

Sermon for 4/30/2000—*Sermon Series: “Come, Meet the Lord of Life.”*—Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Title: “The Lord of my past”

Text: John 21: 10-19

Introduction: **Illus.: THE LIVED OUT REGRET OF SARAH WINCHESTER**

Theme: For Jesus to be Lord and Savior of my life, we must surrender the control and let him be the Lord of our past circumstances so that he can deliver to us the peace of mind which only he can give to us.

If Jesus never rose from the dead and was the Lord of past sins. . .

- We would live in regret over our past
 1. Which would literally kill us—physically and eternally
 2. *“For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death.” 2 Cor. 7: 10*
- We would live with no peace in the present
 1. Peter was trying to re-find his life—even by going fishing again—but was not at peace
 2. *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. . .but now Christ has been raised from the dead. He will become first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.” 1 Cor 15: 17,20*
- We would live with agonizing fear of the future
 1. **ILL.: LIVING IN THE PAST**
 2. I am sure that Peter thought that he had forfeited his future apostleship because of his past denial
 3. What is the bottom line of your fears—failure of the past—the great equalizer=death=no respecter of what you did or accomplished---fear of no lasting legacy (why we pour selves into jobs, kids, etc.)

If Jesus is the Lord of our past. . .

- We can live “guilt free” by his death and resurrection
 1. **ILL.: OVERCOMING YOUR PAST**
 2. Three times Jesus revisited the denial so that Peter was assured Jesus did the reconciling and nothing left
 3. We can stop trying to master our past and let Jesus be Lord because God does the declaring for Jesus’ sake
 4. “He was handed over to death for our sins, and he was raised so that we might be declared “no guilty.”Rom 4: 25
 5. When we live in the confidence of God-given grace, we can stop manipulating (lording) others with guilt
- We live for Jesus as a response not as an obligation
 1. Interesting word exchange between Jesus and Peter (vss. 15-17)
 - Jesus says, “Are you committed to me (Love) more than these friends (disciples) and Peter says lukewarmly, “You know that I am your friend (love)
 - Jesus says, “Are you committed to me (love) more than just friendship” and Peter says, “You know that I am your friend”
 - Jesus says, “Are you my friend? (Willing to give up your life for me) and Peter is grieved at Jesus for third question, “you know that I am your friend!”
 2. Do we have a relationship with Jesus, the living Lord and Lord of life, or just a casual friendship?
 3. Do we serve him out of obligation, afraid of his power, or do we submit ourselves to Him, his Word, and his righteousness, because we respect his authoritative love?
 4. *“I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.” John 15: 15*
- We can live a life of restoration not penance
 1. **ILL.: RESTORATION**
 2. Not living a life always trying to make up for our past but having past transformed in thought and action
 3. *“I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.” Romans 12: 1-2*

REMORSE

Sarah was rich. She had inherited twenty million dollars. Plus she had an additional income of one thousand dollars a day. That's a lot of money any day, but it was immense in the late 1800s.

Sarah was well known. She was the belle of New Haven, Connecticut. No social event was complete without her presence. No one hosted a party without inviting her.

Sarah was powerful. Her name and money would open almost any door in America. Colleges wanted her donations. Politicians clamored for her support. Organizations sought her endorsement. Sarah was rich. Well known. Powerful. And miserable.

Her only daughter had died at five weeks of age. Then her husband had passed away. She was left alone with her name, her money, her memories, ... and her guilt.

It was her guilt that caused her to move west. A passion for penance drove her to San Jose, California. Her yesterdays imprisoned her today's, and she yearned for freedom.

She bought an eight-room farmhouse plus one hundred sixty adjoining acres. She hired sixteen carpenters and put them to work. For the next thirty-eight years, craftsmen labored every day, twenty-four hours a day, to build a mansion.

Observers were intrigued by the project. Sarah's instructions were more than eccentric ... they were eerie. The design had a macabre touch. Each window was to have thirteen panes, each wall thirteen panels, each closet thirteen hooks, and each chandelier thirteen globes.

The floor plan was ghoulish. Corridors snaked randomly, some leading nowhere. One door opened to a blank wall, another to a fifty-foot drop. One set of stairs led to a ceiling that had no door. Trap doors. Secret passageways. Tunnels. This was no retirement home for Sarah's future; it was a castle for her past.

The making of this mysterious mansion only ended when Sarah died. The completed estate sprawled over six acres and had six kitchens, thirteen bathrooms, forty stairways, forty-seven fireplaces, fifty-two skylights, four hundred sixty-seven doors, ten thousand windows, one hundred sixty rooms, and a bell tower.

Why did Sarah want such a castle? Didn't she live alone? "Well, sort of," those acquainted with her story might answer. "There were the visitors..." And the visitors came each night.

Legend has it that every evening at midnight, a servant would pass through the secret labyrinth that led to the bell tower. He would ring the bell...to summon the spirits. Sarah would then enter the "blue room," a room reserved for her and her nocturnal guests. Together they would linger until 2:00 a.m., when the bell would be rung again. Sarah would return to her quarters; the ghosts would return to their graves.

Who comprised this legion of phantoms? Indians and soldiers killed on the U.S. frontier. They had all been killed by bullets from the most popular rifle in America -- the Winchester. What had brought millions of dollars to Sarah Winchester had brought death to them.

So she spent her remaining years in a castle of regret, providing a home for the dead. You can see this poltergeist place in San Jose, if you wish. You can tour its halls and see its remains.

But to see what unresolved guilt can do to a human being, you don't have to go to the Winchester mansion. Lives imprisoned by yesterday's guilt are in your own city. Hearts haunted by failure are in your own neighborhood. People plagued by pitfalls are just down the street .. or just down the hall.

There is, wrote Paul, a "worldly sorrow" that "brings death." A guilt that kills. A sorrow that's fatal. A venomous regret that's deadly.

How many Sarah Winchesters do you know? How far do you have to go to find a soul haunted by ghosts of the past? Maybe not very far. Maybe Sarah's story is your story. In the Eye of the Storm by Max Lucado Word Publishing, 1991 Page 193-195

PAST, living in

One man said to his friend: "Say, you look depressed.

What are you thinking about?"

"My future," was the quick answer.

"What makes it look so hopeless?"

"My past."

PAST, overcoming

Putting Your Past Behind You, E. Lutzer, Here's Life, 1990, p.13ff

I wish there were some wonderful place called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all of our past mistakes and heartaches,
And all of our poor selfish grief,
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat
at the door
And never be put on again.

RESTORATION

J. Stuart Holden tells of an old Scottish mansion close to where he had his little summer home. The walls of one room were filled with sketches made by distinguished artists. The practice began after a pitcher of soda water was accidentally spilled on a freshly decorated wall and left an unsightly stain. At the time, a noted artist, Lord Landseer, was a guest in the house. One day when the family went out to the moors, he stayed behind. With a few masterful strokes of a piece of charcoal, that ugly spot became the outline of a beautiful waterfall, bordered by trees and wildlife. He turned that disfigured wall into one of his most successful depictions of Highland life. Swindoll, *The Quest For Character, Multnomah*, p. 49ff

John 21: 10-19

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. 15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. 18 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"