

Learning from Mistakes

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- [0 : 00] But let me begin by saying that we all make mistakes from time to time, don't we? Like putting the milk in the cupboard and the cereal in the fridge. Or am I the only one who does that?
- No, other people? Oh, good, I feel better now. Thank you. Of course, some mistakes are well-intentioned. Take a look at this one. Taking off the whole bumper bar. We might need a bit more volume. Thanks, Tim.
- Yeah, and some mistakes are just plain embarrassing. This guy's trying to show how tough he is with a rock. The next one I can relate to, because I'm teaching my own daughter to drive, that this father's mistake was trying to be too funny.
- For those who don't know, that's a crash test dummy outfit. You play too much.
- And she's not happy. You play too much. I'm out of here. I've had enough, Dad. Of course, mistakes can be as simple as a spelling mistake. I saw this church sign once, which is Bueller's Church, by the way.
- [1 : 21] God does not make mistakes. And for those who haven't quite picked it up, the E is in the wrong spot. But the question is, will we learn from them?
- Which is why the sermon on the front of your bulletin is learning from mistakes. And yes, I deliberately spelt mistakes wrong there for a bit of fun. I promised to point that out for you, because Peter, who was printing the bulletins, was worried he'd get in trouble.
- You're all right. My bad. So the question is, are we going to learn from them? And today, it's not so much learning from our mistakes, as it is learning from the disciples.
- Because today we see four failures of the disciples when it comes to following Jesus. You see, a couple of weeks ago, Jesus told them that whoever wants to be his disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him.
- And then last week, we saw that it is worth following him because he's the real deal. But it seems the disciples are having trouble putting that into practice.
- [2 : 29] In fact, verse 51, I think I've got it there. Yep. Just to remind, I'm going to put the verses on the slides, as well as your Bibles, just for those aged care homes that are live streaming in.
- But verse 51 of the passage also says that as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. He was determined to enter Jerusalem on a donkey that very first Palm Sunday, and then five days later on Good Friday, die on a cross.
- But on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus will have to keep teaching his disciples what it means to follow him.
- And so we'll come back to that next year because this is our last installment of Luke's gospel for this year. Verse 51 is the turning point in the gospel. But he'll have to teach them what it means to follow him, both in terms of relying on him and having the same attitude as him.

But for us today, we can learn from their mistakes, like their first one, their failure to keep trusting in Jesus's power to save. Have a look at verse 37 to 39.

[3 : 45] The next day, when they came down from the mountain, that's where Jesus was transfigured, a large crowd met them. A man in the crowd called out, Teacher, I beg you, look at my son, for he's my only child.

A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.

Here is a father desperate for his son to be healed, isn't he? And Luke points out again that this is his only child. And Luke has often done that.

Jairus was described as, Jairus' daughter as his only daughter or the woman from name, her only son. And Luke gives a fair bit of description here so that we might feel the desperation of this poor boy's spiritual oppression.

Did you notice that? We're told the spirit seizes him, throws him, scarcely leaves him, and is destroying him.

[4 : 46] Can you feel the desperation? He needs saving, doesn't he? But the disciples are unable to do so.

So verse 40, I begged your disciples, the father says, to drive it out, but they could not. They fail to heal this boy, which is surprising because if you look at your Bibles back in verse 1, we're told that Jesus gave the 12 his power and authority to drive out all demons and heal diseases.

It's still his power which they are to rely on. That's why in chapter 9, verse 3, they were to take nothing for the journey to force them to rely on him. But either way, they should have been able to heal this boy in our passage today.

So why did they fail? Well, we need to keep looking at the text for clues, like verse 41. Jesus says, you unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?

Bring your son here. Here Jesus uses language from the Old Testament, which we heard in our first reading from Deuteronomy, like a warped and crooked generation.

[6 : 10] Later on in that same chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses will, or God will say that they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful or unbelieving.

And so Jesus is using this Old Testament language here, but the question is, whom is he applying it to? Well, even though the word generation probably includes all people here, who are the last people Luke mentions?

