

Local preacher writes winning sermon, 'Three strikes and you're out-maybe'

By Brent Beasley

Scripture passage: Mark 14:29-31
66-72, 16:1-7

Opening day for T-ball season was yesterday. Lynn Ellis and I are coaching a team together. After the game, Kelly Al-Obaidi came running up to Lynn yelling, "Miss Lynn, Miss Lynn, did we win?"

And Lynn said, "Kelly, everybody's a winner in T-ball."

There isn't a lot left for us to do where everybody's a winner. You don't have to live very long or do very much to know what it's like to lose. To come up short. To fail.

Ask Peter. Peter enjoyed the thrill of victory. But he also experienced the agony of defeat.

Everybody knows he started out as a fisherman. He lived with his wife in Capernaum, where they shared a house with his mother-in-law and his brother Andrew. He and Andrew had their own boat and were in business with a couple of partners named James and John, Zebedee's sons.

The first time Jesus laid eyes on him, he took one good look and said, "So you're Simon, the son of John" (John 1:42). And then Jesus said that from then on he'd call him Cephas, which is Aramaic for Peter, which is Greek for Rock.

He could stop fishing for fish. Jesus told him, "He's been promoted. From there on out, people were to be his business. Now he could start fishing for them."

Peter certainly experienced the thrill of victory in this business of being a disciple. There were all these half-baked theories of who Jesus was, so Jesus put it to them straight: "Who do YOU say that I am?"

Nobody wanted to stick his neck out, until Peter finally said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus said, "Blessed are you Simon." Then Jesus told him that he was the rock he would build his church on. "I will give you the keys to the

kingdom," Jesus told him. Another victory.

But Peter also knew the agony of defeat. He didn't always say the right thing or do the right thing. One time Jesus was talking about heaven, and Peter wanted to know what sort of special deal people like himself got, people who'd left home and given everything up to follow Jesus.

Jesus took it easy on him that time because a rock can't help being a little thick sometimes.

And then there was their last supper together. Jesus was explaining that he would have to be going soon. Peter didn't quite get it, and he asked about it, and Jesus explained what he meant was that he was going where nobody on earth would follow him. Peter finally got the point; then he asked why he couldn't follow.

"I'll lay down my life for you," Peter said.

Then Jesus said something terrible to Peter: "Listen, the rooster won't crow 'till you've betrayed me three times."

And Jesus was right, of course. After Jesus was arrested, Peter was sitting out there in the courtyard keeping warm by the fire. Then the girl came up to ask him three times if he wasn't one of them with Jesus, and he replied each time that he didn't know that in God's name she was talking about.

And then the old rooster squawked at the rising sun, and tears ran down Peter's face like rain down a rock as he remembered.¹

Peter knew what it's like to be a winner. He also knew what it's like to be a loser.

But everybody's a winner in T-ball. Do you know why everybody's a winner in T-ball? Because we don't keep score in T-ball.

Most of the time, sports are all about no second chances. There are clear winners and losers. There are the

ones who start and play most of the time, and there are the ones who almost never get to play. There is the one who is picked first. And there is the one who is picked last.

Most of the time, sports are all about no second chances. But T-ball is one sport that is all grace.

When you go up to bat, you can't strike out. The rule is you keep going until you hit the ball.

An inning is over after three outs, or after everybody gets to hit.

Everybody plays the whole game. We had 13 players out in the field.

And in T-ball, you don't keep score. And when the game's over, everybody gets a snow cone.

Nobody knows the score. And everybody gets a snow cone. T-ball is all grace.

One of the things we discover as we consider what happened to Jesus at the end of his life is that all of us share the burden of guilt as betrayers of Jesus.

The truth is that all of us are a part of a company of betrayers.

We can't run off and hide and leave Judas holding the bag.

When the rooster crows, we just can't look smugly at Peter. Pilate is not the only one who has washed his hands of an opportunity to do the right thing.

It's nice to have somebody else to point to as the guilty party. It's nice to have someone else to blame. It's nice to have a scapegoat. We don't like to have to admit our daily betrayal of

Jesus. We don't like to have to admit our own portion of the guilt in his death.

And a lot of us would like to live in a world where when you go to church you never hear Christians-much less preachers-confess to the pain or sin of anything. The problem is that each of us has a story. And all of our stories include the truth that we are guilty, that we have all betrayed our Lord, that we are all a part of the company of betrayers. That is a part of our story. And it's the only story we've got. And that's my story, too.

If you're keeping score, I don't think I'm winning this game. And I know I don't always deserve a snow cone.

But the thing is, we don't have to end up like Judas. We don't have to let our guilt and our shame and our failure destroy us.

Peter proves that. Peter.

The Sabbath was over. Mary Magdalene and two other women were going to anoint Jesus' body. So, very early on the first day of the week, just before sunrise, they were on the way to the tomb. They were even wondering as they walked how they were going to roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb so they could get in, because it was a very large stone.

But when they got there, the stone had already been rolled away and an angel was there who told them that if they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth they were looking in the wrong place. He is risen. He wasn't there.

GCA holds yard 'Scarecrow' contest

The Garwood Community Association (GCA) recently sponsored a "Scarecrow" yard decoration contest.

Rules of the contest were simple... build a scarecrow, display it and it would be judged.

The judges for the contest were

anonymous.

Citizens' response to the contest was strong with many displaying unique scarecrows.

Members of the GCA would like to thank everyone who participated and wish one and all a happy holiday season.



Second place was won by Laurie Valchar.



Winning first place honors was the Garwood Post Office, Postmaster Janet Wells presiding.



