

March 23, 2014

Lesson 24: Peter's Denial



John 18:12-27

So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.' When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?' Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the slaves 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?' Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Peter's Denial

John 18:12-27

"He denied it
and said,
'I am not.'"

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The Big Story Truth: We might deny Jesus... but Jesus never denies us. Jesus forgives us and loves us even when fail to live our faith.

About This Scripture Passage: In John's Gospel, Peter represents all the disciples and all of us. Peter is a figure that we can often times read as being where we would be in the story. Earlier in the gospel of John, as they were still at supper and after Jesus had washed their feet, Jesus had predicted that Judas would betray him and that Peter would deny him. Peter argued that he never would and even said that he would lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus, though, replied with, "Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times." (John 13:38). In today's passage we see Jesus' prediction coming true. Just as Jesus is standing trial and holding firm in his testimony that will lead to his crucifixion, Peter is outside and can't even admit that he has been one of Jesus' followers. Three times Peter denies

Jesus: to a random servant girl, to the temple police, to an eye witness who saw him with Jesus in the garden. And then the cock crowed. But even this moment of denial wasn't the end of the story for Peter and Jesus. In the final verses of the Gospel of John, the risen Jesus appears to Peter and asks him three times if he loves him. Peter's response is "Yes" 3 times! In spite of his denial, Jesus forgives and calls Peter to a life of following him! (John 21)



Making the Connection: All of us find ourselves in situations where we have regretted our actions. We find ourselves perhaps not outrightly betraying our faith, but walking in that grey area that is denial. We are so much like Peter. In the Lutheran church we have an expression for this: We are both Saint and Sinner. Each of us struggles daily against sin and each of us is beloved and forgiven. This week provides an opportunity for us to talk with our kids about forgiveness. Like Peter, all of us sin. But through Jesus we also have forgiveness. The faithfulness that mattered that day in the court was Jesus'. Jesus is faithful even when we are not. Jesus is loving, even when we fail to love him or each other back. Our kids need to hear that Jesus (and we too!) will love them even when they mess up! They need to hear that nothing that they can ever do will make God stop loving them!

Where in the World Are We? This story takes place in the courtyard of the high priest in Jerusalem. Locate Caiaphas' House on the map of Jerusalem. Caiaphas was the high priest when Jesus was on trial. This picture is a reconstruction of what the courtyard of the High Priest might have looked like. (As you are showing these maps/pictures to your class, please be sure to emphasize that there weren't cameras back then, so what we know about how these buildings and places might have looked is from people who have studied the ruins and the culture of the time and descriptions in the Bible and other ancient documents to make a good guess.)

For Your Reflection:

When have you denied your faith in one way or another? What is in your heart and mind that needs confessing today?

In the mercy of almighty God, you are forgiven in Jesus' name!



