

# **LUKE**

Part 79: "The Faithfulness of Our God"

Luke 22:31-62

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Sunday, March 22, 2020 (The Fourth Sunday of Lent)

## **Scripture Reading**

*"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.' Jesus said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.' And he said to them, 'When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?' They said, 'Nothing.' He said to them, 'But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment.' And they said, 'Look, Lord, here are two swords.' And he said to them, 'It is enough.' And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.' And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.' While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.' Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, 'This man also was with him.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.' And a little later someone else saw him and said, 'You*

*also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' And 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, how he had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly' (Luke 22:31–62, ESV).*

## **Prayer**

*Our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Word. Your word is an abiding rock of truth for us in a time of great fear and uncertainty. We are limited in our capacity together, but your Holy Spirit is unlimited in his power to comfort us, to convict us, and bring about change in our lives. So, we pray he would do that now as we study your word together. We pray this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

## **Introduction**

For quite a while now, our church family has slowly been walking through the gospel according to Luke. And now, we are in Luke, chapter 22. Jesus is in the city of Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. He has just shared his last Passover meal with his disciples. And although the disciples do not yet realize it, a course of events has been set in motion that will result in their Rabbi and master dying on a Roman cross.

For the last several years, the disciples have been following Jesus. They have heard Jesus's life-changing teaching. They have witnessed his power and miracles. Their whole lives have been centered on serving him, learning from him, and walking with him. They have even left their jobs and homes for the sake of Jesus.

They are convinced that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah – God's anointed deliverer who will bring about freedom and the kingdom of God.

But then, suddenly, in one moment, their hopes are crushed. Their savior is captured. Their world falls apart. Will they be faithful? Or will they fail?

In light of this, we too might ask, what do we do when things fall apart?

And in today's world, that is not a hypothetical or theoretical question. The stocks are falling. Businesses are in danger of closing. A pandemic is spreading.

As disciples of Jesus, how might we be tempted to respond to these events? How are we *called* to respond? It is with those questions in mind that I would like to take a deeper look at the passage before us today.

## **Exposition**

### **1.) The Failure of Peter**

The Apostle Peter frames this passage. At the beginning of this text, we see the bravado of Peter. At the end, we see his brokenness.

Jesus begins by crying out to him by his given name, the name he had before Jesus gave him the name Peter: ***“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat”*** (Luke 22:31, ESV). The act of sifting wheat is an image of violence. Peter will be shaken and broken. Circumstances and events will soon take place that will be so severe that the disciples will be tempted to separate and fall apart.<sup>1</sup>

This is true, not just of Peter, but of all of Jesus’ disciples. The original New Testament Greek shows us that Jesus’ words of warning are not just for Peter.<sup>2</sup> They are for all of the twelve disciples, and they are also for us today.

When true suffering comes, what are we instinctively drawn to put our trust in? Here in Luke 22, the disciples in general, and Peter in particular, show us how even followers of Jesus can place our hope in things that are not Christ. There are three things in this text that Peter and the disciples place their trust in outside of Christ. They put their trust in their own strength, their stuff, and their self-salvation efforts.

The first thing that Peter places his trust in is his own strength. After Jesus warns him of the coming trial, look at how Peter responds: ***“Peter said to him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death’*** (Luke 22:33, ESV).

Peter is confident in his own will-power, his determination, his resolve, and his self-discipline. And admittedly, Peter has some reason to be confident. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, Peter was the only one who stepped out of the boat and walked out on the water to meet him. When Jesus asked his disciples who they thought Jesus was, it was Peter who said, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!”***

But Peter’s will-power will fail. Verse 34: ***“Jesus said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me’*** (Luke 22:34, ESV). Jesus is saying, “Peter, I know you think you are strong. But in less than twenty-four hours, your strength will fail.”

Later in the same conversation, Jesus warns his disciples that a massive change is coming. There was once a time he sent them out to do ministry. He told them not to bring an extra change of clothes or money or a backpack or swords. They were used to this unique time of supernatural, bountiful provision by God. But things are about to change. And they need to be prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 217.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus calls out to Simon Peter individually, but the “you” (ὁμοῦς) of verse one is plural.

The disciples respond to this warning by saying, “Hey Jesus, look at our swords!” In other words, they are not concerned about a potential change in circumstances because their stuff brings them comfort.

In the ancient world, it was easy for a nation to put their strength in their military might. But God wanted his people to put their strength, not in their stuff, but in him. This is why King David says in Psalm 20: **“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God”** (Psalm 20:7, ESV). Today we might say, “Some trust in mountains of toilet paper and gallons of hand-sanitizer, but we will trust in the name of Jesus.”

