

## Sermon- Confessions of a Faith in Progress

Scripture: John 13:31-38

Sunday, June 30, 2019

Last time we were in the Gospel of John we looked at Jesus' conversation with Judas, the disciple whose betrayal played a pivotal role in Jesus being placed in the hands of the Romans. In that interaction we looked at the role that God, Satan and the individual in carrying out an act of evil. Remember Satan carries out the act of evil, using a human he has hijacked, while God defines both the limits of what Satan can do and makes the outcome serve God's end goal. Today we are going to look at Jesus predicting another betrayal, this time at the hands of Peter. Peter's betrayal is different from Judas' because what Judas did can never be done again by any human being. But Peter betrayal is something every disciple would have committed at some point in their life journey. So we need to pay careful attention lest we fall as well.

But to get to the essence of lessons from Peter's act we have to start with a careful reading of our passage. Our passage starts with Jesus talking to the 11 disciples at the last supper, after Judas had left the room. In this sermon Jesus talks about how it was time for God to be glorified by the Son of Man and that in turn the Son of Man would be glorified by God. And then he adds, "in a short while you will not be able to see me. And you cannot follow me where I am going now".

This is a powerful moment as you can imagine. Because Jesus' words sound so glorious and yet so alien at the same time right? The word "glorify" itself is so grand that it we know that only a tiny bit of its full meaning can be held inside the picture frame of our imaginations. Such talk is too wonderful for the human mind. And yet it awakens the desire in any disciple to be close to the action that Jesus is talking about. And that is why Peter wants to follow Jesus into all this amazing stuff right now. Unfortunately for Peter,

Jesus tells him, sorry buddy, not now, later. You will follow me into what I am about to do eventually, but not right now.

Peter seems kind of frustrated about not being able to follow Jesus right now and so he asks Jesus, “Lord, first of all, where are you going? And secondly Lord, why can’t I go with you now?”.

Now to be fair to Peter, Peter is also telling Jesus that he is willing to die for him. So if that is true then Peter is wondering what would be the reason that he cannot follow now. This is a fair question if Peter asked it this way, right? Now, did Peter truly believe he was ready to die for Jesus? I believe he was. But if you turn the tables and asked Jesus, did he believe that Peter was ready to die for him? The answer clearly is no. Now we can be hard on Peter and say, Peter was all bluster and what he declared with his mouth was far from what he was willing to actually do. Now I believe this is not being fair to Peter. Because if we examine Peter’s journey from his call at the end of John chapter one to his declaration of being willing to die for Jesus in John chapter 13 something amazing has already taken place and we need to examine this journey more closely. So let’s look at it.

In John chapter 1 Peter was introduced to Jesus. There he followed because he thought Jesus was the Messiah sure. But remember he had his own definition of what the Messiah would look like. Six chapters later, Jesus took people on a roller coaster ride feeding the 12,000, gaining thousands of followers, he then gave them a super hard sermon telling them unless they ate his body and drank his blood they would not be able to get into the kingdom of God. In that process he lost thousands of followers and many disciples. But at that time in 6:68 when Jesus asks his disciples if they are going to leave him as well, Peter is the one who declares, and I am paraphrasing here “I don’t get everything you said but Lord what is the alternative? You are the only one who has the words of eternal life”. Then earlier in this chapter when he resisted Jesus washing his

feet and Jesus responds by telling him, in that case you cannot have any part in his ministry. At that point Peter flips and wants Jesus to wash his whole body. In other words he was not going to let anything come in the way of him being a part of Jesus' ministry. So through the 13 chapters of John you see Peter start by agreeing to follow Jesus and giving Jesus the benefit of the doubt when he could not understand what Jesus was saying and then agreeing whole heartedly to Jesus washing his feet because he really did not want to miss out on serving in Jesus' ministry and finally coming to the point in our text today of Peter being willing to follow Jesus everywhere even if it meant dying for him.

You see it is easy to dismiss Peter as someone who at least in our passage here is willing to say more than he is willing to do. But here is the deal folks. In our passage today even though Peter is in the presence of Jesus he does not have the benefit of the Holy Spirit in him. So it is true that very soon, at the slightest provocation he is about to deny he even knew Jesus. But one day when the Holy Spirit comes on him he will go a lot further than you or I will ever go in following Jesus.

