

## The Twelve: Solidifying the Rock, Part 2

Luke 6:14

March 12, 2017

Luke 6:12 to 16 goes like this, "In these days he," that is Jesus, "went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

We are going to become more acquainted with these men over the next several weeks because they are the key characters in the story of the Gospel. And they are the immediate recipients of Jesus' teaching. It's helpful for us to get a character sketch of these men so we can sort of keep them in our minds' eye as we go through the Scripture. These Apostles are set forth in Scripture as examples to us. They are encouragements to us, but not so we can ever say, "Hey, if a guy like Peter can make

it, I can make it, too." That is not the point here. That would be missing the point entirely if we're to look at them and say, "Boy, they're just as human as I am and if they can do it, I can find it within myself to do it, as well." They are there in the text so that we can see not their ability, but Christ's power to change our lives. That is the point. It's God "who is able to do exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think," right? Ephesians Chapter 3, "According to [his] power that works within us."

Why is that? Why is it that the focus of the Scripture is entirely on God and his power and his action and always on our weakness? Is it to make us feel low? Um, yeah. It is, it's to put us, actually, in our proper place because of sin. Our natural tendency is to elevate ourselves as if we're something, as if we're important. What we need to see is that we are important in as much as God has created us in his own image, inasmuch as a God has sent his Son to die on the cross for us, for our sins. That's what makes us important, because God says we're important. But really, the point of all of Scripture is that God is central. And his purposes and his plans and his glory is everything. What's important in Scripture is Jesus Christ.

Why is it that we see in these men, weak men, not strong in and of themselves, common, normal, everyday men like us? Why do we see them in all their humanness? Why do we see Christ in his power working within? Because we need to see that to God will be the glory in the church. God will, "be the glory in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen," Ephesians 3:21.

So this list of Apostles that we just read, they are believers in Jesus Christ. God has done a remarkable work in them, but they in and of themselves are nothing special. We need to see that. That is actually what's part of what offended the scribes and the Pharisees, that Jesus did not come to their seminaries and try to cherry-pick and recruit their best men for his purposes. His glory was not to be made manifest in the glory of men. His glory was to be made manifest in average men, residents of Galilee, not Judea; fishermen, not scholars; some of them even on the margins of society, like a tax collector and a political radical.

The rest of these men that are named there in that list, they're notable, mostly, for their plainness, the fact that they're not notable. They're notable for their ordinariness, but it's through them that Jesus Christ has changed the entire world. By Christ's power working through these men, the course of human history continues in its God-determined direction. By Christ's power working through these men, the lines of the map have been drawn. Even the global scourge of Islam has arisen as an action against and as an antithesis to the Christian witness, as set forth by these men.

So these are incredible things we're reading here about God's power to take ordinary men and do the absolute extraordinary, to take men with whom nothing is possible and do what's absolutely impossible. That's the point. Incredible world-changing, history-determining, map-drawing power. That is the power of Jesus Christ.

Now, we've started our survey of the twelve with Simon Peter, of course. Who else would we start with? He wouldn't allow us to start with anybody else because he's always jumping in front, right? He has that kind of personality that sort of

thrusts itself front and center, demanding our attention whether you like it or not. That's Peter. But again, it's not because Peter is so remarkable in and of himself that he's prominent. The fact that he's prominent, the fact that he is put into this place not just by the Gospel writers, but by Jesus himself. The fact that he's put there is because he is so common, because he's so relatable to us. I believe that God chose Peter to occupy such a prominent position among the Apostles because we all know a "Peter," and also because there is a bit of "Peter" in every single one of us, truth be told.

