

# Written Copy: John 18:20-21, 25-27 "Faithfulness VS Unfaithfulness"

## Midweek Lent #3

Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. 2022

### Text: John 18:20-21, 25-27

<sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."

<sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." <sup>26</sup> One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" <sup>27</sup> Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

### Exegetical Statement

All 11 of the Disciples promised they would stand by Jesus side no matter what, even if it meant death. But at His arrest all flee. Except two of them end up following after Him as He is taken to be interrogated by Annas, the high priest. They follow, but from a safe distance. John then lays out Peter's three-time unfaithfulness denying that he was a follower, or that he even knew who Jesus was. Interposed in the story of Peter's denial is Jesus faithful witness of who He is and the truth He proclaims. When asked about His disciples He doesn't throw them under the bus but focuses on their question of the doctrinal correctness of His teaching. As Jesus predicted Peter's denial ends with the rooster crowing twice, and guilt overwhelming him as he flees, while Jesus is sent to be tried before the Sanhedrin.

### Focus Statement:

Where we fail to keep our promises and vows not to sin, but to live faithfully, Jesus stands in for us and fulfills them. When Peter was denying even knowing Jesus He was giving the faithful confession before men. He lived the perfect obedient life we could not and suffered the punishment we deserve. And He comes to us through His Spirit in baptism, just as the risen Christ came to Peter, both Easter Sunday, and in Galilee before the other disciples, and restores us to perfect fellowship by grace

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

Peter made great promises and vows to Jesus that he would not be able to keep. We make great promises and vows when we are in trouble, saying, "Lord, if you save me from this, I'll be a better person. I will be more faithful in my Christian life. But then we too, when faced with temptation, find we have not the power to fulfill the vows. Like Peter, when confronted with our failures, we can be crushed by guilt.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Realize that, try as hard as we might, we will not fulfill all our vows and promises to the LORD. That does not mean we shouldn't commit our way to Him. There will be times of struggle and temptation, but God uses these not to thin the herd, or drive us away, but move us closer to Him, more dependent on His presence, power, and grace.

### Subject Sentence: Whenever we are unfaithful, Jesus is faithful for us

## **Introduction**

Shalom Lamb of God people! That is what you call yourselves as you gather for worship in this place, is that not so? And you take that name from the One whom John the Baptizer in my day pointed out as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”, is that right? With the lesson I am called here to share with you tonight from my written account, remembering that Jesus is that Lamb of God is one of the most important things for me, as it should be for you too. Tonight, your Pastor has asked me to speak about one of the lowest moments in the life of my good friend and fellow Apostle, Peter. But it was also one of the lowest moments in my life too.

## **The Text**

It begins where I left off last week, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was arrested, bound, and led back to Jerusalem by a contingent of soldiers and temple police: ruffians who at times acted like bodyguards to the priests of the temple in Jerusalem. You recall Peter’s attempt at bravery, slicing off the ear of Malchus as he came forward to arrest Jesus, and Jesus’ rebuke to Peter and to the rest of us disciples that this was not time to fight, that He was willingly surrendering to the powers of darkness. Seeing how Jesus was not going to fight back, and that He told us not to defend Him or ourselves, at that point all 11 of us took off and ran out of fear of what would happen to us too.

As I fled into the night, I thought back on what Jesus had told us earlier on the way to the Garden, that when they strike the shepherd, the sheep would flee. That was us, fleeing from our master just as He said would happen. Guilt began to rise in my heart, and also in Peter’s heart too. He remembered his vow to Jesus following that statement, how he would never desert his Master but would be willing to stand by Him even if it meant death. Peter said it, the rest of us agreed to it, yet here we were abandoning Him to the powers of darkness. That fueled the guilt; so much so that I found myself following after the party that escorted Jesus back to Jerusalem. But I wasn’t the only one following from a safe distance; Peter was too.

Jesus was to stand trial before the religious court of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. The current high priest Caiaphas was the leader in charge of calling the Sanhedrin together. He was the instigator of the plan to put Jesus to death as a blasphemer and a heretic. Caiaphas would not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but instead saw Him as an imposter, one that would work the people up into a frenzy that would cause the anger and authority of Rome to descend and bring about a blood bath amongst the people. And it would also cause he and his cohorts to lose their power over the daily lives of all who resided in Jerusalem. He is the one who said that it would be better for one man (Jesus) to die than for all the people to perish. He didn’t understand how true his words were according to the plan of the Heavenly Father.

However, it took time to assemble a quorum of members of the Sanhedrin to try Jesus before. And while they were being assembled Jesus was led to the house of Annas for a kind of pre-trial hearing. Annas was once upon a time high priest himself. But he did something to anger one of the previous Roman governors responsible for Jerusalem, and so was deposed. In his place the governor that preceded Pontius Pilate made Caiaphas High Priest. But many still recognized the person and authority of Annas as kind of an elder statesman, much as you might one of your former Presidents. It was to Annas that they led Jesus first. Once He arrived at Annas house the contingent of Roman soldiers reported back to their barracks, no longer needed now the prisoner was bound and delivered. But the temple police remained for what followed.

Now my family was an acquaintance of Annas and his household. Following behind Jesus it was no problem for me to enter into the outer courtyard. To the servant girl who acted as the door keeper I was a somewhat familiar face. But not so with Peter. He remained standing outside. When I saw him there, I made arrangements for him to come in too. Looking back, I wish I never had.

