

04/01/18 Easter Sunday Mark 16

“Not Done Yet”

Pastor Wayne Puls, Senior Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church

I'd like some help getting the sermon started today. We have a lot of talented, smart children and youth here at Hope. I need one who has a special talent to come on up for a second and stand with me. Someone who's good at a sport, dance, school subject, dog training, computers, cooking, etc.

- Good at it? Who's helped? God?
- Ready to turn pro?
- Not done yet. Keep working hard. Encourage. Clap.
- Second kid/youth.

One more volunteer who's not done yet.

- Baptized in last year. Fully grown? Not done yet.
- Baptized ___ ago. Learned everything about being child of God? Not done yet.
- Parents/godparents/family/church family here to help. God, too. But not done yet.

Not done yet. That's our theme today. It's kind of fun for us to look at kids and to say they're not done yet. But it's not so easy for adults to do the same. Many of us grownups really struggle to admit those parts of our lives where we need to keep learning and growing.

One of the toughest areas, I think, for many of us is in our faith life. Taking on new spiritual challenges, trusting the Lord more than we're accustomed to trusting him, allowing our relationships with God to deepen and intensify – that can be scary stuff. Are you done with that kind of stuff? Or not done yet?

The message of Easter Sunday is summed up in these three words: not done yet. Everybody thought Jesus was done. He

was dead, buried, entombed. Jesus had been condemned and crucified by his enemies, and they had gleefully watched him die. "He's done!" they said, on Friday afternoon.

But then comes Easter. God's power raises Jesus from the dead. He's not done yet! Jesus is alive again. And the living Lord is bringing new life and new beginnings to his people today. Jesus is saying, "I'm not done with you yet!"

Did you notice in the Easter story today how Jesus sent that very message to one of his followers? A man who had failed Jesus, and messed up horribly, in a crucial moment. A man who had every reason to think his relationship with Jesus was done. But Jesus, on Easter morning, had a message for him: "I'm not done with you yet." And Jesus is not done with you yet, either.

This man's name was Peter. Peter was one of the twelve disciples. He was the loudest of them all, the biggest personality, and had the fiercest love for the Lord.

But do you remember the story of how Peter failed Jesus? On the night before he was killed, Jesus predicted that all of his disciples would abandon him. Big, bad Peter protested, "No way! Even if they all desert you, I will not." Jesus looked at him and said, "Peter, this very night you're going to deny me three times." Peter insisted, "Even if I have to die for you, Jesus, I will never, never, never deny you."

So what happened? Peter denied Jesus, three times! The Lord was arrested. The disciples abandoned him. But later Peter came skulking around, trying to see what was happening. Someone said, "Hey, aren't you one of Jesus' followers?" And Peter denied it, denied Jesus again, and then denied his Lord a third time. The words just spilled out

of his mouth; and suddenly brave Peter was filled with shame.

When we look back on our lives, we can all recall mistakes we've made, relationships we've ruined, lies we've told, trusts we've broken, sins we've committed. Sometimes we're filled with shame, too. How many of us have ever failed God, ignored God, disobeyed him, or acted as if he wasn't important? Surely you have. And so have I.

The message of Easter – to Peter and to all of us – is this: not done yet! God's not done with you yet! You may have failed and messed up in years past, in the past week, in the past day, in the past hour. But this is a new day! This is a new start! God's not done with you yet.

Today we celebrate new life, re-birth, resurrection, brand-new beginnings even after horrible endings. First with Jesus. But next with Peter.

In a very personal way, Peter the horrible failure gets a message of a brand-new beginning. On Easter morning, when those women first went to the tomb, the angel spoke to them. "You're looking for Jesus? He's risen! He's not here. Look, the tomb is empty. But now go," the angel said, "tell his disciples **and Peter** that he is going before you to Galilee." Tell his disciples **and Peter ...**

Why is Peter the one disciple to get a shout-out? Because Peter needs it the most. Jesus was sending a mercy message to Peter. "I'm not done with you yet, Peter. I've come back to life, and I'm going to help you bounce back, too." Peter failed, but Jesus forgave. Jesus died for Peter's

sin; and on Easter morning he let his friend know he was not done yet.

And so it is, friend, for you. Jesus died for you, for your sin, for all your sins. He paid for them in full. And today, the living, resurrected Lord is saying to you, "You're not done yet. I'm going to help you bounce back. I have a place for you in my family, in my church, in my heart. I care about you. I want to help you. I want to walk with you closely every day, and transform your life by my love, by my power. I'm not done with you yet."

How many of us really need that Easter message of mercy today? I know I do. I know there are plenty of failures in this room today, many guilty consciences, lots of shame-filled hearts. Some struggling with failed marriages and broken families. Some burdened by sexual sins. Some guilty of being lousy parents or lousy neighbors. Some don't know if they believe in God, and some don't bother paying much attention to God.

But to all of you -- no matter what your burden is, no matter how deep your guilt goes, no matter how big a mess you've made -- to all of you, the message of Easter is a message of mercy. In Jesus there is forgiveness. In Jesus there is hope. In Jesus there is new life for you. "I've come back to life," Jesus says to you, "And I'm here to help you bounce back from your failures, too."

Pray: Lord Jesus, I hear the story today. Help me to believe. I hear the promise of new beginnings. Help me to receive it with faith. As we celebrate the joy of Easter in our church, Lord, let it be a new start for each of us, according to our need. Amen.