

Wednesday in Holy Week

Peter's Denial

Read: Matthew 26 v 31 – 35, 69 – 75

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."' ³²But after I am

raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' ³³Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.' ³⁴Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' ³⁵Peter said to him, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples.

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' ⁷⁰But he denied it before all of them, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' ⁷¹When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' ⁷²Again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' ⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' ⁷⁴Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know the man!' At that moment the cock crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection:

It had been quite a day for Peter:

it began when Jesus had sent him off with John to find a young man carrying a water jar so that they could make the arrangements for the Passover meal.

then there had been the meal itself, with several unusual things happening: Jesus washing their feet; that strange bit with the bread and the wine, Jesus saying they were his body and blood; Jesus shocking them all by saying that one of them was going to betray him; the worst bit was when Jesus said that Peter would deny him, that hurt, Jesus didn't trust him...

well he'd thought it was the worst bit but it was overtaken by the shock and the confusion of Jesus' arrest, Peter had tried to defend him but Jesus had stopped him, he'd followed them though.

Now, here he is bewildered and frightened with the adrenalin still running through him, sitting in the courtyard to the high priest's house, in the crowd near the fire, he can see Jesus across the courtyard surrounded by people mocking him, hitting him, spitting at him, abusing him.



Peter watches wanting Jesus to do something, say something, wanting to do or say something himself but unsure what he *could* say or do, shivering despite the fire.

Then, one of the girls who has been watching him comes over and says, 'You're one of his people aren't you, I've seen you with him' heart racing Peter instinctively shrinks back 'No, no I don't know him' Later another servant girl challenges him, 'You've been with him, I saw you' and again Peter denies it, 'Don't know what you mean, I don't know him'

Later comes a third challenge, 'You're a Galilean, you must know him', and for the third time, 'I don't know what you're talking about, I don't know him'.

Then the cock crows...

Jesus turns around and looks straight at Peter, all the horror and the pain of the night crash down on Peter as he remembers what Jesus had said and realises that it has happened exactly as he'd predicted.

What would you have done if you'd been there that night? None of your friends appear to be there, you're alone, frightened and bewildered. I'm fairly sure that I would have re-acted the same way as Peter and denied knowing Jesus.

I have never been in such an intense, frightening and potentially deadly situation, many people have. Hundreds of the early Christians died because they wouldn't deny Jesus, thousands across the world still live in places where it is dangerous to admit to knowing him. Through the years I have often not spoken up when I knew something was wrong, not said anything when I've been with a group of people who were complaining about 'The Church' or about Christians in general. Each time was a denial of Jesus, I've notched up a lot more than those three denials by Peter. You and I though would probably not be here as Christians if people with the courage to stand up and say 'I know Jesus' had not left their homes and travelled to our country to tell a warrior people about him. Their faith and their courage changed the faith and the history of this country.

Jesus had accepted his arrest, the mocking and abuse, now he stands before the council of elders, chief priests and scribes, he gives them nothing to condemn him with but they do it anyway. He knows exactly what he is facing.

Can we continue to keep ducking our heads, saying nothing, denying Jesus and all that he went through for our sake?

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