

Well, keep looking at the screens. Tell me who this is a depiction of?



That's the Apostle Peter. What's happening? He's being crucified upside down. Why? Because church history tells us that he didn't feel worthy to be crucified right-side-up like His Savior. Here's another depiction of Peter. What is this?



He's weeping...what is that on the pillar? That's a rooster. So, what's happening? You know the story: Peter has just denied Jesus for the third time...just as Jesus said would happen. How did Peter go from that...to this...



How did he go from denying that he even knew Jesus to be willing to lay down his life for Jesus? I'll ask this...what makes a person be willing to die for Jesus? What makes a person be willing to lay down his/her life for Jesus? Well, we're going to find out today as we look at the end of this magnificent chapter, John 13. The title of this morning's message is: **"Laying Down Our Lives for Jesus."**

John 13:36-38

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."

Here we are, yet again, in the upper room with Jesus and His Apostles. And for the Apostles, almost nothing they were seeing or hearing was making sense to them. They had watched Jesus take the role of a servant and wash their feet, which was totally humiliating, because **one of them** should have done so. But, didn't...because they were too busy arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. Furthermore, Jesus had just told them that one of them was going to betray Him. They looked around the room at one another stunned...only to cry out, "Is it I?" And now, He's just told the leader of the group, Peter, you're going to deny me three times before morning. What??

Church, for three years, Jesus has been preaching and teaching and saying things that seemed...well...almost crazy. The things He said were, in many cases, the absolute opposite of what they had been taught. Do remember the Sermon on the Mount? Things He said in that message were also counter-cultural.

The Sermon on the Mount was preached at the very beginning of His ministry. What He said in that message flipped everything on its ear. Jesus said over and over again, "You have heard it said, but I say..." For instance... "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' but I say 'If a man looks on a woman to lust after her, he's already committed adultery in his own heart.'" Jesus was

raising the bar from just the raw action...to the heart that leads to the action. In that sermon, most likely, none of the Beatitudes, (initially), made much sense to the hearers.

Matthew 5:3-12

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^[a] of God. ¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Poor in spirit, mourning, being meek, hungering, peacemakers, being reviled...we're supposed to rejoice over that?? What? The disciples heard all of this and perhaps shook their heads... Fast forward to the upper room...some 2 ½ years later...they see Jesus washing their feet...hear Him speak of betrayal and denial, and they're shaking their heads...beyond confused! How are they supposed to process all of this...how are they supposed to live a life like Jesus is describing? Church, I'll tell you: ONE PHRASE: “LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR ME.”

That's how you do it. That's how you become poor in spirit...meaning you realize you are a spiritual pauper and you aren't great, but instead you're meek and humble, hungering for righteousness and desiring to bring peace...washing feet, and to rejoice even when reviled. That's LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE kind of stuff.

For three years Jesus has been offering HIMSELF as the example of this kind of life. He would soon lay down His life...and He's been telling His disciples this heavy news. He's just said: “You can't follow me any longer,” which is the absolute opposite of what He's been saying for 2+ years. See it:

John 13:36

³⁶Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”

Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, said about Peter...

“For Peter, just like with the nation of Israel there was desert between the Red Sea and the Promised Land.” Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator

Peter would have to cross the desert of denial and the immense pain of that denial before he would truly be equipped to follow Jesus. That's our lives too, church family. So often, the place the Lord wants to take us in our lives is bordered by a desert that we must travel through to get there.

But, may we be reminded, brothers and sisters, God was with the nation of Israel in the wilderness desert! With a pillar of a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. And He is with us, but it doesn't mean that we won't go through deserts...difficulties...trials...so as to be refined. That's coming for Peter.

Jesus told Peter, “I've got to do this alone...you can't follow me on this one.” And we know why. Only Jesus could pay our sin debt. He was the only one qualified who could do it, because He was perfect. But, Peter would follow Him later, wouldn't he? Again, church history tells us that he was crucified upside down. See it again:



But, first...the desert



this had to happen: his denial. So, in the lead-up of that...Peter is objecting and pontificating about his loyalty to Jesus... Verse 37.

John 13:37

³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

I believe Peter felt like Jesus was questioning his sincerity. But, Jesus wasn't. He just knew Peter couldn't handle it yet. His heart wasn't ready. Again, Peter hadn't thought to wash anyone's feet. Peter's life was like a yo-yo... "You can't wash my feet...no never." But, then in the next breath he said, "Wash me all over!" **It reminds me of this:**



Remember how Peter was actually walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee, coming to Jesus...until he looked at the winds and the waves and his circumstances and he started to sink. He was UP on top of the water and then DOWN sinking in the water. Jesus knew that in just a matter of hours, Peter would wilt at that campfire outside of the High Priest's home, where Jesus would be taken after He was arrested. Jesus knew this was coming:



"No, Peter, you can't follow me in this." You know church family, it's relatively easy to pay lip-service to Jesus and say, "I'll follow you anywhere." But, it's quite another thing to do so when it might cost us something...that's when we're thrown into the frying pan, the pressure cooker of our public lives.

