

Week of May 6-12

A MULLIGAN

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 21

I don't know how many of you who are reading this devotional play golf, but if you do, then you're, no doubt, familiar with the term, "mulligan." The dictionary defines a mulligan as "a shot not counted against the score, permitted in unofficial play to a player whose previous shot was poor." In other words, a mulligan is a do-over.

In our chapter reading today, Jesus gives the apostle Peter a "spiritual mulligan." At the Last Supper, Jesus warned Peter that he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. Peter, of course, vehemently protested, boasting that he was ready to go to prison and to death. It didn't take long for Peter to fail, though, and by his third denial, he swore that he didn't even know Jesus. Jesus looked right at Peter after the rooster crowed (according to Luke's account of the denial) and Peter went out and wept bitterly afterwards.

Imagine what Peter must have been feeling over the next few days. He had failed, and failed miserably. He must have replayed those denials again and again in his head. To make matters worse, since he didn't expect Jesus to rise from the dead, he must have thought there was no way back. When Jesus did rise and appeared to Peter, he, no doubt, must have been filled with joy that Jesus was alive. Yet, the nagging feeling of failure probably lingered on. Maybe he didn't feel like he deserved to be a disciple any longer. Yet, Jesus had made a promise to Peter during the Last Supper that Peter seems to have forgotten: "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Did you catch that? "And when you have turned back..." Jesus expected his disciple to get back into the game after his failure. In John chapter 21, Jesus calls Peter back to service by thrice commanding him to feed his sheep. Did Peter blow it? Yes! Big time! Failure, however, was not final because of grace and Peter was given a second chance at discipleship. He received a spiritual mulligan, a do-over in ministry.

How about you? Have you blown it recently? Are you struggling with a sense of failure today and wondering if you're beyond hope? While we don't want to go out of our way to fall into failure because there can be consequences, we do need to trust that God is a God of the second chance. Consider the following: Noah got drunk. Abraham lied. Isaac did too. Jacob was a deceiver. Moses lost his temper. Samson chased women. David committed adultery and murder. Peter denied Jesus. John Mark went AWOL on a mission's trip. Shall I go on? Each one blew it and, yet, God still used them because they looked to him. God does give mulligans.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Read Psalm 103:12; Jeremiah 31:34; I John 1:9 and Isaiah 1:18 in light of today's devotional. Reflect on his new beginnings in the lives of the "failures" of Scripture and, then, ask the Lord to give you a spiritual mulligan where necessary.

Take-away: *Mulligans aren't just for golf. Jesus gives "do-overs" too!*