

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last week, we heard of our Savior's path toward His exodus

as He was willingly drawn to Gethsemane, desiring a place of solace to pray to His heavenly Father
as He entered into His great suffering and death for the world.

Earlier that night, He had instituted the Lord's Supper, giving His body and blood to the Church
for our strength and nourishment in times of our own trials and temptations.

Earlier that night, He had prayed His High Priestly prayer, interceding for His Church,
that we would be holy, sanctified in truth through His Word.

Tonight we meditate on the next steps He took toward the cross.

These steps, too, He took willingly, but He didn't just walk up to Caiaphas' front door.

Now He was **in custody**, under arrest, as He was brought to the High Priest's residence.

As follows in Jesus' name:

Then [the temple soldiers] seized Him and led Him away, bringing Him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him as they beat Him. They also blindfolded Him and kept asking Him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck You?" And they said many other things against Him, blaspheming Him.^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

St. Luke is very succinct in his account of Jesus' passion at this point.

He does not tell us, as St. John does, about Jesus being taken first to Annas, the former High Priest.

Nor does he tell us anything about the sham trials that Jesus endured all night long.

Instead, the night's ordeals we hear mostly about are Peter's 3 denials,
and the beatings and the mockeries Jesus endured while in custody.

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St. Luke is now closing out a series of three trials that the disciples endured that evening... and failed.

He especially is cued in on Peter who – to put it mildly – struggled that evening.

And for each trial, Jesus had warned them – had prophesied – the danger and their failure:

First, they were given the opportunity and encouragement to watch and pray with Jesus,

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."^{Matthew 26:41}

But they fell asleep and left Him to His own prayers.

Second, they were tested with Jesus' arrest, at which point Peter failed when he resorted to violence, drawing a sword and cutting off Malchus' ear, and when reprimanded by Jesus, fled from arrest. **"You will all fall away because of Me this night,"**^{Matt.26:31} Jesus had told them.

And when Peter over-confidently stated,

"Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away,"

Jesus then prophesied a third time,

"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."^{Matt.26:34}

It is this third prophecy that takes up much of St. Luke's account this evening.

Peter did not watch and pray. He fell asleep... and then fell into temptation.

He fled from Jesus... but didn't flee from temptation.... Instead, he walked into it.

We are told he followed **Jesus at a distance**.

And when [the guards] had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

St. Matthew tells us why: **he sat with the guards to see the end.**^{Matthew 26:58}

His curiosity had gotten the better of him – What would happen to Jesus now?

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Can you imagine the fear in his heart?

Armed guards just took his Master.

He knew that there had been death threats before;

He had seen people pick up stones to stone Jesus before in Jerusalem before.

And whether he wanted to believe it or not, or wanted to prevent it or not,

Jesus had predicted the scourging and mockery and even His death by crucifixion multiple times.

Was this going to be the end – of Jesus?

– of his faith? He had left his occupation behind in Galilee, believing Jesus to be the Messiah.

If Jesus dies, is this the inglorious demise of his false belief?

...And if they would go after Jesus, a perfect Man who had never sinned against anyone,

what would they do to His followers, especially one who had already attempted murder that night?

And, yet, here Peter is, willingly, if fearfully, sitting among these same guards.

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And then it happened. By the light of the fire that he was trying to warm himself with,

a servant girl identified Peter as one of those **with Him**, the Man of whom all this ruckus was about.

Peter denied Him.. and then left the fire light.

Now he moved on, but the conversation and speculation didn't stop.

A second time, people called him out, and again he denied His Lord and Savior.

But still, he did not flee. He hung around, still waiting to see what was to become of Jesus.

An hour later, St. Luke tells us, in the wee hours of the morning, just before dawn,

Peter crowed his third and final denial, even with swearing and cursing,

testifying that God should strike him dead and send him to hell if he were not telling the truth.

And it was at this point, with the rooster crowing to call up the sun, that he got a glimpse of Jesus...

Or, rather, as St. Luke says, **the Lord turned and looked at Peter.**

Was it hearing the rooster crow for the second time that got Jesus' attention?

Was it eye-catching commotion in the corner as Peter is excitedly, in fear of his life, calling down curses?

Was it the last blow that Jesus had just received that turned his face in Peter's general direction?

Or was it the omniscience of the Son of God *who searches the heart*,
seeing the burden of conscience as Peter, knowingly, yet uncontrollably refuses to own His Lord,
and curses himself to hell's condemnation?

How did Jesus look at him?
Was it with an "I told you so," kind of glance?
Was it with a look of disgust or disdain at this disloyal disciple?
Or was it the eye of the Savior, looking to call His wayward, weak-willed sheep back into the fold?

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While Peter would not own Jesus, Jesus would own every idle word, every false oath, every ugly curse
that Peter ever spoke.

And it was for these and every sinful thing that you and I have ever said, or thought or felt,
that Jesus endured that night and into the morning... and that day.

St. Luke reports that He was struck, not just the fists, but with mockery,
"Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?"

How pitiful these heaps of dust are!

Here is the Son of God! and they only want to know the names of those who struck Him?

Not only could Jesus have told them their names... and their parents' names,

but He could have told them their shoe size, how many hairs were on their head,

how many times they had actually flossed in the last 6 months,

and when the last time it truly was when they had gone to confession.

Or, if they had asked, He could have declared their sins forgiven...

Here was the Prophet that Moses had spoken about in Deuteronomy:

**The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers –
it is to Him you shall listen** — Deuteronomy 18:15

But they did not want to listen to Him. They were there to blaspheme and beat Him.

One little word from His prophetic, omnipotent mouth could have felled them, but

He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth;

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,

so He opened not His mouth. Isaiah 53:7

...

With a look from the servant girl, Peter fell.

With a look from his Savior, St. Peter was called to repentance.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,

on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may deliver their soul from death. Psalm 33:18-19

Your Savior is still looking upon you.

He sees your burdens and fears.

He knows very well your idle words, false oaths, and curses.

But He does not remain silent for you. He has already suffered and paid for them in full.

Now He speaks to you to sanctify you with His omnipotent Word and He says to you,

"Your sins are forgiven." "The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace."

Glory be to Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria