

“ . . . AND THE ROOSTER CROWED ”

Sermon prepared by Thomas Black on October 30, 2012

Jesus' Followers Will Leave Him

“Then Jesus told the followers, ‘You will all stumble in your faith, because it is written in the Scriptures: “I will kill the shepherd, and the sheep will scatter.” (Quotation from Zechariah 13:7 NCV) But after I rise from the dead, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.’

Peter said, ‘Everyone else may stumble in their faith, but I will not.’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, tonight before the rooster crows twice you will say three times you don’t know me.’ But Peter insisted, ‘I will never say that I don’t know you! I will even die with you!’ And all the other followers said the same thing.” Scripture: Mark Chapter 14, Verses 27-31 NCV

It’s not surprising to me that Peter was the first to rebuke Jesus’ pointed statement. I think that Peter’s remark back to Jesus of “I will never say that I don’t know you! I will even die with you!” while among the other disciples, was even said with a hint of arrogance. After all, Peter was the only disciple who had walked on water with Jesus. But it’s easy to be bold and stand firm when you’re with friends who share your same beliefs. And too, it was easy for the other followers to say the same thing.

Peter Denies Knowing Jesus

“While Peter was in the courtyard, a servant girl of the high priest came there. She saw Peter warming himself at the fire and looked closely at him. Then she said, ‘You also were with Jesus, that man from Nazareth.’ But Peter said that he was never with Jesus. He said, ‘I don’t know or understand what you are talking about.’ Then Peter left and went toward the entrance of the courtyard. And the rooster crowed.” Scripture:

Mark Chapter 14, Verses 66-68 NCV

For me, it was after a high school pep rally when I was a junior. Standing up to leave, a small group of boys had gathered on the nearby bleachers. From what I could gather, a boy was accusing someone of taking money from his pocket. I remembered Shawn taking charge of the heated confrontation, watching as each boy was asked to empty their pockets. One boy even pulled out what appeared to be a ten-inch, lock-blade knife from his front pant’s pocket.

After a few more minutes, Shawn turned and pointed to me and loudly stated, “He’s a Christian . . . he’ll tell the truth.” Everyone immediately turned to me, their eyes like lasers burning through thick steel. For the first time in my life, I was being called-out because of my religious beliefs. And at that moment, for whatever reason, I denied my faith. That day, I looked straight-faced into the eyes of all those boys and stated, “No. I’m not a Christian.”

And the Rooster Crows

“The servant girl saw Peter there, and again she said to the people who were standing nearby, ‘This man is one of those who followed Jesus.’ Again, Peter said that it was not true. A short time later, some people were standing near Peter saying, ‘Surely you are one of those who followed Jesus, because you are from Galilee, too.’ Then Peter began to place a curse on himself and swear, ‘I don’t know this man you’re talking about!’ At once, the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him: ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will say three times that you don’t know me.’ Then Peter lost control of himself and began to cry.” Scripture: Mark Chapter 14, Verses 69-72 NCV

In these remaining verses, Peter is once again confronted with being a follower of Jesus. And again Peter denied knowing Jesus as he quickly answered, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about!” Why would Peter not acknowledge his relationship with Jesus? With Jesus’ trial before both the religious and political authorities now taking place, Peter may have listened to the interrogation. I believe Peter was afraid for not only his safety, but his *life*. At this point, Peter looked to distance himself from Jesus in every possible way.

A short time later, the bystanders again confronted Peter with being a follower of Jesus. This third time Peter denied even knowing Jesus. And just as Jesus had predicted, the rooster crowed a second time. Then Peter, remembering what Jesus had told him, began to cry. He was openly remorseful at his actions. But Peter had a faith in Jesus that could be renewed¹, and thankfully, so did I.

My Second Chance to Deny Christ

Another twenty-five years would pass before I would again be faced with either confirming or denying being a Christian. It happened at the end of my last trip to Nicaragua in May of 2011. After leaving the bridge site that Friday, I sat and enjoyed a nice hot meal at Danilo's aunt's restaurant in the small town of Matiguas. I also used this time to reflect in my mind all that had been accomplished at the bridge site and how close the communities were to finishing the bridge. I was trying to visualize crossing the finished bridge, when it began to thunder. The storm clouds made the evening sky instantly turn dark.

By this time Danilo had finished a phone conversation, arranging for my transportation to the airport the next morning. But now raining even harder, it was obvious that I wouldn't be able to walk back to my motel room. Danilo stepped from under the covered porch and to the street, braving the pelting rain until he was finally able to flag down a taxi.

He quickly explained to the driver the name of my hotel and then motioned for me. The nearby street light was burned out, so I scurried the best I could through the rain storm, opened the rear door, and jumped inside. The driver quickly sped off, much faster than I would have liked. It seemed that most of the street lights were burned out in this part of town, so I could barely even make out the back of the driver's head in front of me. Then I sensed that someone else was in the backseat with me.

As the car finally passed beneath a working street light, I caught a glimpse of a young man. He appeared to have a goat-tee and an earring. At that moment, I started to smell the stench of fear coming off my own breath. For the first time, I was afraid. Danilo had no way of knowing anyone else was in the backseat of the car. But now, here I sat, riding with two complete strangers. They could beat me, rob me, or even kill me. I was scared to even breathe.

Now in the better lit part of town, I could see him clearly in the corner of my eye. Then he pointed at me and asked, in broken English, “You . . . Christian?” *Now why would he be asking me that question and for what reason?* I wondered. I glanced down and saw my necklace with a small wooden cross. I had bought this to show everyone at the bridge site that I was in fact a Christian. But now, a stranger in the backseat of a car was calling me out. I quickly thought of how I should respond. *Would a “Yes” answer bring me any unwanted consequences? Maybe I should just say “No.” After all, who would ever know, who would ever find out, and who would he tell that I wasn’t a Christian.*

Then I thought about Peter, who himself was called-out thousands of years before this night. Now, I too was faced with a choice. My voice trembled as I responded, “Yes, I am a Christian.” At that moment, my world seemingly stopped turning as I waited for his reaction to my answer. I gazed over at his face. I was almost overcome with fear when the driver passed by the street which would have taken us to my motel. There was

nothing I could do at this point; I was totally at their mercy. Then something almost unbelievable happened, as the young man pointed back to himself and softly spoke these unforgettable words, “Me too.” And at that moment, riding in a car with someone who looked a lot different than me . . . the rooster *did not* crow.

If we think about it, people deny Jesus today in a lot of different ways. We deny Jesus when noticing the cashier has given back too much change, but fail to hand back the extra dollar. We deny Jesus when unloading the groceries into our car, realize we didn’t pay for the box of laundry detergent placed underneath the buggy, but fail to go back inside the store to pay for it. We deny Jesus when faced with a divisive issue, but fail to apply biblical principals or standards in making our decision. We deny Jesus when we have an opportunity to speak up for Him, but fail to do so.²

In the New Testament, Jesus clearly explains this principle when He states, “All those who stand before others and say they believe in me, I will say before my Father in heaven that they belong to me. But all who stand before others and say they do not believe in me, I will say before my Father in heaven that they do not belong to me.” Scripture: Matthew Chapter 10, Verses 32-34 NCV

1 The Bible Knowledge Commentary by Dallas Seminary Faculty, 1987

2 Life Lessons Bible Studies for Life by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2012