

4.23.23 Sermon

Peter's Denial Story | John 18:12-18; 25-27

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Good morning! You know, there's a phrase within that song that I like. And I'm hoping that each of you is actually grabbing a hold of this one line. There's this thing called Truth. Right?

So, what I love about science is that it doesn't disprove theology. It actually confirms the things that we believe by faith. And it keeps going on and on, approving these things that were spoken 1000s of years ago, that, yes, there's something greater than us. Right?

There are these elements that they call God elements. Why? Because they cannot be explained. They are so powerful, so unique. This is a creation beyond anything that we know how to create, or can be created. It just exists. God elements.

The reason I bring that up is when we talk about truth. In science, there is one truth. And if we take that concept, and then apply it to what we think about God, and the things that we hear about ourselves, as people, if you are loved, if you are cared for. And if that is true, then all these other things must be what? False, you cannot be unloved, you cannot be this bad person, these bad things that people keep trying to put on you as humans. This is true. Hopefully, you got that from the song.

So, I have the honor, of course, of speaking to you today. And I'm just trying to get warmed up. And I'm dealing with this thought because at least five people have come up to me. And I don't know where I got this reputation. They said to keep it short. I was like, "Well, we'll go and see how it goes." But I hope to give you something that you can take with you throughout the week. So, let me jump in.

For those of you who love to discuss the Word in this church, we have a Gathering Room where we get together after the service. We talk about both the sermon and the Word, and it's okay to question any and everything I say. I won't be offended – I'm not God, nor am I his little brother. In fact, I actually love it because it helps me understand where you are and where we connect. It also highlights when something I said didn't make sense. So, I invite you to do that. I also encourage you to listen to our podcast and catch us on YouTube, Twitter, and other platforms. There may be topics on your mind that we're not discussing at the moment, but we have spoken about them in the past. We provide these tools for your benefit.

Today, I will be building upon what Sandra discussed last week in the first part of John 18. She brought up the different perspectives that John introduces in the telling of Jesus Christ's story as he's about to be crucified and then resurrected. John includes small details that help us understand the complexities of what's going on.

There's something she mentioned about how the different authors of the Gospels highlight various aspects. We have a great resource in our library about the Synoptics of the Gospels that allows you to compare what Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John say about a particular topic. This helps you identify overlaps and gaps in order to piece together the full story. It's important to understand the full story and why there are differences among the authors, as well as their intentions. I encourage you to take advantage of resources like this one.

So, what are we going to talk about today? We've reached the point in the story where Jesus has been taken captive. Peter gets into a fight, cuts off someone's ear, and demonstrates his fierce loyalty. Jesus then has to put the ear back on to

calm everyone down. Remember, a detachment of soldiers, police, and slaves showed up to apprehend Jesus. A detachment consists of between 300 and 600 people, not including the police and slaves. They arrived with lanterns, torches, and weapons, indicating that this was far from a friendly encounter. What amazes me is that, in the middle of all this chaos, Peter has the courage to pull out a knife and start swinging.

You know, Sandra described him as, you know, he's about that life. And if you know about that life, you know what Peter was? You couldn't intimidate Peter. You weren't just gonna roll up on him and his crew, and you take it lying down? That's not Peter. That's why I want to be called if there's a wing of Christianity. I want to be on Peter's side. Because Peter gets it done. You roll up on us? Things can happen. I know I need to be saved. All right. All right. So that was what disclosure of me.

Let's read. So, we're just going to start with Chapter 18, verse 12, through 18. And then we're going to jump to 25 through 27. And it reads like this, so the soldiers there. So, the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. They first took him to Annas who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Simon Peter, and another disciple, followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter was standing outside at the gate. So, the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, "You're not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

Jumping to verse 25. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose

ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, the cock crowed. The reading of the word. So, if you have been around a church for a little bit or a while, you commonly have heard this story, and it focused primarily on the works of Peter, in the life of Peter, and with good purpose, right? So, Peter is a major player in all of this. Like I said, if there's a wing of Christianity in heaven, I want to be on Peter's wing because somebody's got my back. That's Peter. Peter's bold. Peter is one of the first disciples of Jesus when he starts his ministry.

Peter is one of the people who asks, "Can I be at your right hand, Jesus, in heaven?" Peter participates in miracles, right? He walks on water. Peter's also, when Jesus asks, "Whom do you say I am?" He speaks out and says, "You are the Son of God." He's one of the first to ever say such a thing. So, I understand the focus and the power of focusing on Peter, and what he's doing and has done. Also, when you focus on Peter, it helps to complete the story of the prophecy of Jesus. When He says, "You will deny me," it completes that story. It also helps us to see ourselves in Peter when we are a little bit too confident about who we are and what we will do. At times, we are extremely confident about our beliefs, and about how bold we are, and the things that we will say in the middle of anyone about what we believe, and who we are, what we profess to be. We see all of that in Peter.

