

Mark 14:27-31

“I Tell You the Truth...You Will Disown Me”

4th Sunday in Lent

March 31, 2019

Our Redeemer

Rev. Larry Lemke

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Hi, my name is Larry Lemke. I’m married to Marge; we have four kids, who now are older than I would like to admit! We have 7 Grandchildren. We moved to Solon in June of 2017 after retiring from my Call to St. Paul Lutheran in Aurelia, Iowa. I enjoy watching the Hawkeyes and Cyclones. I drive a Ford Flex. Marge and I enjoy fishing.

Even if it’s not intentional, we spend a lot of time talking about ourselves. How well do we really know ourselves? The renowned philosopher Socrates said there is not greater gift than to know yourself. Well, maybe it’s not the “greatest” gift, but there is value in honestly assessing who we are. But how do we do that? One wise man, when he was told to “know yourself,” quipped back, “Who will introduce me?” His point being that other people sometimes know us better than we know ourselves. Sometimes the best way to learn about ourselves is not to look in a mirror, but to open our ears.

I Tell You the Truth...You Will Disown Me

I. Heed His Warning

II. Hear His Promise

I.

Peter would have done well to do just that. He thought he knew himself so well. Picture his chest out and head held high as he walks with his comrades to the Mount of Olives. But he really had no reason to be confident of his circumstances along this path, because his whole world had turned upside down in the last couple of hours.

- It started with this foot-washing ceremony. He wasn’t going to let his Lord wash his feet. That was a slave’s job. But when his Lord insisted, Peter was forced to come to grips with what we call servant leadership. Humility.
- Then the Passover celebration came—that traditional ceremony and meal that Peter had been celebrating ever since he was a kid. It was like clockwork. Herbs, lamb, bread, wine. But then Jesus turned that all upside down by talking about a “new covenant” and how this bread was his body and this wine was his blood.

- Some really big foundations of Peter’s life had been shaken in that upper room.

Yet, he seems to be his old, confident self as he treads down the dark path to Gethsemane. Little did he know the darkness, the spiritual darkness, he would be walking into that night. But he could have and he would have known if he had listened to the One who knew him better than he knew himself.

It all begins with Jesus quoting Scripture. Nothing new in that. Yet, it’s a rather strange text that Jesus picks for his post-Passover devotion. You’d expect something about deliverance or thanksgiving. But listen to the text Jesus picks from the prophet Zechariah, **“I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”**

Is that the message you’d expect to hear on the highest festival of the church year? You’re all going to fall? NO! In fact, Peter was insulted. “Hold it right there, Jesus. **Even if all fall away, I will not.**” I get that. Not that we tie our faith to emotions, but when does your faith feel unshakeable? Christmas or Easter. So I get it that Peter just celebrated Passover and confidently was saying, “Jesus, you don’t know me as well as you think.” And that’s when Jesus busts out the trump card we’ve seen him play this Lenten season, **“I tell you the truth...today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”**

Quite the warning! This is not a spiritual storm watch that Jesus sounds for Peter, where conditions might be just right to brew up something bad. No, this is a blizzard warning. A no travel decree. “Today—tonight—you will disown me not once, not twice, but three times. But it’s like Peter has his fingers in his ears going, “Lalalalala.” “I can’t believe what you’re saying Jesus. **Even if I die with you, I will never disown you.**”

We, of course, know how the story ends. Later that night, around the campfire in Caiaphas’ courtyard Peter swears he doesn’t know Jesus. Not once. Not twice. But three times. **“I don’t know the man!”** And every year we think we hear the story. We think, “Peter, you heard the warning. But you ignored the warning. You fool. You should have listened.”

Could the same be said of us? How often don’t we puff out our chests and confidently say, “Don’t worry.”

- Don’t worry! I’ll be ok, just watching a movie with my girlfriend alone in her parents’ basement. Nothing will happen.
- Don’t worry! I’ll be ok; it’s just one drink.
- Don’t worry! I’m just skipping church for a week or two while on vacation or during the summer. I’ll come back.

- Don't worry! It's just meant to be funny. Nobody will be offended or no reputations will be tarnished.
- Don't worry! It's just a computer screen, not like I'll follow through on anything.
- Don't worry! It's just a friendly wager.
- Don't worry! I know Jesus will forgive me; he always does.
- Don't worry! It's just flirting. Don't worry! We're all Christians. Don't worry!

I wonder how many "don't worries" a week, a month, or a year later turn into a whole bunch of worry. We think we know ourselves so well. We think we're so strong spiritually. We've grown up with Jesus. We'll never fall. We're confirmed. We read our devotions. WE go to Sunday services *and* Lenten services. We go to Sunday school. "Don't worry" is what we tell our parents, our spouses, our teachers, and worst of all, ourselves.

Yet our Savior, the One who knows us, warns, "**If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall**" (I Corinthians 10:12). "**Watch and pray...The spirit is willing, but the body (flesh) is weak**" (Matthew 26:41). Whether it's our Christian pedigree or the way we've seen ourselves resist temptation in the past, it is easy to put our fingers in our ears when God sounds warnings through his Word or through his workers. "Don't waste your breath, I don't need to hear those warnings."

- That's what Peter thought. Let me rephrase that: that's what Peter, the spokesman for Jesus' disciples thought.
- That's what Peter, the one who listened to and walked with Jesus, thought.
- That's what Peter, the one who walked on water with his eyes on Jesus, thought.

And it's that Peter who, because he closed his ears to the warning, found himself ill-prepared for the temptations he faced that night. Don't be like Peter. Don't miss the warnings that Jesus sounds in your life today. Don't miss him say, "**I tell you the truth...you will disown me.**"

II.

But you know what the real tragedy is? Peter didn't just miss the warning. When he babbled on with his self-defense, concentrating on what he was or wasn't going to do, **Peter missed a beautiful promise of what Jesus was going to do.** Did you hear it? Or did you miss it too? Maybe that's telling. It maybe reveals how we close our ears at times to

what is written. For those of you who have heard the Lenten story for years, you could have summarized this section of Scripture for me. Jesus said, "Peter, you're going to deny me." Peter says, "No way." Jesus says, "Oh, yes, I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows you're going to deny me three times."

If that's all we summarize, we would have missed one of the most beautiful, timely promises. After saying the sheep will scatter, but before Peter rambles on and on, Jesus pinpoints this promise, "**But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.**"

Isn't that neat? Jesus says the disciples would scatter. He declares, "I know you're going to sin. But I'm going to win." "**After I have risen, I will go ahead of you.**" Brothers and sisters, this is why it's so important to listen to the One who knows us best.

- If we consistently close our ears to his warnings, like Peter we'll try to win all on our own and we'll end up falling.
- But when the Spirit opens our ears to the truth of his warning, we'll also see the only solution lies in Him. Yes, the Good Shepherd would be struck. But he wouldn't stay down. He would come roaring back to be reunited with his followers. That's what you and I have to look forward to. Jesus has risen and gone ahead of us, and now we can look forward to a reunion with him.

When we die and stand before God in all his holiness and glory, we won't have to introduce ourselves, "Uh...I'm Larry Lemke. I failed to heed your warnings, etc." Rather, Jesus will introduce us, not as some rambling fools who failed to heed his warnings, but as his brothers and sisters, washed clean by his blood and sealed by his resurrection.

- Because of Jesus, we will be those the Father cannot deny.
- Because of Jesus, God will not disown us, but call us his own.
- Because of Jesus, He already does. **Amen.**