We often find Peter speaking up for the other men simply because he's impetuous enough to say what he thinks. They're all thinking the same things; he's just the one saying it. He's just the one verbalizing it. In that sense, he's sort of the de facto leader among them because he's always stumbling into the front and everybody else is catching up. And that's by God's good design because as Peter speaks out, we find him speaking for us, too. We find him asking the questions that are really on our minds, as well. In Peter, we hear the honest, transparent expressions from the heart of every typical believer. In that sense, Peter is every man. Peter is like an average Joe, and because of God's work in his life, we see the kind of

transforming grace that isn't just operative in Peter, but in every single Christian. That is what makes him such a source of encouragement to us. It's not because he's so amazing, but because he's so common. God's grace working in Peter, who is a typically weak and impulsive and even vacillating man, to transform him into the steadfast rock. That is what is amazing and that's what gives us hope.

Now, according to the outline we've provided you last time— it's also in your bulletins this week— Peter represents every true believer. He's grounded in faith. He is instructed in hope, and he is serving the Savior in love. And our first point that we covered last time examined the first of that triad of Christian virtues: faith, hope and love. In faith, Peter followed Jesus Christ. He followed Christ in faith. From his initial exposure to Jesus that's recorded in John 1:42-45, Simon Peter followed Jesus. He learned that this Jesus was the prophesied Messiah, and he came immediately and believed in him. That's where Jesus gave Simon the nickname, Peter, in fact, "the rock." That telegraphed Jesus' intention to include Simon Peter in the foundation of his church.

As Simon Peter followed Christ by faith, that initial faith, which was weak at first, like a small seed, it grew and it produced fruit. It strengthened over time, like in his life, it was like the curing of concrete into a sturdy foundation. Peter followed Jesus from the Jordan River, where John was baptizing. He followed him into Cana of Galilee where Jesus turned water into wine. Peter followed Jesus back to Jerusalem. He witnessed his incredible power and authority as Jesus cleared the temple square of those who were profiting from religion. Peter then followed Jesus back to Galilee, witnessed Jesus' wisdom, his authority, his power. Back in Capernaum, Peter's home, Peter returned briefly to his fishing business, but Jesus called him into discipleship, to follow him as a learner.

The first call came in Matthew chapter 4. Mark 1 records it as well. That call came along with his brother, Andrew, their friends and business partners, those two sons of Zebedee, James and John. They all left their nets to follow Jesus. But when Jesus left on his itinerant ministry around Galilee to preach to them as well, they didn't follow at that time. They returned to fishing. So the second call came, Luke 5:1-11. And that was a clear, unambiguous call to permanent, continuous, fulltime discipleship. No more fishing. No looking back. Jesus had

already said, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." By that he meant, "Look, leave your nets behind. Leave your boats behind, your business, your family, your friends because I have called you to an entirely new occupation. From now on, you'll be fishing for and catching men."

So to get their attention, to make sure that they learned the lesson, Jesus crafted a miracle that even a fisherman couldn't miss. Through a remarkable display of his sovereign control of all creation, Jesus showed them he controlled all the fish in the sea. At his will, fish entered into their nets and fed their families, and at his will, also, the fish stayed hidden from them so they could fish all night and catch nothing. Skill, experience, time, looking in all the right spots, had virtually nothing to do with their success on the Sea of Galilee. The key was Jesus' authority, Jesus' power, Jesus' will. They got the point.

Peter got the point. Whatever Jesus says, that's what we're going to do. That's the point. And from that moment, Peter began to learn what it meant to trust Jesus fully, completely without qualification, without reservation. He learned to follow Jesus



in repentant and humble faith. Perfectly? No, not perfectly, but by faith, Peter followed and Jesus changed his life.

We started into a second point last time, which we're going to look at in more detail right now. In hope, Peter learned from Jesus Christ. In hope, Peter learned from Jesus Christ. He had a lot to learn, a lot to understand. And the longer Peter followed Jesus by faith, the more he learned, the more he found out that all his hope is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus was pleased to bring Peter close to him, nearer in intimacy and fellowship, closer in friendship, deeper in relationship. All of Jesus' disciples, you understand, were privileged to be in his presence, to be following him, to be learning from him, hearing his teaching, seeing all of his wisdom, his power on display. But the special privilege belonged to his twelve Apostles.

