**Uniquely Jesus** June 11, 2017

Mark 14:53-54, 66-72

Read the passage.

After realizing he had let Jesus down, by falling asleep in the garden, Peter attempted to redeem himself.

Luke’s gospel (22:49) tells us that as Jesus was about to be arrested, his followers asked, *“Lord, should we strike with our swords?”*

Jesus never answered their question.

And so, without direction from Jesus, Peter on his own – v.47 – drew a sword.

However, it happened, whether he did so deliberately or unintentionally, Peter struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Immediately, Jesus intervened.

Matthew’s gospel (26:52-54) tells us that Jesus said to Peter, *“Put your sword back in its place…Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”*

Jesus also said to Peter*, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”*

John 18:11

Jesus had just finished speaking with the Father three times, and had settled this question. He would drink the cup.

As Isaiah had prophesied, 53:7, Jesus would be *“led like a lamb to the slaughter…”*

But before they bound his hands, Jesus healed the injured servant.

What does that say about Jesus?

What kind of person has such compassion for his enemies?

After he did this – everyone deserted Jesus and fled.

It was then that Peter made a second attempt to show Jesus he could depend on him. He followed Jesus at a distance; going right into the courtyard of the high priest.

He even sat with the guards, warming himself by the fire.

Remember, just a short time earlier, Peter had drawn and used his sword in front of some of these same guards.

Thankfully, because of poor lighting, no one around the fire, initially recognized Peter, as being with Jesus in the Garden.

But let’s back up and ask: how did Peter manage to into the high priest’s courtyard?

He would have had to go past someone who would have been on guard duty.

Why did that person let Peter in?

Look at **John 18:15-18.**

Once in the courtyard, I’m certain Peter took assessment of who was there with him; as well as the layout of the building.

I’m sure he listened carefully to the conversations around the fire, as well as to any pieces of conversation that drifted down from the room upstairs, where Jesus was being interrogated.

I’m convinced Peter was wracking his brain, trying to formulate some plan of what could he do to help Jesus.

And then it began.

We are meant to see Peter’s story in contrast to Jesus.’

In the Garden, Jesus had watched and prayed.

This is why Jesus withstood his time of testing.

But Peter hadn’t – Peter hadn’t watched; hadn’t prayed; and so, he didn’t stand his ground.

*“You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus.”*

***“I don’t know what you are talking about.”***

*“This fellow is one of them.”*

***“I don’t know the man.”***

*“Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”*

**Then calling down curses on himself, he again swore, *“I don’t know the man.”***

How did this happen?

How did Peter so quickly turn his back on Jesus?

How did he fall into the hands of Satan, as Jesus had warned he would?

I want to share with you three reasons.

**First reason.**

Peter fell into Satan’s hand because, however and whenever it began, and we are not given the details, sinful pride, not healthy confidence, but sinful pride, had taken root in Peter heart.

Peter had an overly inflated view of himself.

He saw himself as this untouchable, strong man who could handle anything.

Peter believed he couldn’t FALL; couldn’t FAIL.

How many storms had he faced while fishing?

He’d always brought his crew, and the boat, home.

How many times had the fishing business faced challenges – poor fishing, bad markets, etc., and he’d overcame them all?!

Thinking back to the argument around the supper table, “who was the greatest?” Peter believed.... he was.

This is why, even though, Peter had heard Jesus’ warning, he was adamant in his response, “I will never disown you!!!”

1 John 2:16 speaks this warning:

*“For everything in the world—the cravings of the sinful nature,*

*the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what one has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

Sinful pride boasts, not in God, but in one’s self – what one has or has done or can do.

Remember Nebuchadnezzar?

Daniel 4:30.

*“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”*

Romans 12:3 says*: “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”*

God teaches his people to live by the values of heaven.

Humility is the virtue that God would grow in us, to displace our natural posture of boastful pride.

Humility is the beautiful grace that flourishes when a person’s life is full of God, rather than self.

This is the first reason why Peter fell into the hands of the devil.

His boastful pride had left his life wide open.

**Second reason.**

Peter fell into Satan’s hand because he didn’t watch.

He didn’t carefully observe Jesus in the garden.

Peter didn’t question or evaluate his own emotions or thinking as he sat in the courtyard.

Being watchfulness is as important to you and I, as it was to Peter.

1 Corinthians 16:13: *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;*

*be courageous; be strong.”*

Peter, because he didn’t watch and pray, was overtaken by fear… of what the religious leaders, the soldiers or the Roman authorities MIGHT do to him.

