Mar. 4, 2018 Peter’s Denial John 18:12-27 (Psalm 17:1-7) Liturgical color: Purple

PRAYER OF THE DAY Holy God, We, like Peter, often turn our backs on you. Forgive us and show us a new way to live, walking boldly and passionately toward you. Amen. HYMNS What wondrous love is this ELW 666 Guide me ever, great Redeemer ELW 618 CHORAL Stay with us, Walter Pelz

Psalm 17:1 <A Prayer of David.> Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

 2 From you let my vindication come; let your eyes see the right.

 3 If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress.

 4 As for what others do, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.

 5 My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped.

 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words.

 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

**Announcements Prayers**

Family promise this Tuesday! Dick Labe may go home today post-surgery

Students nation-wide are responding to the pain of school threats and school violence by working together to call for positive change. Please support our youth and neighbors March 14 in 17 minutes of silence for the Parkland victims and Saturday March 24 locally.

Harry Schaum went home yesterday

Remember Peter the flip-flop guy from last week’s reading? He’s at it again! Last week he did not want Jesus to be humiliated by washing the feet of his disciples, so the disciple, Peter told Jesus, ‘no! You will never wash my feet!’

And Jesus replied, “unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”… and that’s when Peter flip-flopped and suddenly exclaimed "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" (Jn 13:9)

After 4 more chapters of teachings and questions and conversation… Jesus went out that same night with his disciples (except Judas who had left the room hours before). Yes, at night, they walked outside the safety of the city wall, walked across the Kidron Valley in the dark and up the next hill to a garden where they often met.

Then came Judas, they could see him coming from the opposite hill of Jerusalem because the lanterns and torches lit up the whole detachment of soldiers who were joined by the police of the chief priests and Pharisees. It’s likely Jesus and the disciples could hear the heavy metal of the weapons and the cadence of the many footsteps coming up the well-worn road to the well-used garden.

Jesus, no doubt, saw and heard all these warnings, and in 18:4 we are told “knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?"

 5 They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied the first time, "**I am he**." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. (but no kiss here in John’s gospel, instead Jesus takes the lead not shrinking from the reality of what is to come.)

 6 When Jesus said to them, a second time, "**I am he**," they stepped back and fell to the ground.

 7 Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

 8 Jesus answered, a third time, "I told you that **I am he**. So if you are looking for me, let these men go."

Three times Jesus clearly defined himself with the echo of the Divine name… I AM he.

Because of this, Jesus was arrested and taken to the high-priest for questioning. And here in John’s gospel, there is a twist, yes Peter followed the arrested and bound Jesus, as did another disciple… but that other disciple knew the high priest so that other disciple went in with Jesus for the trial of questions… this left Peter standing alone at the gate. {where he Petered-out as our cartoon read this morning}

On Wednesday our theme will be Jesus saying ‘I AM the gate’… but at this gate, there is no Jesus, no protection, no way to close-out the fears of this night… this night is different from all other nights.

First the voice was a woman’s; "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?"

Here in John’s gospel Peter’s reply is a shocking opposite of what Jesus is being asked at about the same time… Jesus has been saying I AM… and yet given a chance

Peter says, "I am… NOT."

Jesus is being questioned, and he speaks the plain truth… for this a member of the police struck him on the face. Then Jesus was sent from the chief priest to the high priest… getting into even more danger

And around the warm fire with slaves and police… someone gave Peter a second chance: "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" Peter denied being a disciple, a follower and student of Jesus saying, in sharp contrast to his teacher… Peter said “I am… not”.

And immediately a third time: One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?"

A slave… a person with no voice, no political power, no rights, and nothing to lose… a slave whose relative had just been wounded (there is no healing (Lk 22:51) of this ear in John’s gospel… it just keeps bleeding… a slave pitches the question for Peter’s third strike… again Peter took a swing and Peter denied being with Jesus.

Unlike the other gospels where Peter denies knowing Jesus… here in John’s gospel there is a different twist: there is no question that Peter knows Jesus, that’s already accepted fact… no, instead the question is ‘are you his disciple?’

Remember how in John’s gospel, the Lamb of God comes to take away the SIN (singular) of the world… and that sin is separation from God. Peter commits that sin, distancing himself from the one who came to live among us, clearly confessing I AM. Even as Peter in all his humanity… like us, clearly says I am NOT.

Yes, we too fall into this false security when scared… deny that we are disciples, even though folks see us going to church… deny that we are followers of Christ even though neighbors may know we pray and read the Bible… deny that we are with Jesus when prickly political issues make it uncomfortable to share differences of opinion.

* Like Peter, there are times when we lose our nerve in a public group… do we speak-up for common sense gun legislation after the first 17 mass shootings in 6 weeks of this year? No, will we after number 18?
* Will we deny or assist a family desperate enough to leave their country, and family and jobs, to come to a totally different part of the world in order to keep their daughter from being kidnapped into horror, fleeing to stay alive and together?
* Will we deny or follow the example of Jesus and welcome people cast-out of our ‘accepted circles’ people who have alternative life-styles, or whose loving relationship doesn’t match expectations? Will we stand with people who do not marshal time or money the same as others?

Yes, I deny being a follower of Jesus, we all do at one time or another… usually by our actions and inactions more than our words. And these moments are intersections, cross-roads of decision between following and denying… at this cock-crowing moment, Remember… the pain this leads to at the foot of the cross, but also remember Peter is one running to the tomb, Peter is one who faces the mysterious joy of the empty tomb. And yes the risen Lord, Jesus DOES confront Peter about this denial… and after naming the denial, Jesus forgives Peter 3 times (John 21:17). And Jesus makes Peter the leader of the Christian church… upon this rock I will build my church. Jesus know what to do with people who deny him… he corrects, he forgives, and he gives another chance to be his followers

And this gracious fact… one that we honor with lives of thanksgiving, and service;

this gracious fact tempered by the cross **is un-deniable! Thanks be to God!**

Working Preacher Narrative Podcast:

JC Peter parallel trials

Peter denies relationship and that he’s a disciple .... vs don’t know man of Synoptics

I AM not

Don’t wash my feet - Peter

Use his sword on ear - Peter

Other disciple seems to be able to go in and out without trouble

Where do we stand?? With Jesus

* JC says I AM on trial with people who can make a difference
* Peter by slaves who can’t vote nor take action to put Peter at risk