

Sermon Text: Mark 14:27-31, 69-72; John 21:17

Theme: "I Don't Know that Man!"

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Peter might be the most famous of Jesus' disciples. And he might be the most talked about. Peter is the disciple you want to be like, and you want to *not* be like. You want to praise him, and sometimes you just cringe at him.

Peter trusted Jesus enough to get out of the boat and walk on water. And Peter doubted while he was walking on water and began to sink.

Peter proclaimed: "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God!" But a different time Peter said that Jesus should never die, and Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!"

Peter wasn't the fastest one who ran to the empty tomb on Easter morning...but he was the first one in the tomb. He just ran straight in...no hesitation. But that same zeal caused him to cut off a man's ear on the night Jesus was arrested.

Peter's the one who gave the great sermon on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2 he said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of sins! The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off." In Acts 3 he healed a man who had been crippled from birth. In Acts 4 Peter said about Jesus, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

All those wonderful things Peter did and said, but perhaps the most well-known story about Peter is what is perhaps his worst moment. When he said not once, but *three times* over the course of a few hours, "I have no idea who Jesus is. May I be struck dead if I'm lying—I have no idea who he is and I have absolutely nothing to do with him." All those wonderful things Peter did, and yet the devil was able to succeed in tempting him to deny that he even knew Jesus.

Today we're not so much looking at Peter as an example for us—but we can learn from Peter's story, and specifically the story involving him that we are studying this morning. It's a story of Peter, and Jesus, and us. And this story might be titled, "I don't know that man!" Listen to the words of the true story we have before us this morning, first from Mark 14.

**<sup>27</sup> "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' <sup>28</sup> But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." <sup>29</sup> Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." <sup>30</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." <sup>31</sup> But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.**

Jesus was warning his disciples that they would fall away—they would abandon him. Peter disagreed with what Jesus said each time, and each time his disagreementf more emphatic. First he said even if everyone else fell away, he wouldn't, and then he said he would die before disowning Jesus. Peter was absolutely convinced he wouldn't falter.

Jesus gets more emphatic as well. He gives details. **"Today—yes, tonight. Before the rooster crows twice. You yourself will disown me *three times*."**

How did it turn out? Whose word came true—Jesus or Peter? We see later in that same chapter of Mark. We pick up the story in verses 69-72, after Peter answers a slave girl who said he was with Jesus, “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about.”

**<sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” <sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” <sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.**

Peter was getting more and more concerned about his situation. First a slave girl spoke to him, then that servant announced what she thought to the group of people standing around, and then later the group of people all accused him—and they cited proof as well! They said they recognized him by his Galilean accent.

Jesus getting arrested was a big deal. The girl just said, “This fellow is one of *them*.” Everyone knew whom she was talking about—Jesus’ followers. You can picture the group of people looking at Peter accusingly, and Peter wondering what they might do to him. Peter was worried, and to prove his point, he called down curses on himself, saying, “If I’m not telling the truth, God can strike me down. May God punish me if this is not true.” But he knew in his heart that he was lying.

But it didn’t bother him until he heard the rooster crow the second time. Something so normal—a sound he perhaps heard every day. But now it took on so much more meaning. Peter was jolted back to Jesus’ words of warning, and he realized what he had done to his Lord. The Gospel writer Luke added the detail in his account, “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.” And then Peter was no longer merely thinking about his own safety. He was appalled at what he had done. He was sad. He lost control and wept audibly because of how he had hurt his Savior.

We all know that feeling when we have deeply harmed someone and they know it and we know it and we’re sorry...but the damage has already been done and there’s nothing we can do to take it back. The fact was, Peter had just denied his Lord and done the exact thing he said he’d never do. How terrible he must have felt.

So...what would happen? How would Peter react? Would he react like Judas, who when he realized his terrible sin of betraying Jesus for some money, despaired and hanged himself? Judas, who thought his sin was too terrible for God to forgive? Who rejected God’s grace? Let’s jump to John 21 and finish our lesson.

Now it was over a week since Jesus rose from the dead, and the disciples were up in Galilee fishing. Jesus had miraculously provided them with a huge catch of fish—153 to be exact. So many they couldn’t even haul the net into the boat! Then back on shore after they had eaten, Jesus asked Peter a series of questions: “Do you truly love me more than these?” “Do you truly love me?” Peter answered “yes” to both questions, and then verse 17 happens.

