

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 21st March 2010
‘A Warning from Jesus: He Predicts Peter’s Denial’
John ch.13:30-38

Introduction

This weekend we have been looking at the life of Peter under the theme:

‘The ups and downs of following Jesus’

Some of us have been away at our Church Weekend in Bushmills Youth Hostel, while the rest of you have been back here in Armagh. So we thought that tonight we would tie the whole theme together with this concluding message based on the final part of John ch.13, where Jesus predicts Peter’s denial.

On Friday night we thought about **Working for Jesus**. This was based on Jesus’ call to Peter to *‘Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.’* But we saw that as well as being called to work *for* Jesus, we are first of all called to spend time *with* Jesus (Mark 3:14). Our work must flow out of our time spent with the Lord, otherwise we are just functioning in our own energy.

Then **on Saturday morning** Andrew talked about **Walking with Jesus**, as he took us to that passage where Peter tries to get out of the boat to walk on water with Jesus. As long as he kept his eyes on the Lord he was able to do it, but as soon as he looked around at the winds and the waves, the storm he was in, he took his eyes off Jesus and literally began to sink.

This morning those of you who were here in the church heard Andrew speak about **Watching with Jesus** from Mark ch.14 in the Garden of Gethsemane. And those of you who were up in Bushmills heard me speak on that same passage. We saw the depths of sorrow and suffering that Jesus went through in that garden for us, as he anticipated his death on the cross which lay ahead of him. We saw how he invited Peter, together with James and John, to watch and pray with him, in his hour of trial, lest they fall into temptation. But three times he came back from his anguish in prayer, to find them not praying, but sleeping! We saw that we too need to be alert in the spiritual battle that we find ourselves in today. We need to *‘pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests,’* according to Ephesians ch.6. Pray for yourselves as you pass through the ups and downs of discipleship in your everyday lives, but pray also for God’s servants as we seek to proclaim God’s Word against the back-drop of the spiritual battle that we all find ourselves in.

And so tonight, we want to bring this mini-series on the Life of Peter to a conclusion by tying it in with our series in John’s Gospel that we have been going through on Sunday nights for some time now. Tonight we come to John ch.13:30-38 where Jesus predicts the fact that Peter is going to deny him before that day was out. Here we have **a Warning from Jesus:**

We saw last Sunday night in this passage, that Jesus predicted first of all the fact that Judas was going to betray him in vs.18-30.

Now we see him going on to predict the fact that Peter was going to deny him in vs.31-38. Jesus basically says three things in this passage:

1. ‘I am about to leave you’ (vs.31-33)

The whole tone at the Last Supper changes as Judas leaves the room (v.31). There must have been great tension in that room that night as Jesus began to reveal the fact that he knew one of the Twelve, his closest disciples, was going to turn traitor, betray him with a kiss, and hand him over to his enemies to be put to death by crucifixion. The tension would have grown as each of them looked around the table, mouthing the words, *‘Is it I, Lord?’*

And then when Jesus dipped the piece of bread in the dish on the table, and handed it to Judas, maybe for some the penny dropped, and as Judas got up from his place and left to go out into the darkness, maybe only then did some of the tension lift.

Now Jesus is able to open his heart to his beloved 11 disciples.

These are now really “His own” as we saw back in v.1.

These men can be trusted, so Jesus begins to open his heart to them, to tell them great secrets. In fact throughout the next four chapters of John’s Gospel (chapters 14-17) that’s exactly what Jesus is going to do: Reveal much more to these eleven disciples than he had ever revealed before. They wouldn’t take it all in now, but he would tell them of the Holy Spirit that he was going to give to them, and part of the Holy Spirit’s job would be to remind these Apostles of all that Jesus had told them, after he had gone back to His Father.

What had just happened in v.30 - Judas leaving to go out into the night to betray Jesus - was indeed a tragedy: but it was going to lead to glory!

That’s what Jesus tells them, as soon as he is gone in v.31-32.

*‘Now is the Son of Man **glorified** and God is **glorified** in him.
If God is **glorified** in him, God will **glorify** the Son in himself,
and will **glorify** him at once.’*

There we have 5 mentions of the word glorify in just 2 verses!

This is exactly what Jesus had said back in John 12:23,27-28.

The moment for him to be glorified, not just humiliated, was fast approaching. Very soon he would be on the cross to be put to death, but soon afterwards he would rise again.

The crucifixion and resurrection were glorification for the Son, and his obedience brought glory to the Father.

It was going to happen immediately, at once - the very next day.

Now in v.33, Jesus tells them again that He is about to leave them. He says: *“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.”*

In other words, don't try to follow me into death for now. I'm leaving you for a while. The Second thing Jesus says in this passage is:

2. 'I want you to love one another' (vs.34-35)

In the meantime, while I'm away, I want you to support each other - out of love for one another, and because I have demonstrated my love for you:

'A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

There are 3 things here I want you to notice:

1. A Command - *“Love one another”.*

2. An Example - *“As I have loved you”.*

3. A Witness - *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples.”
How? 'If you love one another!'*

If you don't; they won't. There just won't be enough evidence to prove that you are my disciples, my followers, otherwise.

This really is where the rubber hits the road, isn't it?