But when you look at everything that Peter was willing to do for Jesus even before he had the Holy Spirit fully in him it is truly remarkable. In John 6:44 we have this amazing verse in which Jesus declares "no one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me". So understand this. Before Peter received the Holy Spirit, the Father has been working in him to draw him to Jesus. So what is happening inside Peter during this pre-born again phase? Well, during his pre born again phase, the Father is drawing Peter to Jesus. What does that mean? To understand that I am going to jump ahead and pick up a fascinating verse from the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John and verses 16 and 17, *"<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,<sup>[e]</sup> who will never leave you.<sup>17</sup> He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.<sup>[f]</sup>"* You see in this verses Jesus is explaining a fascinating

thing about how the Holy Spirit operates. You see once a person is born again, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of them permanently. But before they are born again, the Holy Spirit comes alongside the person to be with them and guide them from the outside. At this point the Holy Spirit is working **with** the person to draw them towards Jesus. But because the Holy Spirit at this time is operating on the outside of the individual, they still have to co-operate with the work of the Holy Spirit to draw closer to Jesus. This is where the individual **will** comes into play. So before the individual is born again the Holy Spirit is like a guest in your home. During this time you have the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the Holy Spirit and get some input from the outside. What I have described is the relationship between a seeker and the Holy Spirit before they are born again. Once they are born again, the Holy Spirit comes on the inside taking ownership of the person. Now there is a third category of people. The kind who the Bible describes as being in the world. They neither have the Holy Spirit in them nor is the Holy Spirit influencing them. These people are not looking for the Spirit because they are not seeking for God. And if the Holy Spirit were to be anywhere near them they would not be able to recognize the Spirit as being from God. But for those who are seeking and the Holy Spirit has come in like a guest to their home, they now recognize the spirit of God and are familiar with Him because the Spirit is living with them before the Spirit asks to come in permanently and take charge. That is what Jesus means when he tells his disciples, you know the Holy Spirit because he is now living with you and later He will be in you.

So this is where Peter is. He has the Holy Spirit dwelling with Him. And because of the external guidance of the Holy Spirit, Peter has come a long way in following Jesus even to the point of declaring his willingness to die for Jesus.

But Jesus knows that the Spirit is not yet dwelling **inside** Peter at this point. And it is the Holy Spirit that gives you the power to do whatever God calls you to do. In Zechariah 4:6 the angel tells Zerubbabel *“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor*

*by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts.”* This is when God was telling Zerubbabel how he would flatten the mountains of opposition against what God wanted him to accomplish. So Jesus knows that the Spirit of God is not yet dwelling inside of Peter and because of that Peter will not be able to follow Jesus at this time but later after Pentecost when Peter will have both the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus even to the cross.

But when you look at this exchange between Jesus and Peter at this point, what strikes you is not what Peter cannot do yet. I want you to see what he does do and say even with the Holy Spirit only guiding him from the outside. Yes, no one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws them to Jesus by Peter is certainly being drawn to Jesus powerfully by the Father’s Spirit. This is where you see Peter’s own will cooperating with the will of the Spirit of God. And when Peter cooperates with the Holy Spirit he even knows supernaturally that when Jesus says he is going somewhere, Peter knows that death has something to do with it because he offers to Jesus that he was willing to die. Jesus did not say anything about dying. Peter gets the hint of this from the Holy Spirit working with him.

So, three distinct categories, the Holy Spirit operating in us, the Holy Spirit operating with us and of course the third category, the Holy Spirit operating so outside of us that we are not able to recognize this Spirit at all. So if these are the three categories of relationship between the Holy Spirit and us, my question is, in which category do you think you are in today? Within the category of people who are born again, there are some distinctions as well and I will go into those categories in a future sermon. But as you meditate on today’s passage and the pre-born again Peter making a declaration to Jesus that he is willing to die for him, I personally find this deeply convicting. Peter in his pre-born again stage is further along in following Jesus than most people I know including myself who are post born again. How is Peter so good at following Jesus? Well it is simple. There is a prayer that Jesus prayed “not my will but yours be done”. This is a

prayer of surrendering to the will of God. And there are many levels to this surrender. Jesus had the 100% surrender. None of us are going to come close to a 100% for sure. But your task and my task is to listen for God's voice and then surrender to His will. And if you find you are not able to do God's will surrender to God's request to come in and take ownership of your life. That is called being born again. At that point you will have all the power you need. Once you have access to kingdom power, you have to start using it. It's like the elephants trunk. You see the elephant can carry a whole tree with its truck. But an elephant does not have to carry anything with its truck. It can easily swing it around lazily and not do anything with it. It is an unexercised trunk. And anything that is not exercised will loose its power. The difference between Peter and us is that Peter used the power given to him. We on the other hand have not really tapped into the power we have. That is why we don't see miracles in our life. Because we are so unaccustomed to using the Holy Spirit power that we don't know how to tap into it.

My hope and prayer for our church and those listening to this sermon online is that all of us will become more familiar to discerning God's will and then exercising our Holy Spirit given power to do amazing things just like the ones Jesus' disciples did because the word of God says that we have the same spirit and power in us as was in them. And if Peter can do it then we can do it too! Let us pray.