On one occasion, Jesus told the twelve, Matthew 13, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." Many times Jesus pulled those twelve men away. He taught them things that the crowd would never ever hear. They were an incredibly privileged group of men. But even within those twelve, there was this even more intimate group among the

twelve, those whom Jesus chose for even more special privilege. There were certain occasions when Jesus singled out the big three, Peter, James, and John, and he called them into private fellowship and gave them privileged instruction. He exposed them to even more intimate displays of his power, which the rest of his disciples didn't see, but only heard from their witness.

We looked at one of those occasions last time when Jesus chose Peter and James and John to accompany him to Jairus' house. That's where Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. That privilege access gave those men—Peter, James and John—a unique exposure, an illustration of the extent of Jesus' miracle-working power. And combined with that power was a mercy and a compassion to these grieving parents. It's an incredible display of power, but also of tenderness. Peter was present. He saw it firsthand. We covered that last time, and I told you then that there's another passage I wanted to show you, which illustrates the level of privilege Peter enjoyed, such special intimate access to Jesus. And all for a purpose: so that Peter would learn these hope-inspiring lessons and then all of this would be transmitted to you and me now.

Here's the first lesson. You can write this down, a little sub-point. The first lesson that Peter learned is listen to Jesus Christ and to him alone. Heed Jesus' word and his alone. Listen to him. And to see that, I'd like to show you in Luke Chapter 9. So go ahead and turn to Luke Chapter 9. We read last time the healing of Jairus' daughter in Luke 8, but in Luke Chapter 9, we read about this remarkable experience as Peter is an eye-witness to the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It's an amazing moment. In context, Jesus has just drawn out of Peter the Good Confession at Caesarea Philippi, Matthew 16. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Luke summarizes Peter's confession there in verse 20 as "You are the Christ of God," and that's where we're going to enter the scene. Look at Luke 9:21. Follow along as I read. Jesus, after Peter made this good confession, Jesus "strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the leaders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.' And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does

it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.'"

Stop there for a second. You've got the scene, right? Jesus has separated his twelve Apostles from the crowds and took them to Caesarea Philippi. He's extracted from them through Peter the confession about his true identity. And right after that, rather than promising his disciples an unbroken, unabated pathway to the splendor and joy of Messianic glory, Jesus strikes a rather ominous note of warning. Suffering is coming. First, for the Son of Man, the one you follow. And then secondly, additionally, suffering for all those who follow him. Suffering is the route to glory. There is a cross before the crown.

Luke skips the part where Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him for talking about suffering. We read about that in Matthew. But Luke doesn't waste any time here. He wants us, as we read this, to see the connection between suffering and glory,

that standing with Jesus Christ, whether it's in the classroom, whether it's in your neighborhood, whether it's with your family, whoever it is, standing with Jesus Christ, not denying him, not denying his words, but standing fast with him, it's all worth it. That's what Luke wants us to see.

Look at verse 28. As Jesus provides his inner circle with a special preview into the coming glory, the resurrection glory, it says, "Now about eight days after these sayings [Jesus] took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah." Why Moses and Elijah, by the way? What does Moses represent? The law, right? What about Elijah? What does he represent? The prophets, right? Those two Old Testament figures are there together with Jesus. And they portray the intent of all Old Testament Scripture. What is it? To point to Christ. That's what Moses and Elijah are doing there on the Mount of Transfiguration. That is what Jesus particularly wanted Peter, John and James to see.

Let's keep reading. "Behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Isn't that interesting how it puts Jesus' crucifixion not as a passive thing there, but as something he will accomplish. Fascinating, isn't it? "Peter and those who were with him," verse 32, "were heavy with sleep." I think this, you wonder how in the world could they sleep at a time like this? But I think they were just so overcome physically with the sight they saw and the spiritual reality, that they were just overwhelmed. It just exhausted them.

