



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

85 – Understanding Peter

Announcements:

9/13 @7:30 -

Prayer

9/14 @6:30 -

Grace Group

9/17 @8:30 -

Sunday School

9/17 @6:00 -

FAMILY NIGHT

Large Group

ICE BREAKER: Can you think of a time where you lied to not get in trouble? What happened?

READ: Matthew 26:69-75

On Sunday, we largely looked at Peter's three denials as a unit, proving and confirming both Jesus' prophecy, but more importantly, Peter's desperate need for a savior. Today we are going to dive into each denial to see what How Matthew has included different thoughts in each denial to paint one picture.. The way that Matthew unfolds the story it builds and grows giving us a beautifully crafted narrative. There are three ways that we can see this story taking shape, and each one is of value to us and our souls.

The first thing that I would like to point out is that Peter's heart can be seen as an extension of where he physically was. In particular what we should note is that as his denials pile up he moves further and further away from Jesus. As one commentator notes, "his physical location mirrors his heart." At the beginning of this passage, Peter is in a better spot than any of the other disciples. In verse 56 we read that "all the disciples fled and left", but at least Peter is willing to "follow at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest" (verse 58). But then, "sitting outside in the courtyard" (verse 69) he first denies knowing Christ. This must ruffle him, because he moves farther away from his Lord in verse 71 he "went out to the entrance" only to deny him a second time. This whole passage culminates, after the third denial and his realization with Matthew telling us that he was not in the courtyard, not in the entrance, but that he "went out" (verse 75).

DISCUSS: In what ways might we be like Peter here? How might our "location" mirror what is in our hearts?

The second thing that we can note is that in each denial there is greater and greater pressure for Peter to deny Jesus. At the first denial it is just Peter with some servant girl. That's all we really know about here, but she is alone. She confronts Peter and he refuses to even admit to being "with Jesus the Galilean". But as he moves further away (see above) the pressure on him grows. In the second denial it is not just a servant girl talking to Peter, but a servant girl talking about Peter to "the bystanders". From a purely earthly point of view we can understand why Peter would need to shut this talk down, we know what could happen if this girl can sway the people. But then, in the final denial it is the crowd that brings the complaint against him. Here it is telling that it is not a question, but they actually have evidence that ties Peter to Jesus: his accent! Often this is how we struggle. It is a growing wave of pressure to sin and fall.

DISCUSS: In what ways can we see this growing pressure to turn away? What is the solution?

The final thing to note is that in each denial there is an increase in self incrimination. In each denial we have already noted that his heart grows further and further from Christa as the pressure mounts, but the truly telling part of this whole narrative comes from looking at the level of Peter's denial in each one. He starts by playing dumb. A little girl asks him: weren't you with Jesus and his response is "I don't know what you mean". Already this is suspicious. We had the whole triumphal entry, we had the great crowds that would follow Jesus and here Peter is sitting outside of the place where Jesus is being brought before the high council, everyone would understand exactly what she meant. But then, in the second denial he "denied it with an oath." In the face of Jesus teaching to "let your yes be yes and your no be know" Peter doubles down with his lie. From "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" to "I promise you, I do not know the man." But then finally we read that it is not just an oath. "Then he began to invoke a curse on himself (!) and swear, 'I do not know the man.'" There are a ton of lessons that we could learn here, but the most important, I think, is this: sin begets more sin. It did in Peters life, and it often does in ours.

DISCUSS: In what ways have you seen it be true that sin begets more sin? How can knowing this help us? How can the cycle be broken?