But there's this other character that I gotta be honest with you. For many years, I never even acknowledged he was there. John says that there's this other disciple who also goes, not only does he follow Jesus all the way to the courtyard, but he also has the ability to go into the courtyard. And then, when they are there, they start to make some things happen.

Now, we don't know the name of this unnamed, this new disciple that is on the scene. In fact, some of the writers don't even mention this disciple. There's some speculation about who that disciple may be, but all we scarcely know is, this disciple is known by the high priests. Which is interesting. And strange. For this ragtag group of disciples to have someone within their midst that knows the high priests, right? This is the high society, folks. Anybody offended? Yeah, no.

Alright so, they're able to get into the courtyard. We don't know if the reason this disciple knows the high priests is because they were neighbors, that they went to school together. Did their families know each other? Did they work together? Did they do business together? We don't really know. But we know they know each other. And by that association, this disciple can walk right in, with no problem. No problem. You can do this thing.

And amid this, there's this big hubbub going on. But I have the ability, and I am a disciple of Jesus, and I can walk right into this horrific event. No one challenges me. Interesting reality. And then this disciple has the courage, while he's in the midst of all of this going on, right next to Jesus in the courtyard. Wow, he's being questioned. He's Peter. And didn't leave Peter out there. He goes and gets Peter, talks to the maid, and the maid lets him in, bringing them close enough. So now he can hear and see Jesus. He uses his role as an authority within society to bring Peter in. Right? This is the situation that's going on.

And I wonder, why is John's inclusion of this piece of the story important? Why is that important? There is a belief, there is a perspective that John is including this detail because it bridges the big story of the prophecy to the realities of what happens in day-to-day life.

There's a bridge, right? A big prophecy comes out, let's use it in our life, and we understand today. When people are young, did they want to potentially get married and have a loving, large family or become wealthy? That's the prophecy. But between that and the reality, there are these practical things that happen every day. That is a combination of situations and decisions that become a reality when the prophecy is fulfilled. These things don't generally just fall out of the sky. Because I've been waiting for my millions to fall out of the sky, but they don't seem to happen.

Ted, did it happen in your life? Not yet. Okay. Joe? Not yet. Yeah, Joe. Not yet. Sure. Not yet, none of us, we all may say, I guess. But we are. There's this practical reality that John keeps reminding us in a similar way. I know I can imagine. Peter thought Jesus was crazy when he prophesied before the cock crows, "You're gonna deny me three times." Peter couldn't imagine that there

was a situation that he could be put in, that he would deny his Lord and friend. But now, we have this situation where there's at least 600 people that are against you. And at least one of them knows you cut off their family member's ear, standing around you, and you're inside a locked gate with all of them. The tension is rising for Peter, and in the middle of those circumstances and pressure and reality, Peter breaks. Peter's human, Peter's normal. Peter, the rock, is crushed.

There's an interesting word usage that gets Peter tripped up. I want three people to help because I want you to visualize what I'm about to say next. Three bold people, stand up before I have to grab. Come on. Come on. I need a third. Third, all right. So, I'm gonna have you all stand to my left. I don't want to go over because the speaker starts giving me a lot of feedback. Right. So, one of you, be the unnamed disciple. All right, unnamed disciple, you stay in here. You'd be Peter, and you'd be the madam at the gate.

So, because I want you to understand the tension that is happening and building. The unnamed disciple comes to Peter, talking to the person at the gate. And the question the person at the gate asks, "Are you not also one of this man's disciples?" That is just a simple question. And the word that gets Peter tripped up is "also." So, when you use the word "also," you usually mean "in addition to." The question I have is, what did this disciple say?

When they were asked the question, "What if they say the Bible doesn't record it, but the person at the gate knows, they know Caiaphas and they know Jesus?", they know. The unknown disciple passes the test, no problem; 600, 700, 800 enemies and they survive. Why? They are comfortable with this. They know this environment. Peter does not. Peter is trapped in his mind, wondering what is going on.

See, that's what I would have done; I would have ushered Peter right back out. But no, we wouldn't. The end is this way. It is this way when you have help sometimes. Also, Peter is bold. Yes. Peter is talented. Yes. Peter is nervous. Peter is in unfamiliar surroundings. And now, no longer is this bold and brash

individual. The reality of who they really are, really inside, is coming to the surface so they can see who they are.