The disciples who failed. At this point, it seems Jesus lumps them in with ancient Israel. And we know we're on the right track because if we look at Matthew's account, Jesus makes this clearer.

When the disciples come and ask him privately, why couldn't we drive it out? Because you had so little faith, by which Jesus means no faith at that point. You see, it seems they've stopped believing, stopped trusting in Jesus and his power to save, which is crooked and perverse given that all they're seeing, Jesus's power do.

In fact, all that they'd used Jesus's power to do at the beginning of the chapter when they went out and cast out demons and so on. But at this point, they acted like ancient Israel and stopped believing in Jesus's power to save.

[7 : 32] Perhaps they saw the boy and doubted that they could do it. This was too hard a case to cure, perhaps. Or perhaps their earlier success has gone to their heads.

And so rather than relying on Jesus to still save through them, they're relying on their own strength, their own words or formula or whatever it was. Either way, they have forgotten that they are just the channel.

It's Jesus who is the Savior. That's what we see in verse 42. Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion, but Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? Of Jesus giving this boy life to the full, not just restoring his own life, but the relationship, restoring the relationship with his father as well.

But notice it's Jesus who does it, isn't it? Jesus who rebukes, who heals, who gives. And so first lesson we can learn from the disciples' mistake, I think, is following Jesus means trusting in his power to save.

[8 : 57] I'm sure we don't meet many demon-possessed people in the West, but we do meet many who are spiritually oppressed. Paul puts it like this in Ephesians 2, that we, like the rest of people, were once dead in transgression and sin.

We used to follow the ways of the world and the spirit that is the devil who is now at work in those who are disobedient. You know, whispering lies to them. This Jesus stuff is nonsense.

Don't believe it. And so leading them away from life to the full, eternal life. But we're not to think that any of our loved ones who are like this are too hard a case for Jesus' power.

Or to rely on our own strength, our words, and our strategies to get them saved. I saw a website about how to attract people to your Easter services.

I had a number of good ideas like update your own church website, which I thought, oh yeah, that's good, I better do that. So I did that last week. They had invitation cards. They even suggested painting eggs as a church community and then handing them out to your neighbours and all sorts of wonderful things that sound great if we weren't all exhausted from two years of COVID and so on.

[10 : 14] But the thing is, none of that will actually save people, will it? We are just the channel. Jesus is the saviour. And so the best thing we can do for people is to pray and help them hear about Jesus.

Perhaps print out a Bible verse that speaks of Jesus and stick it on an Easter egg and give it to them. And like John 3.16 or 1 Peter 3.18 which gets straight to the message of the gospel, the cross.

Or perhaps share some hot cross buns with them and say, I love hot cross buns, especially the cross and see if they bite. Pardon the pun. Or as a church, making sure we say, Christ-centred and prayerful.

And if we don't say exactly the right thing, you know, have you ever walked away from a conversation and went, oh, I should have said that or I should have said this? Don't worry. Because it's not our exact words or efforts that save.

We are the channel. Jesus is the saviour. And if you've been doing that and Jesus hasn't yet decided to save this person, then that's not on you.

[11 : 28] It's up to God. Unlike the disciples, we're just to keep trusting in Jesus's power to save. Because it's Jesus who died for us.

Which brings us to the disciples' second mistake. Point to verse 43. While everyone was, the second half of verse 43, while everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you.

The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. Last week, you might remember that God said to the disciples to listen to Jesus.

Well, this week, Jesus is saying the same thing, isn't he? literally, he says, put these words into your ears. Listen, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.

That is, to be killed. But, verse 45, they did not understand what this meant. That is, how this fit together.

[12 : 35] It was hidden from them so that they did not grasp it and they were afraid to ask him about it. Now, the disciples have understood some things. We've seen a couple of weeks ago that they understand Jesus is the Messiah, God's King.

And I think they even understand the basic meaning of being delivered into hands of men. That it's not good. That it could well lead to death. But they're afraid to ask Jesus about how this all fits together.

not because they thought they'd get in trouble, but because they knew it meant he's about to die, which they feared. In fact, Matthew's Gospel, in the same incident, he says, they were filled with grief about this.