Third place went to the Nada Post Office with Sandra Frnka presiding. Photos Courtesy of Catherine Berger

And then, in Mark 16:7, there is this great line that I had never noticed before until it was pointed out to me in a book I read a few years ago.

The angel tells the women, "But go, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is going before you to Galilee."

Go and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is going before you to Galilee.

Let me say it another way: Don't just stay here. Go and tell the disciples-and especially Peter-that he is risen and is going before you to Galilee.

Peter didn't let his despair destroy him. Somehow he kept going. And then we have this great line in Mark 16: The tomb was empty. Jesus was alive.

And the angel tells Mary Magdalene and the others to go tell the disciples-and especially Peter.

It's as if even the angels were saying: "Be sure to tell Peter that he's not left out. Tell him that Jesus still wants to see him."

No wonder they call it the gospel of the second chance. Peter betrayed Jesus by something he said, just like you and I sometimes betray Jesus by things we say and or by things we don't say and don't do.

But Jesus wanted Peter especially to know that he was alive. And Peter allowed himself to be forgiven. And he got a second chance.

Even the angels wanted Peter to know it wasn't over. The message came loud and clear: Be sure and tell Peter that even though he swung and missed, he gets to bat again.

And Peter did take another swing. He hit a home run at Pentecost. He became the leader of the early Christian church.

We live in a world that keeps score and all of us know what it's like to lose.

We also know enough about ourselves-if we're really honest-to shudder at the thought of God with his great scorebook in the sky. That's a pretty scary thought isn't it? A tally mark here, a tally mark there. How do you think you'd come out? God's scorebook in the sky.

Comptroller's unclaimed property could be your link to wealth

Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander's annual Unclaimed Property List appeared in Texas newspapers Sunday, Oct. 21, bringing thousands of hard-working families and business owners some good news: The state wants to give them money.

Readers may call the Comptroller's office at 1-800-654-3463, or at 512-463-3120 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, to inquire about unclaimed property. The phone lines are very busy during the first few weeks following the release of the list, so you may prefer to use the online database at <www.window.state.tx.us/up> to search for names and begin the claims process electronically. There is no deadline to file a claim; the money will be there until the rightful owner is found.

This year's list contains the names of 115,695 people for whom the state is holding at least \$100 in forgotten cash, stocks or safe deposit box contents.

Names from this area: Columbus: Willard Anderson, Alta Marie Barten, Borden Inc., Lloyd Carroll, Walter P. Clore, Columbus Community Chest, Meranell Cook, R.E. Cummings, Alicia Davis, Mark David Goldsmith, Robby Houser, Vernita P. Jordan, Erica Maples, H.C. Moeller, Minnie

Fifteen years ago in a large city in the far West, rumors spread that a certain Catholic woman was having visions of Jesus. The reports reached the archbishop. He decided to check her out. There is always, you know, a fine line between an authentic mystic and the lunatic fringe.

"It is true, ma'am, that you have visions of Jesus?"

"Yes."

"Well, the next time you have a vision, I want you to ask Jesus to tell you the sins that I confessed in my last confession."

The woman was stunned. "Did I hear you right, bishop? You actually want me to ask Jesus to tell me the sins of your past?"

"Exactly. Please call me if anything happens."

Ten days later, the woman notified the bishop of a recent appearance. "Please come," she said.

Within the hour, the archbishop arrived. He trusted eye-to-eye contact. "You just told me on the phone that you actually had a vision of Jesus. Did you do what I asked?"

"Yes, bishop. I asked Jesus to tell me the sins you confessed in your last confession."

The bishop leaned forward with anticipation. His eyes narrowed. "What did Jesus say?"

She took his hand, gazed deep into his eyes. "Bishop," she said, "these are his exact words: 'I CAN'T REMEMBER.'"

I'm practicing some of the things I'll be saying over and over at our next T-ball game:

"I don't know the score."
"Keep trying until you hit it."
"Everybody gets to play."
"Everybody's a winner."
"It's all grace."
"Snow cones for everybody."

¹ The description of Peter based on the chapter "Peter" in Frederick Buechner, "Peculiar Treasures."

² Max Lucado, "No Wonder They Call Him the Savior."

³ Brennan Manning, "The Ragamuffin Gospel."

ENGLISH ANTIQUE AUCTION
Saturday, Dec. 1; 6 p.m. Sealy Outlet Center
Wardrobes, dressers, chests, kitchen cabinets, drop side tables, draw leaf tables, corner cabinets, sideboards, rugs, stained glass, glassware, pottery, porcelain, china, chairs, American dining suite, American bedroom suite.
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Christmas Coloring Contest

Pick up picture to be colored at your nearest Shoppa's Farm Supply.
Deadline to enter is Thursday, Dec. 13th.
Ages 2-5 years old & 6-10 years old

PRIZES

2-5 years old

1st Place - Electric Gator
2nd Place - \$100.00 Gift Certificate
3rd Place - \$75.00 Gift Certificate

6-10 years old

1st Place - 10-Speed Bicycle
2nd Place - \$125.00 Gift Certificate
3rd Place - \$75.00 Gift Certificate

Winners to be announced Saturday, December 15, 2001.

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10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; El Campo Civic Center

Sunday, Dec. 2

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; El Campo Civic Center

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*Food Available in Food Court in Dusen Room

Admission: Adults, \$2; Children 12-5, \$1; Under school age, FREE

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*Door Prize Drawings Every Hour!
Kids Karaoke Sunday, 1-4 p.m.



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Lighted Christmas Parade

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Dec. 6th - 7 p.m.
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