

Good Friday Sermon Peter

Most of you know me by the name Peter, but I also go by Simon Peter, Simon or Cephas. Jesus told me that my name means “rock,” but if you were to talk to many of my friends they would tell you it means “one who talks before thinking!” I’m a fisherman by trade catching fish with my brother Andrew and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. One day Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee where we were fishing and he calls out to us that he would make us fishers of people if we would but follow him. I had no idea what he was talking about, but there was something about him that made it impossible for me to ignore him and stay where I was.

It didn’t take me long to see that Jesus was different from our other Rabbis. Just after I began following him we went to my home for some food and rest. When we arrived we found my mother-in-law with a fever and too sick to make us a meal. All Jesus did was to touch her hand and the fever left her. She got up and acted like she had never been sick! Soon after that Jesus sent us out on a mission in pairs. He gave us authority to cast out demons and to cure every disease and sickness. Boy, I can’t tell you how powerful that trip made us feel!

One time Jesus sent us in the boat ahead of him. In the middle of the night we see someone or something walking on the water. We were so scared, but the figure called out to us not to be afraid, that it was Jesus. Well, I wasn’t so sure, so I called out to it and said, “If it really is you Lord, command me to walk out to you on the water.” The figure called out to me, “Come.” So I got out of the boat and I started walking on the water to him! Everything was going great until I took my eyes off of Jesus and let the noise of the wind and the crashing of the waves be my focus. All of a sudden I’m starting to sink and I’m afraid I’m going to drown. Just as I’m going under I’m grabbed by someone’s hand. It’s Jesus. He whispers to me so none of the others can hear him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

We were walking down the road by Caesarea Philippi and Jesus asks us the strangest questions. First he asks us who other people think he is. We tell him that we've heard him called a great prophet like Moses and Elijah; that others think he is John the Baptist come back to life. Then he asks us who we think he is and something comes over me and I can't help but yell out, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" Jesus praises me for that answer saying, "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven."

Well my head just began to swell with pride and I wasn't paying all that much attention to what Jesus was saying until I heard him telling us that he had to go to Jerusalem to be tortured at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes that would lead to him being killed, but that on the third day he would be raised. What! The Messiah isn't supposed to be tortured and killed. The Messiah is supposed to rescue us from our oppressors! So I grab Jesus and I start yelling at him, "God forbid it Lord! This must never happen to you." Then Jesus turned and looked right at me and said, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things."

Wow, in a few short moments I've gone from being the rock of the church to being called Satan by Jesus! What's going on here? Then he starts to tell us that we all have a cross to bear and that we are to pick it up and follow him because those who try to save their lives in this world will lose it in the next and those who lose their lives in this world for Jesus' sake will gain it in the next.

It wasn't long after that that Jesus pulled aside myself, James and John and took us up on a high mountain. All of a sudden Jesus was changed, his face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white. While we were still trying to comprehend what was happening to Jesus;

there stood Moses and Elijah with him and they were talking with one another! Well, I didn't know what to think or what to say, so I told Jesus that if he wanted me to; I'd build three dwellings here, one for each of them. I hadn't even finished what I was saying when this loud, booming voice comes from the heavens and tells us, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" Boy, I can tell you we were so scared that we fell to the ground. But then Jesus was by us, touching us and telling us not to be afraid and to get up. We got up and looked around and only saw Jesus. He then told us not to tell anyone about what just happened. That was one command I had no problem obeying—who was going to believe me!?

At this point we had spent three years with Jesus; learning from him. He taught us about forgiveness and leaving everything to follow him. He taught us how the first were going to be last and the last were going to be first. He showed us how in serving those in need we were actually taking care of him. I learned so much from him in those three years and I thought that I had changed, but I soon was to find out that I was the same old Peter. And now we were in Jerusalem and celebrating the Passover feast with him.

We were all sitting around the table sharing the Passover meal with Jesus when he tells us that one of us is going to betray him! We couldn't believe it and began talking amongst ourselves trying to figure out who it would be. Then Jesus took the unleavened bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to us saying, "Take, eat this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to us saying, "Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you that I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." We sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

While we were there Jesus told us that we will all desert him. Of course I quickly told him that if everyone else were to leave him that I would never leave. Jesus turned and looked at me with sadness in his eyes and told me that tonight before the rooster crowed in the morning; I would

deny knowing him three times. I was shocked and mortified! I swore back at him that even if I were to die with him I would never disown him!

Jesus went into the garden to pray and asked us to keep watch and pray also, but we were so tired that we couldn't keep awake. Three times he woke us up, but we just couldn't keep awake. Then after the third time he told us that his betrayer was at hand. I couldn't believe it, Judas! Judas comes forward with armed Temple guards calls, "Greetings Rabbi" to Jesus and then kisses him! The guards step forward and arrest Jesus! I pull out my sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, but Jesus commands us to stop. He heals the servant and tells us to put away our weapons for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. They take him away and we disciples scatter in fear.

They've taken Jesus to the High Priest's house and I've followed at a distance. I sit in the courtyard by the fire as they are questioning Jesus inside. This servant girl comes up to me and she tells everyone that I was with Jesus. I'm afraid for my life and so I tell her that I don't know what she's talking about. Then as I'm going out the gateway another servant girl tells everyone that I was with Jesus of Nazareth. This time I even swear an oath when I deny knowing him. Then those standing by me come up and say that I must be one of his followers since I have a Galilean accent.

By this time I'm really scared for my life; everyone in the courtyard is surrounding me getting ready to hand me over to the Temple guards! So I give it my best shot and I swear oath upon oath that I have no idea who it is that they are talking about! I'm just here to warm myself by the fire; I've never met this Jesus fellow they're talking about! Well they finally believe me and go back to their places and I settle back down by the fire. Then the rooster crows and I look up to see Jesus looking down at me. Me, Peter who had bragged that I would die before I would deny knowing Jesus; had just denied knowing him three times to save my own life! I was so filled with shame and self-loathing that all I could do was to run away weeping bitterly.