Circumstances can change. Our stuff can fail us or disappear. But the hope we have in Christ and his cross and resurrection is eternal and unchanging!

Lastly, we see in Peter and the disciples a desire to trust in their own self-salvation efforts. As Jesus is about to be captured, look at how the disciples respond: **“And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, ‘Lord, shall we strike with the sword?’ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear”** (Luke 22:49–50, ESV).

From John’s gospel account, we actually know the name of the disciple who struck the high priest’s servant with a sword. Any guesses? It was Peter (Jn 18:10). It was Peter who felt like he could control the outcome of this situation through his actions. But this situation was outside of Peter’s control.

The point in all of this is that everything the disciples put their hope in – outside of Jesus – fails them: their strength, their stuff, and even their attempts to save themselves.

Then their world falls apart. Trial comes. And this trial will burn away all hopes that are not eternal.

Whatever else you might say about the COVID-19/Coronavirus situation, it is certainly a trial. It is a trial that has shaken us as a world, a nation, a city, and a church.

And in this situation, many of our hopes outside of Jesus have been confronted, such as our sense of independence, our sense of individualism, and our sense of confidence in our ability to control our world and circumstances.

I don’t think it is entirely fair to say of the disciples that they had no trust in Jesus. But I do think they did have misconceptions about Jesus that needed to be broken.

They are right to believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the Living God. They are right to believe that Jesus is bringing the kingdom of God. But even now in Luke 22, it seems like they are still expecting Jesus to be political Messiah who will bring God’s kingdom in a political or military way. But Jesus is not bringing a political kingdom; he

will not conquer by the power of the sword. His kingdom is not like the kingdom of this world.

I wonder, if we truly seek the Lord in this season, how God might lead us into a greater knowledge of who he is. I pray this would be a time that we lay down some of the things we might be tempted to place our hope in outside of Jesus and cling ever more to the eternal hope of the gospel.

After Jesus is arrested, Peter flees from the garden. But he follows the soldiers at a distance to see how this will all play out. He enters into the courtyard of the high priest, just outside the building where Jesus is being held. And it is here that Peter is recognized by multiple people as a follower of Jesus.

They are saying to Peter and one another, “Hey, aren’t you one of the followers of the guy we just arrested? I’m pretty sure we saw you in the temple with him.” Peter is now afraid. He is concerned for his own safety and well-being. And not once, not twice, but three times Peter publicly denies that he ever knew Jesus.

Your temptation in our current trial may not be to verbally renounce Jesus. But there are other ways we can effectively renounce Jesus.

If we hoard our resources in a time when our neighbors are suffering, are we not renouncing the sufficiency we have received in Christ? When we panic in fear, are we not renouncing the peace we have received in Christ? When we judge one another and hate one another, are we not renouncing the love and grace we have received in Christ?

After Peter denies Jesus the third time, he looks into the house of the priest and he makes eye contact with Jesus. Realizing his betrayal, Peter runs away from the courtyard and weeps bitterly. But by the grace of God, Peter’s sorrow is indeed a godly sorrow that leads him to repent from his sin and turn back to Jesus.

So too, for the ways we have missed the mark, let us not fall into the downward spiral of self-condemnation and shame. Let us feel godly sorrow and repent. As the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians, **“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, ESV).**

My charge for us, in this season, is to resist the urge to respond to our trials with fight or flight.

We are called to show the world that we are indeed and unashamedly disciples of Jesus. And the world will know that we are Jesus’ disciples by our love for one another (Jn 13:35).

Love looks like embodying the spiritual fruit of peace in a world of panic. Love looks like sharing what we have with those who lack. Love looks like buying local from our neighbors and tipping generously. Love looks like staying home and submitting to our local leaders as a primary way to fight this disease that assails us.

## 2.) The Faithfulness of Jesus

If the failure of Peter frames this passage, but the faithfulness of Jesus forms the centerpiece.

Before Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, he knows what lies ahead of him. He sees the furnace of wrath into which he will soon be cast. And yet he still goes. He is willing to suffering for the glory of God and the good of his people.

As Jesus prepares to begin his suffering, he quotes a fascinating Old Testament passage. Look at Luke 22:37, *“For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment”* (Luke 22:37, ESV).

