

Sermon for Lent Mid-week #6

Date: April 10, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Exodus 20:1-17

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Gospel Reading: Luke 22:24-34

Sermon Text: Luke 22:24-34

Sermon Title: Peter: The Born Leader

Introit: Psalm 26; antiphon: v. 3

Hymns:

LSB 435 – Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

LSB 430 – My Song Is Love Unknown (v. 1,2,6,7)

LSB 427 – In the Cross of Christ I Glory

LSB 645 – Built on the Rock the Church Shall Stand
Called to Remember (Tune 637)

LSB 422 – On My Heart Imprint Your Image



Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



Text: Luke 22:24-34

Then a quarrel broke out among the disciples. They argued about who should be considered the greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the nations have power over their people, and those in authority call themselves friends of the people. You are not going to be that way. Instead, the greatest among you must be like the youngest, and your leader must be like a servant. Who is the greatest, the person who sits at the table or the servant? Isn’t it really the person who sits at the table? Yet I’m among you as a servant.

You have stood by me in the troubles that have tested me. So as my Father has given me a kingdom, I’m giving one to you. You will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. You will also sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Then the Lord said, “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to have you apostles for himself. He wants to separate you from me as a one separates wheat from husks. I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail. So when you recover, strengthen the other disciples.”

Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and to die with you.”

Jesus replied, “Peter, I can guarantee that the rooster will not crow tonight until you say three times that you do not know me.”

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Grace, and peace to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

You might find this hard to believe at first, but there is really a lot in common with Simon Peter, and Judas Iscariot. You might say these two were made of much of the same stuff. So why did they end up in such utterly, radically, different ways. Today we're going to explore and learn about Peter and as we do, we'll see what made him the great confessor of Christ, rather than the great betrayer.

First let's look at what Peter and Judas had in common. Peter was quick to make decisions and move into action. He didn't miss an opportunity to step up and step out asserting his opinion, often before it was wise or necessary. Peter was always out in front. He was there to lead first, and to fall first. It was Peter who stepped out onto the water and started walking to Jesus.¹ It was Peter who attacked and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant.² People expected Peter to take the lead when the call to action came.

In the group Judas was the treasurer, and Peter was the president, at least in appearance to those who were watching. Both of these men showed skills and qualities of leadership. Peter was perhaps a bit more extroverted and out-going. He was perhaps more energetic and less calculating. Peter was abrupt, and impetuous, impulsive, and courageous. That combination mixed with a huge heart made him always well-meaning, but often mistaken. Acting before thinking was Peter's standard mode of operation.

Peter and Judas were both head strong, stubborn, and headed for a fall of epic proportions. Both of them offered Jesus their enthusiastic support. Both of them shrank from the cross and Christ's crucifixion. Both of them failed to truly grasp just how great, how deep, Jesus' love for us all really is. For that reason both of them suffered the consequences when the showdown came, when the true test of a man's grit arrived, both of them failed, and in a cowardly display of weakness, they each denied Jesus as their Lord, their Teacher, or even their friend. Both of these men shamed and humiliated themselves publicly.

With so much alike, what is it that set them so far apart in the end. One thing only. There is one very major item that distinguished, and set apart, Peter from Judas. Peter had faith. Peter had begun to see Jesus' real reason for being here. Where Judas was still looking for an earthly ruler, Peter saw Jesus had the words of eternal life. Peter saw Jesus was the Holy One of God.³ When the test of grits

1 Matthew 14:28-33

2 John 18:10

3 John 6:68-69

came, Peter had faith that carried him through. Judas did not, and for that reason Judas is lost forever,⁴ and Peter is saved.

Not by much, however. Peter came very close to following the path of Judas into eternal ruin and failure. Peter was strong, stubborn, self-made, and sturdy, but until he learned to follow Jesus he never really was all that God wanted him to be. When Peter learned that his true courage and manhood came from submitting to Christ that is when he found strength greater than he could have ever called up within himself. It was at that point, where Peter learned to lose himself in Jesus, and to trust Jesus utterly, that he became the great apostle we know and revere today, rather than the one for whom we have little more than contempt.

To get to that point was not an easy path for Peter, and it made him a target. Satan wanted to take Peter down. He had gotten Judas to betray Jesus, and his goal was to get Peter to deny the Jesus as Lord too. Jesus even warned Peter, “Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.” Satan was allowed to get to Peter, to put Peter to the test. Satan was allowed to shake Peter violently, to try to jostle him loose from his faith. Satan’s goal was to prove Peter was as worthless as chaff blown by the wind. Peter had to pass through this test, but he would go knowing that the Son of God had prayed for him so that his faith would not fail.⁵

When the test came, Peter’s leadership, his bravado, his courage, his boldness all failed him. It was only his faith in the Messiah of God that brought him back from the brink of eternal failure. Jesus had give Peter advanced notice of the test to come. “You will deny me three times this very night before the rooster crows.⁶” Peter boldly objected and denied such a thing could occur. Peter said he would walk with Jesus, even to his own death. The truth is, when the test came, Peter failed, and Peter fell.

