



August 16, 2020

Luke 22:54-62

⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

⁵⁷ But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

⁶⁰ Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

COMMENTARY

22:54. Jesus stood at the house of the high priest. What should have been holy ground, keeping the leading religious official in Judaism holy and pure, became the scene of the most evil deed in history: the mockery of a trial that convicted the Son of God. Again, a disciple followed Jesus (see v. 39), but this time at a distance. He followed with curiosity to see what would happen, not with devotion to identify himself with the Master.

22:55. This disciple did not follow Jesus for long. He distanced himself from the Master until he had joined the crowd around a comfortable campfire. He had quietly shifted identities. No longer a follower of Jesus, he became one of the crowd, curious to see what was about to happen and eager for a good time around the fire.

22:56-61. The rugged Galilean fisherman could not hide among the group at the Jerusalem court. He stood out from the crowd. A slave girl quickly noticed him. This man had been with Jesus. Without thinking, Peter went into a defensive mode. Peter had denied Jesus, but what he had done did not sink in. He had successfully defended his right to enjoy the warmth of the campfire. Another passerby noticed Peter. Peter again moved away from Jesus and joined the crowd more intimately. A defensive reaction changed his identity without him being aware of the immensity of what he had said and done.

An hour passed, still the devil's hour. Another face in the crowd spoke up, recognizing the Galilean accent. Peter was completely distant from Jesus. He had denied three times any knowledge of or relationship to the man. He now belonged to the crowd and to the devil. Satan had sifted him and found him wanting. A rooster's crow, not a human voice, made Peter realize what he had done. Reinforcement came in one glance from Jesus. Jesus' words stabbed their way into Peter's memory: "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."

22:62. The brashly self-confident man disappeared. Now he distanced himself from the crowd. Outside by himself, he wept bitter tears. Grief overwhelmed him. Follow Jesus to prison and to death? He could not even follow him to a mockery of a trial. The grief was as deep as Judas's later proved to be, but the response and subsequent actions would be quite different. Guilt led Judas to suicide. It led Peter to Pentecost.

JOHN 21:15-19

21:15-19. Following their breakfast meal on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus turned to Peter and asked a series of questions related to Peter's devotion. The first word for love, used in Jesus' first two questions, refers to a love that involves the will and personality. The second kind of love, indicated by the word for love used in the third question of Jesus, refers more to the emotions than to the will.

Regardless of whether or not much is to be made of these word distinctions, the key issue is that of love for Christ, and this Peter surely expressed. His earlier three denials

are here answered in three affirmations of love and service. Jesus clearly wanted love for Him to include both will and emotions, demonstrated in a life of discipleship and devotion to the church.

Then Jesus forecast the kind of death Peter would die in order to glorify God. The early church understood the “stretching out of hands” mentioned here to mean crucifixion. Tradition understands the death of Peter to have been by upside-down crucifixion.

MAIN POINT

Jesus’ relationship with Peter is a testimony to all things that God exhibits towards us in Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Think of a recent decision you were faced with. Did you make a quick decision or did you weigh several factors?

How do you typically make difficult decisions?

What kinds of factors do you weigh when making difficult choices?

For some of us, the bigger the decision the longer the time it takes to make it. We weigh out alternatives and options, carefully examining the fallout of the choices we make.

Peter, a disciple of Jesus, was not like this. He frequently was the first to speak his mind and make quick decisions, for good or for bad. In this study, we will look at a heat-of-the-moment decision Peter made to betray Jesus, the remorse he felt, and Jesus’ restoration of Peter to the position of influence and leadership Jesus had promised Him. Jesus’ relationship with Peter is a testimony to grace, mercy, forgiveness, and patience, all things that God exhibits towards us in Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

- **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 22:54-62.**

Jesus stood at the house of the high priest. What should have been holy ground, keeping the leading religious official in Judaism holy and pure, became the scene of the most evil deed in history: the mockery of a trial that convicted the Son of God. Again, a

disciple followed Jesus, but this time at a distance. He followed with curiosity to see what would happen, not with devotion to identify himself with the Master.

Look back at Luke 22:31-34. Why was denying Jesus unfathomable to Peter?

