

Series: **Power and Passion of Jesus** – week 3

CDOBC – beginning on 3/26/17

Today's Title: **“Denying Jesus”**

April 14, 2017 - John 18:15-18, 25-27; Mark 8:27b-38

Good Friday Service

OBJECTIVE: To help people understand their potential for denying Christ, and how to live in the grace and power of Christ.

(Sketch by Melanie David and team)

Turn in your Bibles to **John 18**

Read **18:15-18** - then read **18:25-27**

Opening Prayer

There are many low points for the disciples in the narrative accounts we read in the Gospels of the night Jesus was arrested.

- Judas' betrayal is by far the most shocking and evil act.
- The disciples arguing with one another at the Last Supper about their status as 'the greatest'.
- The inability of the group to stay awake and pray with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- When Jesus is arrested, the disciples run and scatter to save themselves.
- Peter's denial (3x) that he even knows Jesus.

But his denial must not overshadow the entire picture of this unique disciple.

- It was Peter who, during the Last Supper, boldly (rashly) proclaimed he was ready to die for Jesus.
- It was Peter who when confronted by dozens of armed soldiers in the Garden, took out his small sword and in a moment of determined sacrifice (no way he would escape the soldiers) attacked one of the men, cutting off his ear.
- It was Peter who followed Jesus as he was brought to Annas, the father-in-law to the high priest, Caiaphas.
- It was Peter, who boldly preached on the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 people put their faith in Jesus as a result.
- It was Peter who led the Apostles in the early years of the Church.
- It was Peter who was beaten for his faith in Christ and his refusal to stop preaching about Jesus.
- It was Peter who wrote letters to the churches throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) encouraging them to remain faithful to Christ as persecution was increasing.
- Tradition tells us it was Peter who was crucified upside down at his own request, since he considered himself unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus.

Peter has so many moments of spiritual victory and spiritual success, and we can't let his denials of Jesus on that fateful night paint the entire picture of his life in our minds.

But his denials reveal the bitter reality of not only the frailty of this strong, bold follower of Christ - but it also reveals our own frailty.

Who among us thinks they are stronger in faith than Peter?

Who among us thinks they are more resistant to the pressures of an unbelieving world than Peter?

1 Corinthians 10:12

“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Anybody who thinks they overshadow Peter’s faith and faithfulness, I believe is delusional. Take note: *How the mighty have fallen!*

Peter’s denial of Jesus reminds us of a very important teaching of Jesus:

Your salvation in Christ is free...Jesus paid the price...

Following Christ will eventually cost you something.

Peter often failed to filter his words.

We smile and laugh at some of the things he said...and did.

He wasn’t the kind of person to consider the pros and cons of something - and then act. He was the classic ‘Ready-Fire-Aim’!

He jumped into the deep end of the pool - often before he could even determine if there was water in the pool!

We love his impulsiveness and boldness - and at the same time we cringe at it.

In John’s narrative, we see Jesus being led to Annas to undergo a preliminary hearing. Annas’ son-in-law,

Caiaphas, was the high priest, and it was Caiaphas who held what little legal power the Jews had under their Roman occupiers. But Annas seems to be the man who held the real power in Jewish circles.

Peter is often criticized, and maybe rightly so, for getting rattled by a teenage girl's question to him: (vs. 17) “You also are not one of this Man's disciples, are you?”

Peter was no doubt worried about his own safety as he finds himself in the courtyard of the enemies of Jesus. The atmosphere that night must have been unbelievably tense and dangerous for anyone associated with Jesus.

Also, notice in 18:19, Annas questions Jesus about His disciples.

Could Peter hear what was being said?

If he could, the hairs on the back of his neck must have stood up when Annas was looking for information about Jesus' disciples.

In some ways, the tension and danger of this night shouldn't have taken Peter or the other disciples by surprise. Jesus had not only warned them numerous times, but there had been numerous times when they were with Jesus and the religious leaders picked up stones to stone Him. Being at the tip of their spear was not a new place for Jesus...or His disciples. In fact, a few weeks earlier, Jesus had taught them a very sobering message.

Turn to **Mark 8:27b-38 - Read 27b-30**

Here is Peter again - front and center - taking the lead - stepping forward as the others are weighing the pros and cons of stepping forward.

Before Pentecost, this is probably Peter's greatest moment - he gets an A+ on this exam. He gives the correct answer - Jesus is "the Christ", yet Jesus tells them to keep it quiet for now.

Read vs. 31-32 - Jesus begins to tell His disciples about His impending arrest and crucifixion, and resurrection.

Peter, feeling confident that he just 'aced' the exam, pulls Jesus aside (**vs. 32**) and rebuked Jesus for what He was saying. Peter - rebuking Jesus!

Jesus, brings Peter back to the group - and says to Peter (**vs. 33**), "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Then Jesus calls everyone together - the disciples and the others who were following along - and He teaches a very sobering truth. (**vs. 34**)

"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

Salvation is free - Jesus paid the price for your sins.

But following Jesus will eventually cost you something.

There are so many benefits and blessings to following Jesus.

- Your marriage will be better if you follow Jesus.
- Your friendships will be better, if you follow Jesus.

- Your reputation at work will be better, if you follow Jesus.
- Your finances will be better, if you follow Jesus.

Why?

