

## Sermon for Mid-week Lent #3

**Date:** March 18, 2020

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

**First Reading:** Isaiah 59:1-3, 12-13

**Epistle Reading:** 2 Timothy 2:8-13

**Third Reading:** Mark 8:27-36

**Passion Reading:** Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

**Sermon Text:** Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

**Sermon Title:** Denying Eyes



### Hymns:

CW – Our Eyes Behold the Savior's Face

LSB 560 – Drawn to the Cross, Which Thou Hast Blessed

LSB 420 – Christ the Life of All the Living (v.1,4,7)

LSB 451 – Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

### Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



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## **Text: Mark 14:26–31, 66–72**

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

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

Two weeks ago, we looked at and through Judas' betraying eyes and recognized our own betrayals of our Lord. Last week we saw the disciples' sleepy eyes in the Garden of Gethsemane and identified the times we have fallen asleep in doing our Christian duty. This week we examine other ways sinful eyes can fail as we examine the denying eyes of Peter, of the other apostles, and even ourselves.

Back in the Upper Room, the apostles and Jesus had sung a hymn and then headed for the Mount of Olives. Jesus told the group they would all fall away, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."<sup>1</sup> Their proud spokesman Peter thought he was exempt from this, saying to Jesus, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."

Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times"

Peter said emphatically, "If I must die with You, I will not deny You<sup>2</sup>"

They all said the same! Not just Peter, but they all tried to exempt themselves from His saying and denied that they would fall away from Jesus, which was very foolish. They were denying the words from the lips of Jesus and the inspired and inerrant Word of God recorded by the prophet.

What was in the eyes of the apostles as they looked on Jesus predicting their failing Him? Perhaps first a look of horror at such an awful prospect. Then a look of disbelief as they processed what he said and began to form their defense.

The eyes of the apostles weren't really seeing Jesus and letting the truth of His words sink in. They were blinded by their own delusions. They were lying to themselves as they were denying their Lord's words. They were focused on their own perceptions and plans and had their minds on the things of men rather than on the things of God.<sup>3</sup> Ten apostles would go on to deny Jesus by falling away, in spite of their strict protest. Then we see Peter verbally deny Jesus in dramatic way when he was questioned by a little servant girl and some bystanders.

As we saw last week with Jesus alone and awake while the others slept, it had to be this way. He had to be the last one standing, the only one making "the good confession."<sup>4</sup> The one who would never deny the will of His Father but humbly submitted to suffering and death, for us and for our salvation.

1 Zechariah 13:7

2 Mark 14:29-31

3 Mark 8:33

4 1 Timothy 6:13

When Jesus had quoted the prophecy of Zechariah, He had actually added a couple words I left out. He said, “*I will* strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”<sup>5</sup> This is a quote from the Lord God of Israel Himself:

Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, against the Man  
who stands next to Me,’ declares the Lord of hosts.  
‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered’<sup>6</sup>

Who is the Man who stands next to God the Father? Jesus. He is the One against whom the Father bids the sword awaken. “I will strike the shepherd,” says the Father. It is just like we heard a couple weeks ago. The one who ultimately handed Jesus over wasn’t Judas but the Father Himself. And last week, it was the Father’s will that Jesus drink the cup of His wrath in full, emptying its last drop. That takes us back to Isaiah 53 and the Father’s will to crush the Messiah so that the masses would be accounted righteous in the Father’s sight:

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed Him *stricken*, smitten by God, and  
afflicted. But He was *pierced* for our transgressions; He  
was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the  
chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds  
we are healed.<sup>7</sup>

“I will strike the shepherd,” said the Father, and Jesus was stricken with all of that, for you.

That, however, is not the end! Earlier, I focused on Jesus’ words about the disciples falling away and denying Him, but I left out the Gospel! Jesus told them they would all fall away, but then He said, “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”<sup>8</sup>

His words about their falling away and denial did prove true, but even more importantly, so did His prediction of the resurrection and His subsequent appearing to the apostles. To these denying and doubting apostles Jesus entrusted the teaching and baptizing that would go out to all nations and turn deniers of God into confessors, into followers of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But what about Peter, who had fallen in deeply, who had denied that he even knew Jesus? We think we would never do such a thing, but how many times have we stood by silently when someone spoke words contradicting our Lord’s Word?

5 Mark 14:27

6 Zechariah 13:7

7 Isaiah 53:4-5

8 Mark 14:28

How many opportunities to confess the Gospel to others have we passed up for fear of giving offense? We should recognize in Peter an example to follow in the way he expressed his repentance over what he had done. Unlike Judas, who did have a change of heart but tried to deal with his guilt on his own, Peter had true godly sorrow<sup>9</sup> over his sin, which prepared him for the forgiveness he would receive on Easter morning, when Jesus appeared to the apostles, showed them His hands and side, and spoke the forgiving “Peace be with you.”

Later on, in Galilee, Peter got a special singling-out that left no doubt he was restored from being a denier and was placed into the office of confessor. At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus showed up for a breakfast on the beach with some of the disciples, including Peter. Jesus gave Peter a threefold edict to feed His sheep, to trump Peter’s threefold denial, and then, “Follow Me,” Jesus said to the restored Peter.

Now He says the same to you. Jesus says:

If anyone would come after Me, let him *deny himself* and take up his cross and *follow Me*. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?<sup>10</sup>

Through your Holy Baptism into Christ you have been given a gift greater than the whole world. You have lost your life in this world for the sake of Christ and have now found your life in Him and His kingdom. There you are saved from sin, death, and Hell. You can now look forward to the eternal resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

9 2 Corinthians 7:10

10 Mark 8:34–36