What emotions might Peter have felt in that moment when he realized Jesus' prophecy came true?

When have you felt like Peter? What do we learn about Peter from his response to his denial (v. 62)?

Peter's lie couldn't have been further from the truth. Peter was one of the first men Jesus called to be disciples (see Luke 5). During Jesus' three years of earthly ministry, Peter was present for some of the most miraculous moments, like the Transfiguration we studied earlier (see Luke 9). Peter exhibited great faith (like the time when he jumped out of the boat to walk on water, see Matthew 14), and he was one of Jesus' best friends. He wouldn't have been in the courtyard outside Jesus' trial if he didn't love Jesus, but fear and self-preservation kicked in, and he allowed those emotions to control him. Peter blatantly denied his friendship with Jesus, and if we're being totally honest, we know that we've done the same thing. Maybe we've never come right out and said we don't know Jesus, but just because we've never said it out loud doesn't mean we haven't communicated the same thing with the choices we make.

What are the differences between Judas and Peter, since both failed Jesus?

What could tempt you to betray or deny knowing Jesus?

What measures can you take to avoid denying Jesus in the future?

Denying Jesus takes many forms, and it doesn't have to be verbal. It's far too easy to downplay our relationship with God when we allow fear and insecurity to determine our behavior. We should take a cue from Jesus, whose love motivated Him to be completely selfless, which included forgiving Peter for his denial (see John 21:15-19).

- HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 21:15-19.

Three times Peter had denied Jesus, and at this meeting on the shoreline, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him three times, each canceling out a denial. Their dialogue makes it clear that in God's eyes, love far outweighs failure, and no one is beyond His reconciliation. That kind of love would propel Peter to spend the rest of his life spreading the good news of the gospel.

**How is Peter supposed to demonstrate his love and loyalty to Jesus?
In light of John 10:15, what would Jesus' shepherd image mean to Peter?**

Though Peter denied Jesus, Jesus was not finished with him. He again issued His call to Peter to follow Him and to serve Him out of love for Him. Peter's love for Jesus was to express itself in caring for His people. Jesus' conversation with Peter shows He viewed love as the key to faithful discipleship and service. Jesus challenged Peter to show His love for Him and follow Him by caring for His people. Believers should express love for Jesus by caring for His people. If we really love Jesus, we will want to get involved in serving Him by caring for His people.

The Lord's questions to Peter revealed He wanted Peter to follow Him out of love and in humility. Why do Christians tend to become proud of their service for Christ instead of remaining humbled at the privilege of serving Him?

In the past, Peter had boasted in pride of his faithfulness and courage to follow Jesus. But Peter failed by denying Jesus three times. Jesus restored Peter and called him again to follow Him and serve Him. Peter was definitely humbled through this experience. Following Christ and helping His people requires humility.

What does Jesus mean by His prediction in verse 18?

What sacrifices are most of us called on to make as we live for Christ?

How willing are you to make great sacrifices in order to follow Jesus? How can we as a church or a small group follow Christ in sacrificial service?

Peter had denied the Lord out of fear of possible arrest and suffering. Jesus, however, revealed to Peter following and serving Him would require sacrifice. In fact, Peter would be called on to sacrifice his life. The first time he met Jesus, Peter was fishing. That day, Jesus called him out of the boat and invited Peter to follow Him. He issued the same invitation here, reminding Peter that there's no going back to the way life was before. He couldn't be a fisherman because he had more important work to do. He was given the responsibility of shepherding Jesus' sheep. Jesus was calling Peter to a life of love, called for and inspired by the sacrifice of Jesus.

NEXT STEP

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian?

Do we tend to think of love as the primary mark of the Christian life? If not, what do we think of as that mark? Why?

What most frequently stands in the way of you truly loving others?

What are some tangible expressions of this kind of love you might practice this week: At your workplace? In your home? With your friends?

PRAYER

Pray that there be fewer and fewer moments in our lives that we set Jesus aside in order to satisfy more immediate and temporary passions. Pray that in those moments we reject Christ, we always recall that Jesus never rejects us. Give God thanks that our relationship with Him is not based on our ability to hold on to Him, but on His promise to never let us go.