We have been talking all weekend about **'The ups and downs of following Jesus.'** But there are plenty of ups and downs in our church life, aren't there? Well, here's the challenge, no matter what you feel people have done for you or against you, even from within the church, you and I are called to love one another! It's not an option – it's a command from the Lord Jesus.

How are we to love one another? 'As [Jesus] has loved us.'

How has Jesus loved us? By laying down his life as a sacrifice for us. So that's how we are to love one another. Not because we deserve it, because we probably don't, but because it has been commanded of us by Jesus, and this kind of unconditional love has been demonstrated to us by Jesus also.

And what's the thinking behind this command? Why should we love one another this way in the Church of Jesus Christ? Simply as an authentic witness to Jesus: *'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'* If we're always fighting and bickering with each other, and being unforgiving towards each other, then we have no witness worth talking about! We are in fact denying the Gospel we proclaim.

Let me say that again: We are denying the Gospel we proclaim!

Let that penny drop for a moment. Let what I have just said sink in.

And then when it has sunk in, when we've all got the message of how we can deny the Gospel today, then read on into vs.36-38, because the third thing that Jesus says in this passage was to Peter:

3. 'Peter, You are about to disown me!' (vs.36-38)

Peter comes to the fore once again, in the Upper Room.

Jesus predicts the fact that Peter is going to disown him, not once but 3 times. And how was Peter going to disown him: By denying that he even **knew** the Lord, never mind **loved** the Lord as a devoted follower of Jesus.

He was about to deny the very essence of the Gospel: **knowing Jesus**.

We are very hard on him for doing so, sometimes as modern day disciples.

But if we don't love one another as Jesus has loved us, then we are guilty of the exact same thing – denying the very Gospel we seek to proclaim.

There is no evidence we are truly his disciples, if we don't love one another.

Take a look at vs.36-38. As usual, Peter has to get the last word in.

(v.36) *“Lord where are you going?”*

Jesus replied: *'Where I am going you cannot follow now'* (Crucifixion, Heaven) ... *'But you will follow later.'* (Peter would go through Martyrdom - to Heaven.)

(v.37) Peter thinks he's got what it takes right there and then –

“Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

But it's then that Jesus reveals in v.38 that Peter is about to disown him:

'Will you really lay down your life for me (Peter)?'

'I tell you the truth, before the cock crows,' (i.e. before dawn, before daylight)

'...you will disown me three times.' He would deny any knowledge of Jesus, not once, but 3 times over – that very night!

We're all just like Peter. We all think we're great Christians. We all think we're strong disciples. But in the ups and downs of following Jesus, if we're prepared to be honest for a moment, we all let the Lord down again and again. The only difference between Peter and us is that we're better at covering it up. We're good at putting on a respectable facade; we wear the masks well!

It's time to drop the masks. It's time to be real as followers of Jesus Christ.

It's time to admit that we're not as good as we think we are.

It's time to remember that Salvation is by grace, not by our good works.

And even discipleship, going on with Jesus, is by grace, not works as well.

We need God's forgiveness, even as believers, day in and day out.

We need to be humble enough to admit that, and to receive his grace and his forgiveness every day that we live.

4. Peter did go on to deny Jesus

We treat Judas' betrayal of Jesus, as serious, and so it was. But the truth of the matter is that Jesus treats denial of him just as seriously (Luke 9:23-26). Are you ashamed to be known as a disciple of Jesus? There was no way back for Judas, but there was for Peter. Peter did go on to deny his Lord in **John ch.18:15-18; 25-27**. (Read it).

5. But later Jesus restored Peter to himself

Jesus went on to restore his crest-fallen disciple in **John 21:15-22**. Three times Jesus asked Peter: *'Do you love me?'* (vs.15, 16, 17). Three times Jesus responded by giving Peter new work to do: *'Feed my lambs'* (v.15) *'Take care of my sheep'* (v.16) *'Feed my sheep'* (v.17).

We began our studies in the Life of Peter on Friday night with these words: *'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'* In Luke ch.5 in the middle of that great catch of fish, Peter realised he was a sinful man and he said to Jesus, *'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.'*

But here in John ch.21 Peter still know he's a sinful man. He has let his Lord down, denying him with oaths and curses – Peter had totally lost it! Big time! And yet here we have Jesus graciously meeting with him afresh, and graciously asking him three times over – once for every time he had denied him – Do you love me? And then he responds by giving Peter new, and better, and even greater work for him to do in Christian Service.

Conclusion:

Let me ask you as I close tonight:

1. Do you realise you are a sinful man or woman?
2. Do you realise that Jesus should depart from you, for you are unworthy and totally undeserving of even the least of his mercies?
3. But do you also realise that Jesus won't depart from you, just because you are a sinner and you let him down again and again?
4. Do you realise that instead of departing from you, Jesus wants to draw near to you, and just as he did with Peter, he wants to restore you to a closer walk with Him?

Jesus says: Do you love me? Really love me? More than anything else?

Well if your answer is, *'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'*

Then He is willing to take you, with all your faults, and all your failings, and restore you to Himself, and make you useful in His Service all over again.

What will it be for you tonight? Is this the night that you'll come back to the Lord?

Finish with Andrew's powerful quotation from George Verwer... (Plan A etc).