It was cold that night, and they had a charcoal fire burning for the servants and the temple police to keep warm while the pre-trial hearing before Annas was underway. As Peter walked in and the light from the fire shown on his face the dawning of recognition seemed to come to that servant girl at the door. She asked Peter accusingly "Aren't you one of those with that man's disciples?" And then to the group assembled in the courtyard she said "This man was also with Him!" Peter responded, "I am not!" Looking back, at that point, he should've just left, because it was only going to get worse. Instead, he walked over and stood by that fire warming himself, along with the servants and temple police who were awaiting the results of this pre-trial hearing.

Peter and I had been faithless to our promise to stand by our Master no matter what. Now Peter had denied being one of his Disciples. Meanwhile, what was Jesus doing? Being faithful; faithful to His mission given by the Heavenly Father and faithful to us. Annas asked Him about us, His Disciples, and the soundness and truth of what He had been teaching us that caused us to follow Him as we had. Annas was looking for something, anything, that he might use to incriminate Jesus with. Now, according to Jewish law, a man could only be convicted of wrongdoing by the testimony of two or three witnesses. So, Jesus responded to Annas by saying **"Why are you questioning me about what I have taught and proclaimed? I have openly taught in the synagogues throughout Galilee. I have taught openly in the temple courtyards where the Pharisees and all the other religious leaders gather. Nothing I have spoken has been in secret. If you want testimony to what I've been teaching and preaching and saying you should ask them yourself."**

Jesus had made an excellent point. And what He said was the truth. But those who are on the side of lies and deceit hate the truth. Annas and Caiaphas were interested in getting rid of Jesus by any means possible, not in seeking the truth or justice. At this point one of the Temple police who was standing in attendance with Annas reached out and slapped Jesus face, open handed, and hard; hard enough to leave a mark on His skin afterwards. He then said, ***“Is this how you answer the high priest?”*** Jesus responded ***“If what I have spoken is evil and deserving of punishment, then give evidence of how that is so. But if what I have said is the truth, then why are you beating me so?”*** In all this Jesus remained faithful to His Heavenly Father and what He had been sent to do.

Meanwhile Peter was still standing around the fire in the courtyard. One of those standing there with him looked at him and said, “You are one of His disciples, aren’t you?” But again, Peter denied it and said, “I am not!” While Jesus was proving His faithfulness Peter was continuing to prove his unfaithfulness. Then one of the servants of the high priest who was related to Malchus spoke up and said, “Didn’t I myself see you in the garden with Him? Just listen to your accent, it proves you are one of those Galileans!” Now the cat is pretty much out of the bag. It was time for Peter to own up and confess who he is, not just as a disciple of Jesus, but a leader among the disciples. But he could not and would not rise to the occasion, except to invoke a curse upon himself and to swear that not only was he not a disciple, but that he didn’t even know Jesus. It was then the rooster crowed and Jesus prophetic word was made complete: that by the time the rooster crowed Peter would deny him three times.

You know the rest. Peter, overcome with guilt ran out of the courtyard weeping bitterly, overcome with guilt and shame at what he had done and how he had failed his Master who he swore to stand by no matter what. My heart went out to my good friend Peter at that point. But he was not the only one who carried the weight and shame of guilt. I did too. I stood by and said nothing. Instead of speaking up to encourage or defend my fellow disciple, or allow myself to be counted among His followers, I just kept silent for fear of what might happen to me.

### **When We Are Faithless, Christ is Faithful**

Have you ever been overcome by guilt like that? Have you ever made a promise to your family or a friend only to find that it was too difficult or inconvenient to keep? How about with the Lord? Have you ever been in a tight spot and asked the Lord to save you, promising that you will never do it again, that you will live a more faithful life, only to fall back into old habits and old ways? Have you ever had the opportunity to share your faith only you were too afraid to do so? How about when we confess our sins to the Lord? Aren’t we called to repent; to turn away from sinful thoughts, words, and actions and instead live new faithful lives towards Him? And how long do those faithful lives last? A day? An hour? Even less time? We are a faithless bunch of people, me included.

But thanks be to God that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was faithful to the end and beyond. He remained faithful throughout His suffering and death. He remained faithful for you, being faithful in all the ways you and I fail to be. He remained faithful in His mission to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He covered Peter's faithlessness, my faithlessness, and yours too.

He is the loving and gracious God that wants you to know that you are forgiven, despite what that guilt in your heart might tell you. When He rose again in victory on the third day, He came to Peter so that he might know that all has been forgiven. He appeared to all 11 of us so that we might know our faithlessness in the Garden and thereafter has all been forgiven. And then some time after by the Sea of Galilee He came and publicly restored Peter as His Disciple in front of all of us; the lead Disciple, soon to be lead Apostle. And He comes to restore you as well. His message to you this day is whatever you are carrying guilt about, whatever sin of faithlessness is troubling you, know that it has been forgiven, and the Lord holds it over your head no more.

Whether you confess your sin in private to Him, or you do so publicly when you gather for worship, this truth stands: **(1 John 1:8-9) <sup>8</sup>If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** You can always be sure that this is the case because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is faithful to His promises, always.

## **Conclusion**

My time is up. But I leave you with this. When you repent and turn away from your sin, mean it. When you promise to live more faithful lives mean it and work at it. Strive to live in obedience to our God. But when you fall short, when you fail, when you show unfaithfulness, do not let guilt get the best of you. Do not let the lies of the devil work to tear you away. Turn instead to our Savior who is always faithful and just, who has done all that is necessary to cleanse you from unrighteousness and make sure you know you have been restored as His precious child. Shalom!