In Scripture there is perhaps nothing, but Jesus’ own suffering, that is more painful to watch than that third time Peter denied his friend and Lord. The one man from whom we thought we could expect the most, gave the least. He failed when he was needed most. The one known as the Rock,⁷ fell apart like sand when the pressure came.

Peter had put Jesus’ warning out of his thoughts. He repeatedly denied Jesus. The third time he denied Jesus with all the vigor he could muster. Shouting loud enough for all to hear, with cursing and fowl language he said, “I do not know the

4 Acts 1:25

5 Luke 22:31-32

6 Luke 22:34

7 Peter is a Greek word that means ‘Rock.’

man!” Then he looked up to see Jesus being taken across the courtyard. There was his friend looking at him with pity and sorrow. ...and the roster crowded.

In that moment a great and powerful man was shattered to sobbing. He saw in himself the utter failure he truly was.

...but, Jesus had prayed for Peter, and that prayer had not gone unheard. Peter’s faith, tattered, battered, and bruised as it was, still remained. Peter remembered all that Jesus warned, and Peter in shuddering tears repented. Peter would again vow to never leave Jesus. This time however not with boisterous blustering, but rather with a firm, silent, humbleness and wiser resolve than before.

Peter fell, but his Savior lifted him up.⁸ Jesus took special care of Peter to bring him back.⁹ From then on Peter saw, perhaps more clearly than most, the unconditional, unending, unrelenting love of Jesus for us all. There in his failure, and Christ’s success, Peter would be a man among men. He would courageously and confidently preach and proclaim Christ crucified to his own horrible torturous death.

Unlike Judas, Peter lived to see Jesus resurrection and ascension. All because Peter learned to listen to, and live for, Jesus his friend and Lord. That is Peter’s lesson for us today. We all like to rely upon ourselves and our own efforts. When it comes to faith, nothing is more dangerous!

As we watch Peter’s part in the record of Christ’s Passion, you might see some of yourself in him. You might see a lot of yourself in him. You might see your own failures, your own errors, your own lack of resolve and strength. Not one of us is worthy to stand before the Father’s throne and exclaim to the heaven’s, “Look what I did for Your Son!” All of us would feel like fools if the thought crossed our minds to try.

We all know we have failed. We’ve failed ourselves, our families, our friends, our neighbors, and our Lord. Not one of us can stand.¹⁰ Yet in that guilt, hope springs eternal. There is freedom from the weight those thoughts put on our shoulders and our soul. If you hear nothing else tonight, hear this, your failures, no matter how great, how humiliating, or how disappointing, cannot separate you from the Love of God which in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹¹

Has Satan told you that you are a coward and a failure? Remember his failure and proclaim Christ crucified. Do memories remind you of past mistakes and

8 Mark 16:7

9 John 21:15-19

10 Romans 3:23

11 Romans 8:31-39

missteps? Proclaim Christ crucified. Do people vehemently proclaim victory over your vacillating weakness? Proclaim Christ crucified! You, dear child of God, are just that, a child of God. You are claimed before all of creation as His own. When all of creation attacks, lean back into the loving arms of a heavenly Father who loves you and will not let you go. Nothing can take to from His hands.¹²

That is why we are hear tonight. Because in reading and studying God's Word, God works. He work on us, He strengthens us, He forgives us and makes us holy again. That is what church is for. It is a place where the strong hold up the weak, and we all stand before God as forgiven children, perfect in His sight. This is a place where pains should be shared without fear of judgment, and where forgiveness must pour out like rain upon all. Where it doesn't we're acting like Peter again.

That is the lesson for us in Peter's life. Peter is a man you will meet someday. Not because Peter was so great, but because God is so good. Heaven is filled with failures, and sinners, losers and people labeled as disappointments. That is what Heaven was made for. People like you and me. Let the account of Peter's denial remind us of the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus suffered and died because even the most spiritual among us need the forgiveness of sins He won for us.

He died because we all, with Peter, need to have His love and mercy. He died because that is the only way He could rise again, to assure us of everlasting life free of failure and floundering. He died to set us free from Satan's tyranny.

May God always keep you in that one true faith that lead you to eternal life. Amen.

¹² John 10:28