

"Were You There When Jesus Was Denied?"—Luke 22:60-62

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Were You There When Jesus Was Denied?", is Luke 22:60-62 → *Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

"Talk is cheap." This cliché is intended to remind you that it is very easy to speak the necessary or right words at a given moment but, when something or someone challenges your words, the "value" of your confession will be measured by your commitment to those words expressed in your behavior. A person with a strong conviction can find himself "cave in" to behaviors and ideals contrary to his conviction under the pressure of relativism or analysis based on *philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition and elemental spirits of the world.* (cf. Colossians 2:8) Standing up for your convictions becomes especially challenging in the face of intense fear as well as in the midst of

temptation to sin.

At the same time, it is one thing to express a conviction and quite another to claim association. While many may engage openly and freely in conversation about God, prayer, angels, “spirituality,” the “supernatural,” things from the Bible, and so forth, those same people may shrink back or remain silent when asked about their relationship with Jesus, the Christ. Claiming association with Jesus means you have to claim association with your sins since dealing with your sin was the purpose of Jesus’ physical presence on this earth.

Our text reveals such a personal struggle in the midst of the sinful events involved with Jesus’ passion as Peter awaited the outcome of Jesus’ mock “hearing” or “trial” before the Sanhedrin. Peter “caved” in the midst of his fear and denied that he knew the man, Jesus. However, in the denial of Jesus by Peter we can see various aspects of the struggles we all face in our own lives even as His disciples.

We get a picture of Peter from the Scriptures as one who appears to be rather quick to react. Some have even suggested that he has “hoof in mouth disease” because of the many instances where he engaged his mouth before engaging his brain, eating his own words in the end. This was especially true on this particular evening of Jesus’ arrest.

Just hours earlier Jesus had been telling His disciples what was about to take place, including their all deserting Him. Peter spoke up

confidently: *Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away.* No doubt, Peter felt a strong conviction of his commitment to Jesus. *Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* Peter stated his position so confidently: *Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!* Now before you’re too harsh on Peter’s brash confidence in the presence of Jesus’ prediction, it is important to remember that *all the disciples said the same.* (cf. Matthew 26:31-35) Apparently they all had the same conviction as Peter. I have wondered if Peter was actually revealing his self-righteousness in light of a personal judgment of Judas’ actions of upcoming betrayal which Jesus revealed to the disciples that night as well. (cf. Matthew 26:20-25) “How dare Judas betray the Master! I would never do that!” No?

Now, in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter is recognized by others to be Jesus’ disciples. True to form, Peter engaged his mouth saying, *I do not know Him.* (cf. Luke 22:57) But the fear of being associated with Jesus was so strong that when someone else insisted that he was with Jesus, *Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.”* (Verse 60) He “caved” and associated himself with Jesus’ enemies instead—no different than Judas’ sin of betrayal.

Were you there when Jesus was denied? Sadly, we can find ourselves acting much like Peter, denying Jesus in different and various

ways in our own lives. For instance:

- Have you ever reacted by engaging your mouth before your brain only to find yourself in the depths of sin in the end? God says in James 1:19-20 → *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*
- Have you ever been swayed by the people around you to believe or do something wrong? God says in Psalm 1:1 → *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.*
- Have you ever held to the truth of God's Word in full conviction until a family member or friend challenged you to think differently and, if you didn't, you were accused of not loving him or her? Jesus says in Matthew 10:37 → *Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*
- Have you ever remained silent when the moment called for confessing Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Jesus says in Matthew 10:33 → *Whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in heaven.*

Verses 60-61 of our text says: *And immediately, while he was still*

speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. First, an audible reminder to make him recognize that he had sinned. Then, the text reads as if Peter looked into the eyes of the very Lord Whom he had just denied when Jesus *turned and looked at Peter*. Oh the shame one feels when the guilt of sin is revealed in the eyes of the one against whom you've just sinned. Then came the conviction of the Holy Spirit working through the Word. Verse 61 of our text continues: *And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times."* It led Peter to leave and weep ***bitterly***.

You have a glimpse into Peter's contrition—being ashamed of his sin and expressing the bitterness of the sorrow that sin caused. It feels like the complete end of everything. If we look deep into our heart of hearts we have been there in Peter's sandals, ashamed of our sin, burden with the sorrow it has caused God, others and ourselves. If you are honest with God and yourself you cannot but confess, "I have been there." Now what?

Standing with Peter in the midst of such contrition over sin we also stand with him hearing the words from Jesus' mouth—"Forgiveness is yours!" It was for just a time as this that Jesus endured His passion. 1 Peter 2:24 says: *He Himself bore **our sins** in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. **By His wounds you have***

been healed. Having been “broken” spiritually we can run to Jesus in *godly grief* which *produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.* (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10) Why? Because Jesus’ forgiveness is **complete!** It is so complete that it creates a new life with a new attitude in you so that, claiming association with and faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord, is also given new meaning!

Jesus had even revealed this to Peter right before He predicted Peter’s denial. In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus told him: *Simon, Simon, behold, satan demanded to have you . . . but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. **And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*** It is only when you lose your life in Jesus through contrition, repentance and absolution that you are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister the grace of God in Christ Jesus to others. Thus, even through his sinful denial, Peter was still being trained by Jesus for future work in His kingdom. We even witness this when Jesus reassured Peter of His love for him, wanting him to continue feeding His sheep and lambs. (cf. John 21:15-17)

Were you there when Jesus was denied? Yes. Not only so, but you are still there since the denial of Jesus by many still happens daily in your world. You are also there when Jesus gives you His complete and total forgiveness of your sins when failing to associate with Him **so that**

you can confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior openly before others. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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