They're fearful that they might lose him and they're grieving about it. And so, what they can't grasp is not that he's going to die, but why this Son of Man should die.

This Son of Man who in the Old Testament receives all power and authority from God whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, how can possibly this one die?

[13 : 50] How can that be part of God's plan? Of course, we know he must die to pay for our sin so that we can be saved from our spiritual oppression, you know, being dead to sin and so on.

And I think that's why all this has happened the next day after the transfiguration. You know, to show that Jesus must suffer first, why he must suffer first, then enter his glory.

It's like he, we see the glory and then he goes up, but here's the problem, spiritual oppression. That's why I need to die. In fact, Luke even makes this connection clear in verse 43, the second half, because he says, while they're all marveling at what Jesus did, like saving this boy, Jesus kind of ignores that and turns to his disciples and tells them the most important thing he must do, which is die.

Because again, it's his death which saves. But this was hidden from them so they could not grasp it. It's hard to know who or how it was hidden from them, but we can see that they should have understood it.

After all, Jesus tells them to listen, doesn't he? As though they ought to grasp it. And they had their Old Testaments which predicted it. What's more, they could have asked Jesus for help to understand it.

[15 : 15] Help that Jesus actually gives them without asking later on in Luke's Gospel, where he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, that he must die and then repentance and forgiveness be preached to all nations.

That's God's plan. And for us, we too can sometimes fail to grasp Jesus' word to us, can't we? And sometimes out of fear of perhaps looking silly, we don't ask about it.

Or perhaps out of fear of what it might mean for us. We suspect it might, we know what it means, but we don't want to ask for a clarification until we hear something too fanatical and then we have to do it or something too politically incorrect.

Ignorance is bliss, they say. Or sometimes we can fail to grasp even his word about his death. And not why he died, we get that, don't we? But perhaps we fail to grasp the enormity of his death for us.

Such that it grips our hearts and shapes our lives. That we seek to live every day in humble thanks and joyful forgiveness and obedient reverence.

[16 : 31] And this time we might fail to ask for help not out of fear but out of familiarity. I know what it means, I get it already, I hear it every week at church and oh, here comes Easter, I'm going to hear it again, you know, Friday and Sunday.

But unlike the disciples, we're not to let fear or familiarity prevent us from asking for help. Instead, pray for God's help to open your mind and understand his word or grasp more fully even his death, the depth of God's love and what it means for us in life.

For God promises to give us wisdom. Perhaps God's spirit will give you one of those aha moments. Have you ever had one of those? You're kind of reading the Bible and finally the penny drops. Or perhaps God will work through one of his people to help you grasp his word.

Either way, unlike the disciples, ask for help to fully grasp his word. Well, the first two failures have to do with not following Jesus in terms of trusting or relying on him, his power and help.

That's the kind of vertical. The second two failures have to do with not following Jesus in terms of not having his attitude towards others, the horizontal between one another.

[17 : 54] If they'd fully grasped his death, then they would have seen his attitude of humble service and not argued over who is the greatest. Verse 46.

An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Now, we don't know the details here that started the argument.

Perhaps Peter, James and John who were up the mountain last week with Jesus, perhaps this week they're saying, oh, look, you are the nine. If we had been here, we could have healed that boy.

You lot are losers. We're going to be the greatest. We don't know the details, right? Either way, it's an issue of pride and arrogance, isn't it? Arguing who the greatest is.

Like Muhammad Ali who famously said, I am the greatest and then added, I said that even before I knew I was. Now, I doubt arguing over who the greatest is an issue for us here at church.

[19 : 00] I mean, I don't think we, I've never heard any of you arguing who the greatest is at church. But perhaps we can still look down at others at church, you know, those who are different to us. You know, those younger people at church who like those modern loud songs or those people who can't park straight in the car park.

or those who seem less godly or those who barrack for Collingwood. But if we follow Jesus, then there's no place for pride and arrogance.