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 53. It is known as the song of the “Suffering Servant.” It about one who is high and lifted up, but who will be despised and rejected by men. It is about one who is pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. It is about one who is a sacrificial lamb, who goes silently to slaughter. It is about one who is righteous and true, but is counted as a transgressor, so that he may be a substitute who bears the penalty of our sin and atones for us.

Jesus is saying, “Read Isaiah 53, and know that this is me!”

He then goes to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Verse 41 says, *“And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done’”* (Luke 22:41–42, ESV).

In the language of the Old Testament, God’s “cup” is a symbol of his wrath (see Isa 51:22; Ezek 23:32-34). God has a righteous anger against the sin and evil that has corrupted his good creation and wounded his people. But how can God bring an end to evil and sin without also bringing an end to all of us for our complicity with evil and sin?

The answer is only Jesus. Only Jesus can endure the penalty for sin and overcome the power of death.

But Jesus knows that this will cost him great personal suffering. He does not respond to his hardship with detachment or escapism. He relinquishes himself to the will of the Father. He chooses to love his people, even if it means going through the horror of the cross.

Jesus is under such immense spiritual agony that he sweats blood.

Judas, the temple priests, and guards come to arrest Jesus. Now that Jesus is away from a crowd, they have a free shot. Judas betrays Jesus, by identifying him with a kiss on the cheek, which was and still is a normal greeting in places like the Middle East.

Jesus doesn't use his power to resist. The mouth that stopped the storm on the sea of Galilee does not speak. The hands that cast out disease does not raise in self-defense.

Jesus does not use his power to free himself. Instead, he uses that power to heal one of his enemies. After Peter strikes the servant of the High Priest with a sword, Jesus says, "No more of this!" And he touches the servant's ear and heals him.

Jesus had all the power he needed to protect his own comfort. But instead, he willingly submits to the will of his Heavenly Father.

It has been noted that this extraordinary act of submission and obedience happened not just anywhere, but in a garden. It is here in a garden that Christ's blood is first shed for our redemption.

Now, in isolation, that might be just a random detail of the story. But in the scope of the story of the Bible, we see the brilliance of the plan of God. Because it was in another garden that the story of man began. And it was in that first garden – the garden of Eden – that the first man was called to submit to the will of God. But instead of submitting to God, the first man chose his own desire over the will of God. And it is from that moment that sin and death entered into the world.

But here in Luke 22, Jesus passes the test. He submits to the will of God. And the sacrifice that will accomplish our redemption begins. As the Apostle Paul says in Romans, *"For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous"* (Romans 5:19, ESV).

## **Conclusion**

As great as the power of human sin is, Jesus' power is greater. Peter's failure is great. But Jesus' faithfulness is greater.

Although Peter denies Jesus and, for a time, falls away, he will be restored (see Jn 21). In fact, he will become a key leader in the early church. He will preach the gospel and lead with great boldness. He will go to prison because of his commitment to Jesus. He will even die because of his commitment to Jesus.

And the reason Peter will be restored and endure is not because of his own strength, but because of the greater strength of Jesus!

Satan demands Peter's soul. But Jesus intercedes for Peter and says, "No!"

In the midst of our current trial and tribulation, I want you to know that Jesus is interceding for you!

Jesus died, rose again, ascended to heaven, and is now at the right hand of the Father. And until he comes again, he is right now – at this very moment – interceding on our behalf.

Our high priest still intercedes for us today! I cannot think of a more comforting thought!

In our life, we will stumble and fall. But let us commit together to stumble toward Jesus and not away from him. Let us stumble toward grace, toward love, and toward faithfulness.

Our sins are many, but his mercy is more.

So, Redeemer Christian Church, in this plague and time of fear, may we know the faithfulness of our God. May we believe in the faithfulness of our God. May we trust in and find our rest in the faithfulness of our God.

AMEN.

### **Gospel Community Discussion Starters**

- 1. Read Luke 22:31-62. Summarize this passage in your own words.*
- 2. This passage begins with Simon Peter's bravado, but it ends in his brokenness. In seasons of trial, how might we be tempted to trust in our own strength, our stuff, our capacity to save ourselves? How might we cultivate in our hearts a greater sense of humility and dependency upon God?*
- 3. Luke 22:37 is the one place in the gospel where Isaiah 53 is connected with Jesus. Read Isaiah 53 and discuss how this passage is fulfilled in Jesus.*
- 4. In Luke 22, Jesus submits to the will of his Father in a garden. Compare and contrast how this moment relates to Adam rebelling against the will of God in a garden (see Romans 5:12-21).*
- 5. How might we apply this passage to our circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic?*



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