Because when you follow Jesus and obey His teaching, you will live your life in ways that are healthy and positive.

Jesus' commands are helpful and beneficial to life.

But eventually, as you live each day following Jesus, there will come a moment where following Jesus will cost you.

When Jesus said they would have to *take up their cross and follow Him*, they knew exactly what He was talking about - and it was a horrific thought.

In our modern mind, crucifixion is white-washed - it's softened and sterilized. Even in the movies which show it's brutality, there is music behind the visual, but you can't smell the blood - you can't smell the rotting flesh of the other victims crucified in the previous weeks.

The Romans used crucifixion as a form of capital punishment - not only to punish the criminal, but to strike fear in the population. They would often crucify criminals along the side of the roads leading in and out of a town / city - so every traveler - every person would walk through a gauntlet of crosses and they would see, hear, and smell what would come their way if they did something against Rome.

"Take up your cross and follow Me" - Jesus wasn't messing around.

No small print to read well after you decide to follow Him.

No reading the contract *after* you sign it.

Jesus wants everyone to know up-front - there is a cost to following Him.

Salvation is free - Jesus paid the price for your sins.

Following Jesus will eventually cost you.

There will come a moment where you will have to deny yourself, if you are going to follow Jesus.

You will have to say 'no' to yourself - and 'yes' to Jesus.

Your way...or Jesus' way?

vs. 35

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

We all die - our story - everyone's story has a number before *and after* the dash.

You can do everything to save your life - to extend your life - to live for yourself and your own interests, but you will lose it all in the end because you can't take any of it with you.

But...if you give up your life - "lose your life" for the message and mission of Jesus - you have life eternal - your soul will be saved.

vs. 36

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"

There is no profit in this.

If you gain everything this world offers - and deny everything Jesus offers - in the end, you have forfeited your soul - forfeited eternity.

vs. 37

“For what can a man give in return for his soul?”

Answer: Nothing.

Once you spend your life, your wallet is empty.

vs. 38

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

This is a harsh...and stern warning.

Do you take Jesus - as long as He doesn't demand too much?
Or, have you committed each day to Him - no matter what it might cost you?

There are many ways following Christ may cost us.

- A job offer may come your way, and it's a great offer, but it would require you to compromise what Jesus taught.
- You're hanging out with friends from school or work, and they want to do something you know would be wrong.
- You're in a relationship - you're in love - but it's become clear - this person you've fallen in love is not really interested in Jesus.
- You have a hobby which you really enjoy, but it's taking you away from your family too much.

- You're invited to be involved with something which will make it impossible to attend church.
- You're ridiculed and insulted by a few people at school / work who think being a Christian is for ignorant people.
- Your boyfriend / girlfriend breaks up with you because you won't compromise or violate your Christian principles.

1 Peter 4:14

"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

One of the blessings of having faith in Christ is the abundant grace available to us in Christ.

Even if we deny Jesus, He gives us another chance...and another chance...and another chance.

We can look at Peter's life and gain wisdom to protect from repeating his mistakes.

There is a principle in Scripture - and in Peter's life, which can be helpful for us.

Great success - great spiritual victories can often leave us vulnerable to great failure.

In **2 Chronicles 26** we read of King Uzziah's great success. After listing these successes, it says in **vs. 15**:

2 Chronicles 26:15b-16a

And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction."

In Peter's life, we see his great confession that Jesus is the Christ - and then he rebukes Jesus!

His great and confident claim in the upper room that he would die for Jesus - was demonstrated in the garden as he was going to take on the armed soldiers with nothing but a small sword!

After the garden, all the other disciples fled for their lives - but he follows Jesus as they bring Him to Annas.

Feeling confident of his devotion to Jesus, he denies Jesus when a teenage servant girl calls him out.

Past victories do not guarantee future obedience.

1 Peter 4:12

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”

Salvation is free - Jesus paid the price for your sins.

Following Jesus will eventually cost you.

Are you willing to take up your cross - or will you deny Jesus when following Him hurts?

Tonight - as we consider the love and agony of the cross.

Tonight - as we consider the price Jesus paid for our sins.

Tonight - as we consider our devotion to Jesus...

Be prepared for Satan's attacks.

Luke 22:31 - Jesus told Peter that Satan was after him.

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat...”

The evil one will sift you - shake you up - rattle your cage hoping you will walk away from Jesus.

Paul tells us in **Ephesians 6** to be ready for spiritual battle. Don't be surprised that there is a cost to following Christ. No soldier ever serves without paying some sort of cost for their service.

Beware of over-confidence in your faith.

Stay humble...and dependent on Christ. “For when I am weak I am strong”. (2 Corinthians 12:10b)

Spiritual failure often follows spiritual success.

1 Peter 5:8 “...be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Failure is never final

Jesus forgave Peter.

Jesus never stopped loving Peter.

Jesus forgives you - and He's never stopped loving you.

Tonight - as you take communion in a few moments...as you pound a nail in one of the crosses in the

courtyard...repent of your sins (“And he went out and wept bitterly.” - Matt. 26:75b; Mark 14:72b; Luke 22:62)

Repent of the times you have denied Jesus and lived for yourself.

Be ready for Satan's attacks...

Live in the power of Christ...

Wrap yourself in the love, forgiveness and grace of Christ.

Psalm 56:11

“...in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?”