**<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”**

Why exactly was Peter hurt and sad that Jesus had asked him again? Perhaps he was

remembering his denial—it had only been a couple weeks ago at most, and surely Peter still felt guilty. This was perhaps his first personal conversation with Jesus since the denial, and Jesus began the conversation by asking if Peter loved him. And then asked again...and then again...

Think of it this way. When you have harmed someone, and because of what you did, they are wondering if you still love them or even like them, and they keep asking you “Do you love me?” you will probably be sad because you know you did wrong and you know there is probably no reason they should think that you still love them.

Peter was saddened, but he did not despair. And we see that Jesus clearly forgave Peter. Peter said numerous times, “Lord you know that I love you.” And Jesus did know. He could see into Peter’s heart, and he didn’t accuse Peter and he didn’t say Peter was wrong. Jesus simply said three little words that showed he had completely forgiven Peter. “**Feed *my* sheep.**”

This shows ultimate trust. When you give someone a command and a job, that means you trust them. You have faith in them to complete the task.

But Jesus didn’t just give Peter a generic command. He said, “feed *my* sheep.” The “my” adds emphasis. Don’t just go and do something, but take care of something that belongs to me. Take care of my precious sheep. The ones I love. Jesus shows great trust confidence in his disciple. Jesus has forgiven Peter for his grievous sin. Peter had sinned and hurt Jesus, and he knew it. But instead of despairing in his sin, Peter’s heart was washed clean by the forgiveness of Jesus.

In the beginning I said this was a story about Peter, Jesus, and *us*. How is it about us? What does this story teach us—how is it our story as well?

First: a twofold warning against the devil’s attacks on us. Because the devil wears two hats. #1—tempter.

The devil tries to pry us away from Jesus by tempting us to disown or deny Jesus. What are ways in which you say, “I don’t know Jesus. He doesn’t mean anything to me.” I have overconfidence, just like Peter. I deny Jesus by relying on myself, and not on him. Crazy as it sounds, I can forget about Jesus! It’s terrible! I am selfish in my desires. I think about glorifying myself, about advancing myself in this world, and not simply about giving all the glory to God. The fact is—whenever we sin and do what we know is wrong, we are in reality slapping God in the face. “I don’t know that man—God—and moreso...I don’t care what he says.”

Hat #2: Accuser. The devil tries to get us to deny Jesus’ forgiveness. To despair. This is just as perilous a trap for a Christian. The law works a lot more easily on us than the gospel does, because the law is naturally inside of us. We do something wrong, and we feel *guilty*. The devil keeps on accusing us and says, “You think your spouse could forgive you? No way? You think your friend still wants to be your friend? Preposterous! You think that after all the times you have backhanded God across the face, that he still wants you? Are you kidding me? Would *you* want to live with you? Oh, Christian, give it up. You’re nothing more than a worthless wanna-be. You’ll never be good enough for God.

How does Jesus respond both when we sin and then also when the devil keeps on accusing us after our sin? Peter denied Jesus. “I don’t know that man!” And what did Jesus do? He denied that man who denied him. “I don’t know that man who denied me! I know *you*, Peter, and your sins are all gone! I took them away.”

Look at verse 27: “**I will strike the shepherd.**” It was God striking Jesus. This wasn’t the devil

harming Jesus or defeating him. IT was God being just and carrying out the necessary plan of salvation. God struck down God. God struck down his only Son. Someone had to pay the price for the sins of the world, and Jesus did. For you.

Look at verse 28. In the middle of his warning, Jesus gives word of comfort. The sheep will be scattered; you will all fall away... **“BUT! After I have risen...”** Jesus knew they would fall away, but the promise of resurrection was still valid! We need not despair. Jesus assures us of that. He assured the disciples. Jesus knew that the disciples would fall away/astray and be scattered, but he knew that wasn't the end. He would see them again. Our sins are not the end. Jesus has the final say. And his resurrection says that our sins are gone.

Finally, Peter called down curses on himself in denial of Jesus. And Jesus—he called down the ultimate curse on himself in denial of himself. To save us. He took the curse that should've been ours. He made the greatest substitution in the history. He took the curse and punishment of death that should have been ours and made it his. And now Jesus denies knowing our sin. When God looks at you, he doesn't see a sinner. God sees his children, freed from the curse of sin and made perfect by the death and resurrection of Jesus. So do not despair. Rejoice in your Savior Jesus and the forgiveness he has won for you! Amen.