This is why he didn’t stand firm.

This is why he didn’t act with courage.

This is why he wasn’t strong.

While he didn’t learn it, that night, when he turned back to Jesus, it was a lesson,

Peter never forgot.

We know this because of what he wrote in his first epistle.

1 Peter 5:8: *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”* NLT

As followers of Jesus, we are NOT told to fear our great enemy;

only to watch out for him.

Even though it seems counter-intuitive, we watch out for “our great enemy,”

by keeping the focus of our lives, firmly fixed on our God and Savior.

**Third reason.**

John 7:37-39: *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.*

***38****Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”* ***39****By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

After his resurrection, but before he bodily ascended into heaven, on one occasion as he ate with his followers - Acts 1:4-5 - Jesus gave them this command:

*“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.****5****For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized withthe Holy Spirit.”*

As Peter was sifted that night in the high priest’s courtyard, I remind you,

he did not yet have the Holy Spirit living within him.

We know this because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Do you ever think, how incredible it must have been, for those disciples, to physically see and hear Jesus?

Do you ever wish that it could be the same for you?

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**Share some of my thoughts about visiting Israel.**

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Around the supper table, as they celebrated the Passover meal, Jesus told his disciple’s something shocking.

John 16:7 – *“It is for your good that I am going away.”*

How could it be… a good thing for Jesus to go away?

What could possibly be better than having Jesus physically present with you?

John 16:7 - *“It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you.”*

Did you catch that?

The coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of Jesus’ followers is better than Jesus being physically present with them.

What was true for those early followers, is still true for you and I.

Peter’s denial of Jesus emphasizes to us that the Christian life is impossible

to live without the Holy Spirit.

It isn’t just that following Jesus is challenging.

It isn’t just that being a Christian is difficult.

It is actually impossible…unless the Holy Spirit lives within a person.

You can be religious – without the Holy Spirit.

You can even be a moral person – without the Holy Spirit.

But you can’t follow Jesus.... without his Spirit living in you.

On the day of Pentecost, what Jesus had promised in John 7, happened.

Acts 2 tells the story of how his followers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Peter, the same man who had denied Jesus to a small group of soldiers and servants, on the day of Pentecost, boldly proclaimed Jesus to a crowd of many, many, many thousands.

What made the difference?

There is only one explanation.

The Holy Spirit.

It is the same today for you and I.

It is the Holy Spirit in us who makes our lives distinct; who helps us to live like Jesus, and who empowers to engage in acts of goodness and service.

Let’s press deeper into this.

As we begin to follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit initiates in us a life-long process of character renovation.

He prompts and then teaches us how to cultivate new habits (virtues), consistent with the new nature he birthed in us. At the same time, he helps us to put off old habits (vices), we learned when our old nature was in charge.

We are a community of people being transformed by God’s Spirit.

And while we wish that our experience of the Spirit’s control and influence in us would always be constant, our experience and the Scripture confirms we are prone to:

quench (smother) the Spirit – 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

grieve him – Ephesians 4:30.

become spiritually careless or preoccupied.

This is why Ephesians 5:18 stresses to us – be **continually** filled with the Spirit.

Read through the book of Acts and you will see that in spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit filled Peter’s life on the day of Pentecost, he needed his life to be regularly filled with the Spirit. See Acts 4.

The environment of the culture in which we live spiritually wears us down.

We are in need of God’s Spirit to regularly convict, refresh, and spur us on in our faith.

In the book of Revelation, in the letters written to the seven churches of Asia Minor, there is a phrase repeated at the end of every message: “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

As we come to our response time, I would ask you to be attentive to what the Spirit is saying to his church this morning.

We cannot afford to quench or to grieve God’s precious Holy Spirit.

The prayer corner is available to you this morning.

As the Spirit, speaks with you regarding any unresolved issue; any unconfessed sin; any moral or ethical sloppiness; any half-heartedness; any spiritual drift that has happened – I would encourage you to come for prayer.

This church is a composite of who each of us are individually.

If the majority of us are in step with God’s Spirit, this will be a place of life, and liberty, and joy; where even those who don’t know Jesus, will say, what was said of the Corinthian church, “God is really among you!” 1 Corinthians 14:25

More than anything, we need God – we need to see his glory; have his love poured into our hearts and know what it is to be re-energized by his Spirit.