So they're "heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake"—like, "Get up, guys!"—"they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said." Of course he didn't know what he said. He didn't know what he was talking about, but that never stopped Peter, right? He just opened his mouth and let it flow. But look, can you blame him? Once again, we're like this. We are so like this. And if you don't say it like Peter, you're thinking it. You're thinking the same thing. He's saying here,

"Look, this is awesome. This is incredible. Let's stick around for a while and maybe we'll celebrate the true Feast of Booths. Let's make some tents, camp out."

Which one of you, which one of us, wouldn't think that's a good idea? I, for one, would love to stay there and worship and fellowship and ask, I mean, I've got a lot of questions. "Moses, tell me about..." I have so many questions. "Elijah, what was chariot ride like, man, when you went off in the heavens, never were buried or anything? We get it, Peter, we're with you." Again, there he is right out in front. He's speaking what's on his mind. He's speaking before the others had a chance to speak. But again, he's verbalizing what they're all thinking.

Notice what happens next, no doubt in response to what Peter said in that moment. In fact, all three synoptic Gospels record this scene in exactly the same way. The transfiguration happens; there's Moses and Elijah. Peter speaks and then immediately a voice from heaven answers. And the whole thing is intended to teach us something very, very important. "As," verse 34, "As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the

cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!' And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen."

Literally, that phrase in the Greek, it's, "To him, listen." This is emphatic. The One to whom Peter is to listen and to heed and to pay attention to, it's this one, who is placed in the emphatic position grammatically. It's indicating the exclusiveness, the absoluteness, the uniqueness of the authority of God's beloved Son, God's Chosen One. So the Old Testament—the law, the Psalms, the Prophets—they all serve their purpose when they point to the one and only Son of God, Jesus Christ. So for you and me, beloved, just like Peter, James and John, it's to him we're to listen. It's to him we're to give heed to, to pay attention to. Beloved, this is such an important lesson Peter learned. And one that we all need to learn, as well.

Let's just ask a few questions of self-reflection and self-confrontation. Is Jesus Christ the singular object of all your affection? Is he, beloved, to you? Is he the object of all your



devotion, your time, your worship? Does his will command your full and unqualified, unhesitating obedience? Do you study his words? Do you reflect on his teaching that you might demonstrate your love and gratitude to him through obedience to his will? Paul wrote, 2 Corinthians 5:9, that "whether we're at home or we're away, we make it our aim to please him." We are to, Ephesians Chapter 5, "to walk as children as light" and we're to "try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord." That's the joy of every believing heart, to worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take an inventory sometime of your checkbook or however you record your expenditures. Take an inventory sometime of your week, how much time you're devoted to work or probably more for your sake, your play, your entertainment. Take an inventory. Just write it out in a week's time and see if your time and attention given to work and play, even family, can become so much more important than devotion to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What's occupying your time and attention?

Listen, turn off the media. Power down your smart phones. Unplug yourself from the internet. Stop trying to find pleasure

in the pursuit of worldly amusements and activities. Open your Bibles. Read and study your Savior. And then get up and go out and do what he has said to do. Believe God that true joy is found in worshipping and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, that's what you and I were saved for. The Gospel is the beginning. It's the commencement of a relationship to God. Once the sin is taken away in the cross, we are now on good standing with our God. We are children of our Father, and we delight to do his will just as Jesus delighted to do his will. Is that your heart? Is that your pleasure? Is that your joy?

Look, if you know the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there is no other answer. Deep down inside, even if you don't do it perfectly, like Peter, even if you don't do it perfectly, you know that is the true answer of every believer. It's your heart. So be radical in obeying him. Be radical in giving your time and attention and all your resources and all your energy and all your passion and devotion to him and him alone. Don't let anything separate you from what you're saved for. You're saved for relationship to the Father through Jesus Christ. Do not shortchange that. Do not sell yourself short. You're a child of the King.

Second lesson Peter learned from Christ, another sub-point for your note there. Second lesson: Love Jesus Christ more than anything else. You're like, "I thought you just said that." Yeah, I did. I said, "Learn from Jesus Christ, listen to him and don't listen to anybody else." Now, love Jesus Christ more than anything else. You're like, "Those things are parallel." You're right. They are parallel. I just want you to get it, okay, to see this, though.

