believe the lies of the devil. “God doesn’t care about you.” And if you do believe that lie it separates you from Him. It is an accusation the devil uses to divide us from our heavenly father. I am telling you, “God does care!” The cross and resurrection declare that! Why else would God go to such lengths to save us!?!

b. Lazarus’s Recognition

i. Lazarus though dead...clearly recognized the voice and authority of God calling his name! What would have happened if Jesus has just said, “Come forth!” Yes, every grave would have opened!

ii. Your spirit recognizes the voice of God. You can be dead in your sin and recognize the voice of God and know for a fact that He cares about you.

iii. I clearly heard that voice on January 6th, 1980! I can’t remember what the preacher said, but I remember the voice of God, with authority, calling me out to himself!

c. Lazarus’s Realization

i. God does care! He cared about Lazarus, He care about Martha, and He cared about Mary!

- ii. The devil may be whispering to you today that God does not care. But I tell you, God cared enough to send His one and only Son! Love did that! Because He loved, he cared! He care enough to do something about the way you are feeling...He died for you!
- iii. Lazarus's "Ah-ha!" moment was when he realized God cared enough to raise him from the dead. I hope you are getting this "Ah-ha!" moment today that loves you enough to forgive you, God loves you enough give you value, and that God cares enough to give you life. Life eternal in Him!!!
- iv. If He has the power to raise up a stinking Larzarus He has the power to raise us all at the end of the age.

Conclusion:

- If there is one thing I want you to know and to leave here today with it is this: God Can and God Does!
 - God Can and does forgive!
 - God Can and does love!
 - God Can and does Care!
- God does love you so much that he went to great extents to demonstrate that love to you. "*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*" (Romans 5:8, NLT)
- The only thing standing between you and this reality is your ability to believe.
- Who would like to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord this morning?