

“The Courtyard – A Place of Renewal”

Luke 22:54-62

Have you ever been caught by surprise going into a store unplanned and unprepared? You have to drop your child off for an early morning practice or so they can catch a bus for a field trip. You haven't had time to shower or put on anything decent. On the way home, you remember you need to stop by the store to grab a few things. It's just in and out, and then comes the voice. Someone calls out your name. Normally, you like meeting people . . . but not today. Today, you want to run and hide. Why? Because all of a sudden you see yourself and you think “Do I really look like this, out in a public place?” It's a moment of self-revelation.

Tonight, we have a moment of self-discovery for Peter. Peter sees who he is in terms of his denial. But, by God's grace, Jesus also holds out another picture for us. A picture of who Jesus is for Peter: his Savior. This evening, we will meditate on these two pictures—Peter's denial and Peter's Savior. Doing that, it is my prayer that we will grow in trust of our Savior, who enters places of denial and turns them into places of renewal in His love.

Consider the courtyard: The place of Peter's denial. As we listen to the conversation that occurs in the courtyard, we see more and more of Peter's life stripped away. It's kind of like watching a crack in the foundation slowly spread, bringing the whole house to ruin. The servant girl is the first to reveal the problem. She mentions the relationship between Peter and Jesus. “This man also was with Him,” she says (Luke 22:56). She puts Peter and Jesus

together with these words. But Peter denies it. “I do not know Him,” he says. A crack in the foundation.

He denies his Lord. And when your relationship with Jesus is broken, it doesn't take long for everything else to give without Jesus fixing it. From there, we move to Peter's relationship with Jesus and the disciples. Someone says, “You are also one of *them*” (22:58). So, we have Peter and Jesus and then Peter and the disciples. Finally, someone offers the bigger picture. He says, “Certainly, this fellow was with Him, for he too is a Galilean” (22:59). We move from Peter and Jesus to Peter and the disciples to Peter and all of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. And Peter still says “No.” When your relationship with Jesus is broken, it doesn't take long for everything else to give.

At this moment, Peter has a moment of painful self-revelation. He hears a sound, sees a face, and remembers a word. Luke writes, “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” (22:60–61). Much worse than hearing your name called in a store, Peter at this point remembers and sees. He remembers what Jesus said. Jesus knew him better than he knew himself.

Peter had that said he would follow Jesus to prison. He'd follow Him to death. But instead, he denied he ever knew Jesus. This is a moment of spiritual self-revelation. By our own might, we are unable to follow Jesus. Salvation is not dependent on what we do for Jesus. It never has been, and it never will be. And, if we ever rely on our own strength rather than His, we've entered into a place of denial.

That is what really makes a place of denial. Not the drama of having other people question you about Jesus but the simple nature of your

relationship to Him. Whenever we rely on our own strength instead of His, we've entered into a place of denial.

We see it in our lives. We see it in our moments of self-revelation. We cannot follow into prison or give our lives unto death. We are weak; we are sinful; and there is no strength in us, and, in those despairing moments, all we can say is "We are lost in sin and cannot set ourselves free."

To such people, like us, Luke offers another word this evening. The word of Jesus. The story of His Passion. In the midst of our failure, Jesus is and remains the one who takes away our sin. Our salvation does not depend on how much we can bear the load for Jesus. Instead, it depends on what He bears for us. Our forgiveness does not depend on what we do or say. It rests securely on what He does and says for us. In the face of Peter's denial as His disciple, Jesus continues to be his Lord. While Peter goes out to weep bitterly, Jesus goes on to suffer for this man that is weeping. It is His work, His love, His mercy that overcomes our sin.

We are the object of His love. There was nothing more important to Him than becoming our refuge and shield. All of Adam's children stand condemned under the wrath of the Law. Jesus chose to stand in harm's way between us and judgment. This was His Passion, He is obsessed with being merciful.

We are not saved by giving our lives up for Jesus; Jesus saves us by giving up His life for us – for the forgiveness of our sin. That's what Luke reveals to us this evening. When Peter is caught in the act of denial, Jesus continues in His act of love.

By doing this, Luke asks us to see a different picture. The picture of a Savior's love. Jesus comes to us in the most awkward of moments. He does not wait until we get it all together. He does not wait until we have overcome

our temptations and fought our demons and conquered our sins and achieved our goals. No. He comes now, while we struggle. Now, while we confess our failure. Now, while we feel like we'll never be the person God wants us to be. He comes now to assure us that "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Jesus comes to you tonight with a love that never changes. Time passes and our life is filled with change. We move from the home of our parents to a college dorm, from a dorm to an apartment, from an apartment to a house, from a house to a condo, from a condo to a retirement center, from a retirement center to a skilled care facility, from the skilled care facility to our grave, and from our grave we will be raised to live in our Savior's kingdom. Not everyone progresses through each step, however, no matter where you are in life, Jesus remains the same. He is the one who forgives our sins and saves our souls. Even at the end, after death and the grave, we will be raised to find Him as we have always known Him to be – the One who went to the cross to die for our sin and rose from the grave for our salvation. Jesus brings us tonight a picture of His love.

In those times when you are faced with a painful self-revelation (and I am talking about more than just being in a store in your pajamas with uncombed hair). In those times when you are faced with a painful self-revelation, Luke wants you to see your Savior. Trust in His love, live in His kingdom, pray in His name, and know that you now know Him and He will not change. Jesus enters our places of denial and makes them places of renewal in His love. Amen.