There's another lesson here in this text. We need to skip ahead a bit in the story. And we're going to go here in Peter's life to the end of Jesus' earthly life. As Jesus is making his way to the cross, there are so many Peter moments leading up to the cross, and they're so instructive for us. By the time Jesus was headed for the cross, you remember that Peter had been watching Jesus at this time for more than two years. Daily, he'd walked with him. He'd observed him. He'd learned from him. They ate meals together. They were in homes and around campfires. They bedded down at night, whether under a roof or under the stars.

As John also wrote in 1 John 1:1, Jesus was someone whom they had heard with their ears, seen with their eyes, someone they looked upon, someone they observed closely. He was someone that they had touched with their hands, their hands had handled, whether it was just casual contact or even just a warm embrace. Peter was in intimate company with our Lord Jesus Christ. And all of that exposure caused Peter to grow in his love and in his affection for Jesus Christ, to deepen his conviction in the truth and to strengthen his devotion to him. Again, not perfectly, but the overall direction in Peter's life was bent toward following Jesus Christ, learning from Christ, serving him.

And over the course of Peter's instruction, what he learned through daily interaction with Jesus Christ, it really had to do with the true nature of divine love. He needed to learn the nature of divine love. Listen very closely because I want you to understand this. It's a very important point. From time to time, we watch Peter trying to serve Jesus faithfully, but he's doing so according to what seems right to him. Have you ever been tempted to do that? I have. Peter tries to demonstrate devotion to Christ, and he's motivated throughout the text by a kind of love, you might say, but every time he tries to serve Christ

with his own version of love, which is a humanly-defined, naturally-understood version of love, every time he tries to serve Christ with that kind of natural, human love, he fails. And Jesus has to rebuke him in love.

Remember earlier, after making the Good Confession, Jesus predicted the sufferings he would endure before the glory that would follow, right? Well, Peter rebuked him for that. Peter got in his face and he said, Matthew 16:22, it says, "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you.'" Peter's obviously feeling a little like we used to say in the Navy, "feeling a froggy." He's feeling a little bold. He's just been conferred upon him, he's just been conferred with great authority as an Apostle: "keys to the kingdom," "whatever you bind, whatever you loose. It's all coming through you, Peter." So perhaps he's feeling a bit bold at this moment and tests that out. He's taking a test drive in his newly delegated authority. And yes, of course, he got it very wrong.

Once again, we need to see in this moment how God used Peter to teach all of us such a vital, vital lesson. Whatever

Peter's motives were for rebuking Jesus at this point, I assume the best motives here. When Peter rebuked Christ, he thought he was being loyal to Jesus Christ. And apart from Jesus' rebuke, if that hadn't been in the text, we would have probably all cheered his actions. That's exactly right. We wish we could have been so bold as to try and steer Jesus away from the death of the cross. We don't want to see this, this short circuiting of the Messianic glory. After all, Jesus is coming as the Messiah to restore glory to Israel, fulfill all the Old Testament promises. What does a cross got to do with that?

But we learn through Jesus' stern rebuke that apart from understanding the truth, which Jesus had told Peter by this time and apart from understanding the truth, Peter's attempt here at loyalty actually turned out to be disloyalty. Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man." Listen, Peter's good intentions weren't benign and harmless. His good intentions aren't like, "Hey, you got an A for effort." No, you get a rebuke. Peter thought he was rebuking Jesus out of loving concern, but Jesus had a totally different view. He identified the source of Peter's concern. It was nothing short of Satanic. Why? Because the cross was the

plan. Because without the cross, there is no salvation. Peter didn't understand that.