So, I want to park here for a few minutes and I want to ask you to consider: **What does it actually look like to go beyond lip service to truly lay down our lives for Jesus?** As you are turning, remember they were just arguing about who is the greatest, right? Jesus had already addressed this exact topic a few months back when they were in Capernaum at Peter's home. You would have thought they would have remembered, but they didn't. Let me show you.

Matthew 18:1-6

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵"Whoever receives one

such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,^[a] it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Jesus is not just talking about children...He's talking about His kingdom...the child standing in the middle of them is to represent new or young believers. He's saying...first...to get into the kingdom, you've got to humble yourself like a child. Second...once that person is saved, you want to do all you can to disciple that person, not cause that person to stumble in sin. In other words, you have to be willing to lay down your life and wash their feet...you'd never want to do anything that would cause them to stumble into sin. Now watch Jesus continue this instruction in verse 7, and keep in mind the backdrop of laying down our lives for Him and His work...

Matthew 18:7

⁷ "Woe to the world for temptations to sin!^[b] For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!"

Jesus is saying, "You don't want to be the one who causes another believer to stumble." After all, we all know that the world has plenty of temptations to offer us. We expect that out of the world. But, the world doesn't get a pass. Jesus says, "Woe to the world," meaning...they won't get away with it. They'll be judged for their wrongdoing, lies, deception, corruption, immorality...it'll all be judged.

And you see church...these people of the world in our day, who want to groom our kids stripping their naivete with all this transgendered identification...drag queen...story-time hours...**FURBABIES**...kids claiming to be cats and wanting liter boxes in our schools...and I pray our teachers and administrators won't go woke and won't live afraid, all because of a paycheck...forgetting the reason they were put there in the first place is for the well-being of the child... the child is more important than the progressive liberal agenda and even a paycheck.

May I be blunt. We've been conditioned. Covid did that. The medical hierarchy at the CDC and the NIH. Oh, they should have been caring about patients...but, instead, the hierarchy became mouthpieces for an agenda, not medicine...and those leaders at the CDC and the AMA and the NIH...they will all be held accountable for that. Many lives were lost or damaged because of an agenda that wasn't about medicine at all, but power.

The same is true for the liars of the **abortion mills**, who say that babies are blobs of tissue, and they carry them out in trash bags, they'll be held accountable for that. Yes, we expect this out of the world...but, not in the church, not among believers. We're to be laying down our lives for one another.

But I get...so often, Christians just do what the world does. Pam told me I could share about her wrestling recently to watch a popular show that everyone else seems to be watching...but, she said, I wouldn't watch that show with Jesus sitting with me on the couch. She wrestled though...thinking: I'm strong enough...it won't bother me...but, she realized...that would be the beginning of a slow fade...ignoring the Holy Spirit. What are you watching? Would you watch it with Jesus on the couch? Are they're things you're watching that the Holy Spirit is convicting you...LAY IT DOWN...

But, I can hear it: "I want my rights! I have Christian Liberty...I can do what I want." Can you? Is that laying down your life? Jesus said: blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Church, when a person constantly hollers and screams about "My rights..." that tells me they're not thinking about their brother or sister in Christ. **That's not laying down our lives.**

Let me give you an example... let's say you don't have a problem with drinking alcohol. You say, "I have Christian liberty to drink a beer with my pizza at the local pizza joint." Okay, it's true: the Bible doesn't say, "Thou shall not drink beer." But, let me tell you what it does say:

Proverbs 20:1

¹ Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.^[a]

It also says:

Ephesians 5:15-18

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

Romans 14:20-21

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.^[c]

Paul said, "Don't eat food offered to idols if that's going to offend someone...a new believer, who just came out of idol worship." Oh, you can eat the meat...but, if it's going to cause someone to stumble...to be tempted to go back to that...don't do it!

Now, we don't have that situation today...but, what we do have is LOTS OF FOOD. You see, if I get up and I weigh 400 pounds and preach the gospel...could I be a stumbling block. Yes...because it would show that my belly is my god and I have no self-control...and before you hit me up and say you've got a genetic or gland problem...well, I get it...that can be the case for some...but for me, it would be a problem with self-control and self-discipline. How can I preach self control/discipline about anything else.

Back to the alcohol... Paul said, it's good not to drink wine/alcohol to cause your brother to stumble. Let's say you're out at Applebee's with your family, and one of your children is a teenager and you see me tossing back a couple of beers at dinner. Do you think your teenager could be weakened by having seen me do that...and if they're one day tempted to drink as a teenager, that Satan might throw that thought into their mind (well, Pastor Kevin drinks)?

Do you see...I could easily be a stumbling block? You see church, it's not about MY rights...it's about laying down MY life. So, I'm not going to drink. Yet, there are so many other ways we, as Christians, can be stumbling blocks. And that starts with leadership... Sadly, we have leaders all around us, Christian leaders who teach bad doctrine and they're stumbling blocks. Men, for instance, who say they're modern-day Apostles/prophets...they're stumbling blocks. There are no modern-day Apostles. That's Scripturally inaccurate...the Apostles died out when the Apostles of Jesus died. The only revelation we need today is the Word of God. PERIOD. Those leaders are arrogant and full of pride and they're stumbling blocks...false teachers. Leaders can be stumbling blocks.