For even the least among us is great. Verse 47. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him.

Then he said to them, whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For is the one who is least among you or who is great.

Jesus drops the comparison greatest there. It's literally just great. But in Jesus' day, a child has a very lowly status. That's why he uses a child as an illustration.

[20 : 14] You know, kids were to be seen but not heard. Do you remember that saying? And they were regarded as having little worth because they didn't contribute much to the house but certainly consumed everything in the house.

And Michelle and I go shopping on Mondays and by Tuesday afternoon the locusts have been through the cupboard and everything's gone. And they've left the cupboard doors open again. I'm not even sure why cupboards should have doors actually when kids are at home.

But the point is the child represents the least or the lowly. And Jesus says whoever welcomes this child in my name, that is as a fellow believer, welcomes me and God who sent me.

Because Jesus is with them as a believer. Which makes them important, doesn't it? And so even the least among you all in the world's eyes, like that child, is great.

which means every believer is important. The other gospels talk about the greatest, one being the most servant, but Luke's point here is that every believer is great, is important.

[21 : 28] And so every believer is to be welcomed. To welcome someone is to warmly receive them and serve them. Isn't that what you do when you welcome someone to your home?

You say, hello, come on in. Take your shoes off or leave them on, depending on what your house does, I don't know. And then you serve them by offering them a cup of tea or a glass of water and so on, don't you?

We are to warmly receive and serve every believer, even those who in the world's eyes are regarded as the least amongst us all.

For even those who are different to us, for is that not what Jesus, the great son of man did to us? Did not he warmly receive and serve us by going to the cross to die for us?

And so unlike the disciples, we're to have Jesus' attitude that welcomes all believers as great. And finally, we're to serve together with humility, unlike the disciples whose pride prevents someone else from doing ministry.

[22 : 39] So verse 49, Master, answered John, we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because he is not one of us.

Now in your Bibles it says, Master said John, but it's literally answered because John is replying to Jesus' comments about welcoming and being great. And he seems to be saying, surely Jesus, we were right not to welcome but stop this guy because he's not one of us great ones, one of the twelve elite.

It's the issue of pride again. If you're not one of the special ones in church, then you can't serve like us, seems to be what he's saying. And in fact, I wonder if there's also some jealousy here too because did you notice that this guy is doing what those disciples couldn't do for the boy?

Drive out demons. Because he's doing it in Jesus' name, trusting in Jesus' power. Either way, Jesus says in verse 50, do not stop him.

Jesus said, for whoever is not against you is for you. Now, if anyone is not against you, that is, if they're genuinely wanting to serve with you, then they are for you.

[23 : 57] So don't stop them. Encourage them. You see, serving is not about status, but support. It's not about competition, but cooperation.

It's not about hubris, but humility. After all, we need each other, don't we? It's why we try to encourage people who want to serve.

And sometimes it needs to be directed or there needs to be training so that the body can best be built. but we shouldn't think because they're not old enough, not Anglican enough, or haven't been with us long enough, that they shouldn't serve if they want to.

In fact, at 1030 Church last Sunday, we had an 11-year-old up the back learning to do slides for us. How cool is that? Having said all that, I doubt many of us would prevent people from serving, would we?

I don't think that's our issue. Rather, I suspect the issue for us is not wanting to serve because we don't think we're good enough or there is nothing for us or perhaps we think life is busy enough.

[25 : 07] But Jesus didn't say to his father, I'm too busy to be delivered into the hands of men, did he? He said, not what I will, but your will be done. And so unlike the disciples, we're to all serve with humility.

Well, let me finish. The wife of US President Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, said this, learn from the mistakes of others, you can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

And so unlike the disciples, following Jesus means trusting in his power to save others, it means asking for help to fully grasp his word, it means welcoming all believers as great, and it means serving together with humility.

humility. And so I wonder which disciples' mistake can you learn from this morning? Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word, which points us to your Son and what it means to follow him.

Help us, we pray, to learn from these mistakes, that we might follow him rightly. For we ask it in his name. Amen.