Look, when we don't see things God's way, when we get things wrong, we tend to give ourselves quite a bit of a pass, don't we? We're like, "You know, I was trying. I mean, huh, God knows my heart." Have you ever said that? "God knows my heart." Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter, though, and he identifies the true origin of Peter's thinking. "It's not the things of God, but the things of man that are motivating you. They are satanically inspired, these things of man." That's a powerful and a poignant reminder of how much you and I need to learn. You see, like all of us, Peter had to learn what it meant to serve Christ not with his own version of love, not with whatever seemed best to him, not with whatever came to his mind. He needed to serve Christ with an other-worldly love, with a love that comes from God and no one else. His thinking, his will, his actions, his service to Christ—all of it needed to come out of a love that does not originate here on earth. It comes from God and God alone.

Peter needed to learn about the kind of love that drove Jesus, what we've come to know as *agape* love. He needed to learn this kind of divine love, self-sacrificing love that is willing to crucify self for the ultimate good of everyone else around you. It's that *agape* love that was utterly foreign to humanity until Jesus Christ came to die for his people on the cross. Let me tell you, this is a very brief aside, but it's a footnote that I think is important. There are four words for love in the Greek language. And *storge*, it's kind of a familial kind of love. *Eros*, it's more of like a romantic love. There's *phileo* or *philia*, *philos*, which is more of like a common human affection kind of a love. Then there's *agape*, this supreme sacrifice for the ultimate good.

*Agape* was not a word that was in much circulation at the time. It was almost a word that was set aside a bit and kind of reserved exclusively for the philosophers to philosophize about. The real common love, the real profound love, the one that really marked everyone, everybody rejoiced in and said, "This is love," is the *phileo* kind of love: brotherly affection. It's interesting, though, that through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we come to see a love that he describes as *agape*. He *agapao*-ed the world. It's defined by his sacrifice. It's defined by his



doing the will of God. It's defined by his being completely and totally conformed to the truth. It's defined by his sacrifice, by his giving all the time, whether he's washing feet, or whether he's dying on a cross. That is the love "by which all men will know you are my disciples."

When we bear the mark of that kind of love in our lives as we love other people, everybody knows who we belong to. That's our badge. This is the kind of love that Peter needed to learn. It's the kind of love we all need to learn as well, right? So to illustrate this we're going to read a few passages that happened during Jesus' final week. These are passages where Peter is portrayed as less than his best. These are not very flattering of him, but they're very instructive for us, and to him.

First, I want you to turn to John 13. John 13. We'll start, really, where we're reading for our Scripture reading this morning, in John 13, we are introduced to the setting of this Upper Room Discourse. John 13 through 16. That could go through Chapter 17 if you include Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, but Jesus is getting ready to impart one final, most foundational lesson before he's lifted up on the cross, and it's this lesson about

love. And before teaching the principle, he illustrated it through action. We read this before, but look at John 13:1: "Jesus knew his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end," or "to the uttermost," to the *telos*. "During supper, when the devil had already put in the heart of Judas Iscariot [...] to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, took a towel, tied it around his waist. He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

That's a powerful, incredible act of condescension, and really, for any of the disciples because none of them had done it. None of them wanted to do it. It was so incredible that Jesus did this, their Rabbi, their Teacher, their Lord. But Peter didn't want to allow it. Again, he was judging from a human perspective, and this seemed utterly inappropriate to Peter. But Jesus thinks very differently. Look, we read this already, but let's read it again. "Jesus," verse 6, "came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, do you wash my feet?' Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but

afterward you will understand.' Peter said to [Jesus], 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.'" Simon Peter changed course, flipped sides there. He said, "Okay, Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" "Give me the full bath!" "Jesus said to him, 'The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.'" That's Peter, right? He's vacillating from one end of the spectrum to the other. He doesn't really know what he's talking about, but he keeps talking anyway. He's all for it, whatever it is. Jesus wanted his Apostles to understand this act of condescension, it's not exceptional. It's actually to be the normal manner of relating to one another among Jesus' true disciples. This is the way the church is to be known, by its humble and sacrificial love for one another.

