In Spanish, we have this saying, “Se te cierra el mundo!” which means you **shut down or closed your mind to possibilities both in your present and future**. The phrase is used to describe those moments we all have experienced when we get so overwhelmed or discouraged by a seemingly unmanageable situation that we give up because we can’t or are unwilling to see a positive outcome of our current circumstances.

Has this ever happened to you? Have you had a “Se te cierra el mundo!” kind of experience? It has to do with our limited ability to believe that there is more to life than just the current reality we are experiencing.

People talk about this as seeing the “big picture” in life, meaning that one **should think of the future and not focus only on the small details of the present because they do not tell the entire story**. So, for example, you may be looking at one cloud in a painting of a landscape and think it’s a cloudy day when in reality, it is a painting of a beautiful field of flowers.

The gospel of Matthew tells of an episode where Jesus is looking at the big picture while his disciples are not. In this text, he forecasts once again his imminent death to the disciples and Peter tried to stop him from letting himself being killed. This is Matthew 16: 21-23,

“From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Here, Jesus is sharing with his disciples about what was soon going to happen to him. We can notice that Jesus not only knew what was coming, he was also determined to follow the path set before him. Jesus warned the disciples many times about his death to prepare them to stay steady and not lose heart. However, they lost sight of everything Jesus said to them because they were confused and disappointed. **Instead of trusting Jesus at his word of him being “raised” on the third day, they scattered and gave up.**

In this particular moment, we see Peter telling Jesus, “God forbid it, Lord!” to which Jesus replied, “Get behind me, Satan!” I know that when we read or hear this text, our eyes get wide open, “Did Jesus just called Peter, Satan?” Of course, Peter was not Satan or an evil person; he had just confessed Jesus as the Messiah, saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and Jesus blessed him after that.

What is happening here, then? The word “Satan” means adversary, and that is what Peter was doing, opposing Jesus. Peter did this because he had no idea how God works.

Can we blame Peter for trying to talk Jesus out of being killed? I think Peter did what we would do when someone we love is talking “crazy talk.” **Peter’s love for Jesus was deep and strong, so he tried to save him, saying, “This shall never happen to you! There are twelve of us. We will keep you safe.”**

Peter loved Jesus and was trying to protect him, but in doing so, he was interfering with God’s big agenda; hence Jesus rebuked him.

**Peter didn’t understand God’s plan.** Peter’s view of Jesus as the Christ did not include the shame and the horror of a crucifixion; instead, he dreamed about a Messiah that would overcome their enemies with supernatural power. “That is not happening,” he basically told Jesus because thought he knew God’s plan better than him. In essence, **Peter wanted a world that fitted his expectations.**

But it gets worse. Soon after that, Peter denied Jesus three times and abandoned him on the cross; his promise of being willing to die with him was an empty one. At that point, he thought of himself as too far gone.

If we were to stop here and did not know anything else about Peter but this, we would probably assume he was a coward or bad person and did not end his life well. This is something that we often do to ourselves too. **We judge what is happening to us in any moment and make it the main story of our lives when there is much more to be said and done. When we stop in the middle of the story, we give up our future and the blessings of tomorrow. If we fail to grasp the big picture of God’s plan for us through an entire lifetime, we will fail to live in faith, peace, and joy**.

I know this speaks to many of us. **Unfortunately, we too, get set in our ways and mindset that we can’t see what is in front and ahead of us.** Our imagination gets atrophied by the fears of the moment, and when this happens, when we fear the unknown, we lose the opportunities of new blessings.

**Over the years, I have learned that even when things don’t go as planned, we could surprise ourselves if we keep an open mind.** Challenges, conflicts, disappointments are opportunities to make things better and not to give up on life.

Thank God this was not the end of Peter’s story. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Jesus came to Peter and restored him to life and ministry. Jesus reminded him of his love for him and put him back in God’s story where he belonged. At that moment, Peter understood and was changed. He grew in faith, hope, and trust.

A few weeks after this event, Peter was not afraid anymore, he stood before many and boldly proclaiming these words,

“Listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Acts 2: 22-36 (selected verses)

Wow! This is Peter now. What a difference a few weeks make! This is no longer the confused, misguided, and coward Peter, now he is confident and living with purpose.

What changed? He finally was able to see Jesus as he is. He no longer thought of Jesus as a miracle worker only, but as the living God that defeated death. He no longer tried to fit God into his expectations. He no longer was seeking his comfort. **This time, he no longer defined his life by present circumstances, but he focused his sight on the “divine things.”** Now his eyes were set in the big picture of a life lived longing for the kingdom of God.

My friends, today, we can see through Peter’s life that those who walk with God, who are not set in their own ways but open themselves to the possibility of “What is God doing next?” and give themselves into God’s leading, they always live with fulfillment and purpose.

Over the years, I have learned to look at the “Big Picture.” I am sure many of you have as well. **As we grow older, we learn to see the world from a broader perspective.** That is one of the advantages of growing older because as we age, we are able to look back and see the hand of God in our lives when we thought we were forsaken and done. I am sure you can recall memories right now of past times when you thought you were doomed. However, you made it out, and once you did, you saw the big picture of your life.

Any wise person would tell us, “The key in an adverse situation is to continue the journey, to keep going forward to our destination, trusting that God will always lead us to a good place even if the road gets rough at times.” The road may find unexpected and sudden turns, even detours, but the destination doesn’t change.

Indeed, the good news for us today is that those who walk with God always reach their destination. **God always makes everything right if we give him the time and space to work it out. God always accomplishes his good and perfect will in those that give themselves to him.** Though we don’t always see the “Why?” of things, we can be sure that God is at work to perfect us in our walk with him every day of our lives.

I invite you today to welcome and embrace the work of God’s Spirit in your life. **Don’t quit while going through a bad chapter; God has not finished written your story in this life**. Instead, stay steadfast during trials and trust God with the big picture of your life. Think of Jesus, what he accomplished, and the promise of a new life in him. Get hold of that faith and dare to dream and plan always for the future as you let God guide your steps each day.