It took a situation where the first person asked the question, the second person asked the question, and the third person still did not pause and think, "What would my friends say? What did they say?" Because I'm afraid that these people are going to kill me or harm me. Somehow, my friend has figured it out. There is an answer. Thank you. Thank you. Did you get the pressure that was going on? At times, we miss these details.

Because let's be honest, we're in a society that loves big visions and big prophecies, and we forget the details. But when we forget the details, we forget how things come together. And when we forget how things come together, we forget how we connect to one another. There is a connection now happening between these disciples of Jesus.

In our celebrity-driven society, I get it. We love the big picture. We love our stories in bullet points. We want to get it quick and move on to the next story, and the next, and the next. So, we love talking about Batman, but we don't even talk about Robin. In fact, Robin isn't even in the latest movies based on the comic book. What happened to Batman and Robin? Robin's just gone. Why? We want to be the Lone Ranger, but forgive me if you've got Tonto. Right? We want to be Sherlock Holmes and not Dr. Watson. And we all would rather be James Brown than Bobby Burns. Am I in the wrong house this morning?

There's a lot of hero-seeking going on online. This is who we are. This is just our natural position in this society. Headline celebrity. Headline celebrity doesn't give you the story. Headline celebrity doesn't give you why things are happening. And we're missing a part of the story about this other disciple.

Why are they doing what they are doing? Has this become the B and A times we can think of this unnamed disciple? When we think of these other characters, we think of them as sidekicks. We think of them as somewhat lesser. But can you imagine what happens to the story? If this disciple doesn't do their role? What

happens to the story? Can Jesus even make the prophecy about Peter? If Jesus isn't confident in the consistency of this other disciple?

Does Peter transform himself into the leader he will need to be when Jesus leaves the earth? Can he transform himself? Because remember, Peter is bold, Peter is at times a loudmouth. Can he lead with this type of attitude without a little bit of humility? Without a little bit of understanding of life, and the pressures of these different environments and what they put on us, can he do it.

Because if you can think of the other disciple in the same model, and in the same mode as all these other sidekicks, think of this. Have you ever watched one of these shows and seen what happens to the main character, if the sidekick got mad, and left the main character out to dry their stories would immediately and in a like manner, if this disciple doesn't do what he is supposed to do, the development of Peter in or at least, it's greatly delayed. So, the humility the thinking of letting higher have themselves and he should, Peter never gets to this point. It can never be what God needs, Peter to be.

And so, I say this to some of you that may have been around a little bit a little while, you got some wisdom on your side? How many Peters are you developing both civically and spiritually? Who are your peers? Because, as I say, Peters, both talented, bless all of those things. But your Peter is stuck at the gate of opportunity. And it's locked for them. It needs to be unlocked. And then once they enter the gate, everybody's going to question them why doesn't belong. They know not a soldier. They know. It's not the police. They know he's not one of our slaves. They know he doesn't even talk like us. Peter is nervous. Peter is concerned Peters powerful, but out of his element. And it takes accountability, the skill in the scene of the disciple to bring Peter in.

And the same way for your Peters. Are you offering up your talent, your skill, your access, the people you know, and how you know them? So that your Peters can become all that God has designed them to be? You do on your part? Or are you one of the disciples that would immediately try to change the story and to you? Right? This is your area. This is where you live. So why am I now going to help somebody who doesn't fit? Come in and feel welcomed and warm. Why would I

do that? Because that's your assignment. That's why you do it. It's your assignment. Jesus that pay plate prayed earlier, maybe a couple of chapters ago. God makes them one even as we are one. There's no jealousy. If we're one. There's no hurt, or harm that I will cause you if we are one. I love you as God loves you if we are one. And is because of that. I will put all of my skills to work for you.

As a church at Cornerstone, we have a core value of multiplying leaders. And our goal is to make sure that each and every one as you're called to do certain things that you continue to be able to exist and go in the path that God has for you. In the culture that God has for you in the language that God has for you. We endeavor to be the unknown, the unknown, and disciples just like the pillars that are in this building, and when Peter needed support he was there; he was there. No fanfare, no over focus, just there. And I can imagine at the end when Peter celebrated in Acts, the same disciple, still there, doesn't need to be named. And it's also exciting. Peter has become what he needed to be.

Ralph Waldo Emerson says this about life: "Life isn't about trying to be happy. Life is about trying to be useful. It's about being honorable, and compassionate. And it's to make your life make some difference and know that you have lived and lived well." Booker T. Washington adds on top of that, saying, "Yes, but your happiness is built on helping others. They are the happiest people in the world." So, I, in my heart, reach out to you. Help your Peters become who they were designed to be using your talent and skill and all that it is to open those doors because you have the answers and know how to answer the questions that will attack them in their life. Amen.