Skip ahead. We'll just skip some of this. Go to verse 33. Jesus said there, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will now that you are my disciples, if you have love for

one another." *Agape* for one another. It's an expansion of what Jesus said earlier in verses 13-17. He said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Christians are to be known for that kind of love for one another. We're to race one another to take the position of humility with each other in service, to consider one another as better than ourselves, practically serving each other in the most menial of tasks and everything in between, doing what no one else wants to do.

Now, Peter has seen Jesus' example. He's heard Jesus' teaching, but this is Peter. He's not fully listening. He's only partially tuned in at this moment and hearing. Notice what got his attention. It says, "Jesus said," verse 33, "a little while I am with you," and, "where I am going you cannot come," and that's where Peter opens his mouth, and we wince a little bit because we know what's coming, right? Look at verse 36: "Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow after.' Peter said to him, 'Lord, why can I not follow

you now? I will lay down my life for you.' Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.'"

What Peter intended as a strong affirmation of his personal loyalty, Jesus saw in that statement an inherent weakness. Jesus could see what Peter was unable to see: that human emotion and sentiment is unable to withstand the onslaught of temptation. What Peter couldn't see is how profoundly he needed to know and understand Jesus so he could be transformed in loving devotion. Human love crumbles under the faintest of pressures. Human love blows away with the gentlest of breezes. Only divine love can stand the storm, can make a man stand for Jesus Christ.

Peter made the same strong affirmation of loyalty again that night. It says in another Gospel that they went out on the Mount of Olives and Jesus told his disciples, "You will all fall away because of me this night." Guess what Peter said? "Na-ah. Maybe they will, but not me." "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." So Peter doubles down and said to him,

"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." Peter wasn't the only one saying that, either. All the disciples said the same thing, but he was the first one out of the gate, characteristically strong in his affirmation of ultimate loyalty: "even if I must die with you."

Well, time came to test that. And not even testing it with danger, not even with a sword. You're in John's Gospel; go ahead and turn ahead to John 18. Let's see how this played out in Peter's life, see how Peter's self-professed loyalty to Christ, how it worked, exactly what happened here. John 18:1 there.

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees," pretty resourceful guy, isn't he? "They went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to him, 'Whom do you seek?' And they answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,'" they drew back and fell to the ground." As if

to say, "You're only taking me. Okay, got it? If I go with you, you understand who's in charge here. I'm going with you; you're not taking me anywhere. And you're leaving these guys here."

"So he asked them again, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go.' And this was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me I have not lost one.' Then Simon Peter, having a sword"—I, for somehow, really sympathize with this narrative—"having a sword, he drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?'"

Peter, he knew Christ's power. Christ had power over demons, disease, sickness, physical deformity. Peter knew about his sovereignty over the creatures, especially the fish. He knew about Jesus' power over nature, commanding wind and waves, which obeyed his rebuke in an instant. Here, Peter sees the entire Roman cohort knocked to the ground at Jesus' word, so he's emboldened. The same way he stepped out in faith and walked on

the water in Matthew 14. Here he steps out, he thinks in faith. He draws out his sword. He's ready to take on the soldiers, the officers. He cuts off Malchus' ear, but he's not intending to just cut off his ear; he wants to go for his head and cleave his head. Malchus ducks, so he misses, slices off the ear. Jesus turns around and rebukes him.

In Matthew's account, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back in its place. [...] Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" That kind of love would keep Peter close to Christ. It would keep him truly loyal. It would keep him from falling away. It's a supernatural love. It's one that comes from the Father and is manifest in fidelity to God's Word, just as Jesus is showing here. That's true love. And Peter was, at this point, still dull to understand the nature of this true love. It was based on human feeling. It was expressed in bravado, in foolish acts of heroism. "Put your sword into its sheath [Peter]; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" He's been telling Peter about this moment. He's been being very clear, and now that it's upon them, the inevitable march to the cross



begins, as does the inevitable fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of Peter's defection and denial.

This is setting up the biggest lesson that Peter would ever learn. And looking at the time, we're going to have to come back to that lesson next week.