

Rooster and Steeple

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon explores Peter's denial of Jesus and the call to repentance, emphasizing God's grace and forgiveness for our failures.

Duration: 22:11

Scripture: John 18:15

Topics: "Christian Life", "Denial", "Repentance"

Description

Mariano Di Gangi delivers a poignant sermon titled 'Rooster and Steeple,' reflecting on Peter's denial of Jesus during His trial. He emphasizes the contrast between Jesus' dignity in the face of humiliation and Peter's fear-driven betrayal, highlighting the significance of the rooster's crow as a reminder of repentance and grace. Di Gangi urges the congregation to examine their own lives for moments of denial and to seek genuine repentance, assuring them of God's mercy and forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. The sermon serves as a call to align one's faith with actions, reminding believers that true discipleship requires integrity and courage.

Transcript

Reading from the Gospel according to John, the 18th chapter, beginning to read at verse 19, or rather beginning at verse 15. John, the 18th chapter, at the 15th verse. Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus.

Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. But Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there, and brought Peter in.

You're not one of this man's disciples, are you? The girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, I'm not. It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm.

Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. I have spoken openly to the world, Jesus replied.

I always taught in synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me.

Surely they know what I said. When Jesus had said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. Is this the way you answer the high priest, he demanded? If I said something wrong, Jesus replied, testify as to what is wrong, but if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me? Then Annas sent him still bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.

As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, you're not one of his disciples, are you? He denied it, saying, I'm not. One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, didn't I see you with him in the olive grove? Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, a rooster began to crow.

I find this to be a very moving passage of scripture. Part of it is expected, the rest of it totally and shockingly unexpected. This is a passage of scripture in which we see Jesus degraded by his foes.

He is opposed, he is oppressed, he is humiliated, he becomes the victim of cruelty, he is treated with utter contempt. The prisoner stands before one of his several judges in the farce that they considered a trial. The prisoner stands before a man named Annas, a man who made a racket out of religion, a man who is so unscrupulous that even the pagan Romans had to depose him from the high priesthood.

But he continued to run the whole puppet show, pulling the strings from behind, having five of his sons in rapid succession named to the position of high priest, and yet another, his son-in-law, serving in that same capacity, and all of them doing what he wanted them to do. They were surrogates for him, a man known for his unbridled ambition, a man who became wealthy by exploiting the religious sensibilities of the people. He, unscrupulous and bloodthirsty, is the judge of gentle Jesus, and he is asked a question.

Tell me about your disciples and tell me about your teaching. How many disciples have you got? Where have you stashed them away so that at a given signal you can bring about a rebellion against Rome? Where have you put your guerrilla fighters, these men who have been trained in secret? What teaching have you given? What sedition have you encouraged? What heresy have you propagated? In other words, I want from you the very grounds on which I can then accuse you and incriminate you, and Jesus answers him, I have not taught anything in secret which I have not also stated in public in the course of my ministry. I have spoken to the world.

I have spoken to people on the seashore by the Lake of Galilee. I have spoken to people at the river's edge of the River Jordan. I have spoken to people on a green Galilean hillside in the spring.

I have spoken to people in crowded homes. I have spoken to them in synagogues. I have spoken to them in the temple precincts.

If you want evidence, if you want to know what I have taught, you go and ask those who have heard me. Get your own evidence. It is not for me to prove my innocence.

It is for you to prove my guilt, and when Jesus answers the high priest in this way, one of those who stands by and is an accomplice of the high priest slaps Jesus in the face, and we can hear the crack even now. The arrogance, the insolence, the cruelty, the contempt, the physical abuse added to the verbal abuse, a mere creature slapping his Creator in the face, one guilty of sin, deserving of hell's condemnation, striking him who is the judge of the living and the dead, a worm of earth defying God the Creator, and Jesus, vulnerable, bound, defenseless, takes this slap as the very beginning of all the outrage, physical, verbal, psychological, that shall be heaped upon him in the next few hours of his

passion. This is but the prelude to savage mockery by crude soldiers.

This is but the prelude to flagellation that will rip away the flesh from his back. This is but the prelude to being crowned with thorns. This is only the beginning of pain and sorrow for the Lord Jesus, and God forbid that we should become so familiar with the story as to fail to hear the resounding thunder of man's hammering into his hands or ripping away his flesh, and to all that abuse, Jesus answers with dignity and with meekness and with the defense of justice.

If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong, but if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me? And the answer that is made by Annas to this prisoner is to leave him bound and to send him on to his son-in-law Caiaphas for further cross-examination. And so we see Jesus bound, bound in order that you and I through his suffering might be set free from the condemnation of sin, bound so that you and I might be set free from the grip of the corruption of sin, bound so that you and I might be liberated once and for all from the thralldom of everlasting death. The prisoner is led away, bound.

This is something that should not surprise us. This is something that we should have expected, for he came unto his own and his own received him not but rejected him, Jesus degraded by his foes. But the unexpected thing, the surprising thing, the shocking thing, is not that he was degraded by his foes, but that he was denied by his friend.

Jesus has been arrested. He's been led away to a series of cross-examinations dignified falsely with the name of a trial, ecclesiastical and political. His disciples have scattered in fear, but several of them want to see how things are going to turn out.