Listen...Christians can be stumbling blocks in a myriad of ways. We can be stumbling blocks with our mouths, how we speak...how we gossip...by the use foul or crass language, slang words (CRAP, SUCK, words that start with F that isn't the bad word...but, are substitutes for it)... I ASK YOU: would you say in here what you say at the ball field...you should be able to say what you say at the ball field in here or anywhere else.

Oh, we can be a stumbling block by our attitudes. People see us being unkind, moody, ungrateful...whining...always complaining...nothing is ever good enough. We **offend** people by what we allow...people living together outside of marriage, no-fault divorce, gay marriage...and the Church in America is succumbing to all of this.

We **offend** people, who watch us as Christians, cheat on tests in school...cheat our employers by not giving a full day's work. We **offend** because we can't be counted on...we're unreliable...we don't show up time...our yes, isn't yes and our no, isn't no; we're not consistent...we're not dedicated and we're not committed to the things of God...oh, but people see us dedicated to our hobbies, to our jobs, all of our kids' extra-curricular stuff...but, not to the things of God... I'll show up if I'm in the spotlight...and if it's convenient...and if there's something in it for me. I'm sorry, that's NOT laying down your life.

Church, people come to me all the time and say, "Pastor My boss/ my coworker (they go to this church) they say they're a Christian, but they're doing this_____ or that say that_____." You fill in the blank. It puts me on the defensive...I tell them to go talk to you one-on-one as Matthew 18:15 directs...but, they won't. They'll just quit coming to church. Do you want that on your head? You say, "That's their problem." No, it's not...it's your problem, because you're a stumbling block.

Listen, if you don't think people are looking...they are. And I'll tell you who' else is watching...your children...and if you're living one way at church and another way at home...giving them mixed messages...and I'm telling you...there's a tremendous likelihood they'll walk away.

Listen to me, it's better to never step foot in this church, if you're going to give your kids mixed messages. If you cuss them out at home and act holier-than thou here...if you lie, cheat, watch trash...kids see through the hypocrisy. Stop playing games! **Lay down your life and let me tell you, it's beautiful when people do and they come to me and say:** "I'm done playing games. I'm all in!!!" And then to see a fantastic transformation take place in their home. Wow!

Church, do you understand that we've been bought at a price by Jesus and we don't own our lives...He does. That's Galatians 2:20.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Look...I'm not here to make you feel bad or feel condemned, I'm just praying the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart. Brothers and sisters...I'm trying to point us to what Jesus had been teaching and demonstrating in that upper room, which is this: We MUST LAY DOWN OUR LIVES...we must humble ourselves...we must be willing to wash feet...to stoop, bend, like a household servant and do the dirty work of the kingdom...be willing to suffer. We're to be living sacrifices!

May we stop shouting: "**My liberty, my liberty**"...and instead, may we grasp all that Jesus gave up when He left heaven to come here... He is our example...He came to do the Father's will and that meant He succumbed His will to His Father's. Jesus is going to deliver the embarrassingly, bad news to Peter...that he's going to fail...and Jesus says it in front of all his peers. This will be so hard to hear:

John 13:38

³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

So what happened...eventually this...



in a matter of a couple of hours in Caiaphas' courtyard, where Peter denied Jesus three times. See that rooster...for the Jews...they had four (4 hour) watches in the night that started at 6 pm. The fourth watch started at 3 am...and that's when the rooster would start crowing...between 3 and 6 am. By 6 am, Peter had denied Jesus three times. And "he wept bitterly."

Do you find it unfair that Jesus used a rooster to mark Peter's denial? I mean Peter would be greeted with a rooster every morning for the rest of his life. Chickens were everywhere in that culture. No church...it wasn't unfair or cruel, it was a blessing... A blessing? Yes.

Listen, sin creates reminders in our lives... Like with King David and Bathsheba. David would cry out in Psalm 51, "For I know my sin, it is always before me." **Meaning: we remember our sin.** Why? Well, because, as humans, we weren't created to forget things, and that's good. Voddie Baucham,



a really good author and pastor of our day, says this:

“If you could forget your sin, you could never testify to the goodness of God.” Voddie Baucham, pastor/author

It’s true. Think of Peter. He was broken...and every morning, he was reminded of that. “I WISH I HAD NEVER DONE THAT.” But, if he could take away the memory and the rooster, he’d lose the warning that comes via the memory: DON’T DO THAT AGAIN! Forgiven...yes...we know if we confess our sin and turn from it...1 John 1:9, says you’re clean... But, it’s ALSO FROM THE MEMORY of our sin that reminds of the goodness, the grace and the mercy of God.

Voddie says this little line that I like and I think we can all claim it:

“I’m not who I ought to be, but hallelujah, I’m not who I was.” Voddie Baucham, pastor/author

Peter would eventually follow Jesus in laying down his life.



He finally got it! He would eventually preach at Pentecost and lead the first Church, but first he had to go through the desert.

Are we laying down our lives? Are we being stumbling blocks? Are we denying Jesus by how we live? Oh, may we repent today, may we choose to live like our Savior, who gave up everything and laid down His life for us!