And so they creep along in the shadows following Jesus, but at a discreet distance lest they become openly involved with his predicament. They follow because they love. They keep their distance because they fear.

And the Apostle Peter is asked by a little girl who happens to be the doorkeeper. You're not one of his followers, are you? And Peter answers, why of course not. This despite the fact that just a few hours before when Jesus had predicted that when the shepherd would be smitten, the flock would be scattered, Peter had protested with the vehemence of his impulsive and emotional character, if they all forsake you because they're not made of the same kind of strong stuff as I am, if they all forsake you, yet I will remain loyal to the very last.

If they want to get to you, they'll have to get to me first. That's Peter's boast, exalting himself over all the rest, and that profession of deathless loyalty is turned into weak base denial at the innocuous question of a young girl. Again, while the prisoner is being cross-examined, treated with verbal and physical abuse down in the courtyard, Peter warms his hands at an enemy fire, and someone who suspects him of being one of the Lord's disciples asks him again in a very direct way, are you at all involved with him? Are you in any way associated with him? And the answer that is given is a second denial.

One of the Puritan pastors put it like this, that one sin is like a needle drawing in the thread of another sin, or a gap having been made, it becomes wider and wider and more sin streams through it. He made that first denial over against a protestation of deathless loyalty, but having made the first denial, he found it easier to make the second, confirming the first. And the third time he was asked, this time by a relative of a man named Malchus, whose ear Peter with impulsiveness had sliced off in the incident in the Garden of Gethsemane in the olive grove.

And the man sees Peter in the dim light of a charcoal fire on that cold early springtime evening and says, aren't you the person I saw in the olive grove? Weren't you there in the garden? Weren't you the one who unsheathed the sword and smoked, Malchus, my relative? What a marvelous opportunity for Peter to give a bold, certain witness to his loyalty and affection to Jesus. But the third time being tested, the third time he miserably failed. And not by coincidence, but in the providence of God, with that third denial, there was heard in the stillness of the night the crowing of a rooster.

And at that moment, the prisoner passes through the courtyard, looks over his shoulder at the eyes of the disciple who denied him thrice, and Scripture says with simplicity and powerful eloquence that Peter, meeting the eyes of Jesus, hearing the crowing of the cock, broke down and wept bitterly. Jesus had predicted all of this, said, Peter, despite your boasting, despite the pride that would elevate you above the others whom you brand as weak and inconstant, Peter, I tell you that before the dawning of a new day and the crowing of the rooster signaling the approach of that new day, by the time that happens, you will have denied me not merely once or twice, but three times. And now with the crowing of the rooster, his conscience is stricken, and when the crowing passes into silence, it resonates and it reverberates continually in the conscience of the stricken Apostle, and he is convicted of his sin, and he is contrite and brokenhearted, and he goes out and he weeps tears of repentance.

And that is why in many of the older churches that had steeples, a rooster crowned the steeple so that elevated above the entire community every time that people would look up and see that rooster on a steeple, they would be reminded of God's call to repentance for sin, reminded of the bitterness of brokenhearted repentance, and reminded of the grace that gave him the remission of sins and restored him to the master's fellowship. How is it with us? Surely our very presence here this day signifies that we are not to be numbered among the foes that degraded him. God forbid that we should instead be numbered among the friends who deny him.

How is it possible for you and me who have taken our vows of church membership and have professed to follow Jesus Christ to be guilty of denying him if the faith that we profess is not matched by the quality of the life that we practice? We have denied him. We may profess the right doctrine, but if our conduct is not Christlike and if our attitudes are not shaped by the Holy Spirit and if our words and our deeds are not in keeping with the revealed will of God, we have denied him at that particular point. Whether it's in our social relationships or our sexual relationships or our business dealings or the way that we do our daily work, honesty and integrity and purity are demanded of us, else in the time of pressure and crisis, when the sincerity or hypocrisy of our profession is sought, we, like Peter, will fail and fail most deplorably.

But like Peter, we may hear the crowing of the rooster. We may be reminded by the rooster on the steeple that the God who convicts us of sin will also forgive us our sin if, like Peter, we experience brokenhearted repentance and we ask him to wash us and make us clean, separate us from the millstone of our guilt, and send us forth with peace in our hearts and joy upon our faces, because we, like Peter, have been forgiven. How is this all possible? It's possible because of the great event that we commemorate today.

We have sinned in one way or another, but confessing our sin, we find that God is merciful, that the Lord is gracious, because another has been willing to take our guilt and the load of our judgment upon him and willing to die in our place. This is what we remember today, that his body was broken for us, that his blood was shed in sacrifice for us, the just dying for the unjust, so that the way might be cleared for you and me to come back to and be restored to his fellowship and experience the joy of his salvation. Let us pray.

Spirit of the living God, may we hear your voice resonating in the corridors of our conscience and being brought to the point of conviction and contrition, experience the truth of the gospel promise that if we confess our sins, God is faithful, God is just, God keeps his promise and forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness for the merits of Jesus Christ, our crucified Redeemer. In his name we pray, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/30/SID30677.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mariano-di-gangi/rooster-and-steeple/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net