

Our Lenten Bible Study

Return from Denial

Peter in the Courtyard
Luke 22:31–34, 54–62

OPENING

Each lesson will begin with a reading of Joel 2:13 and a prayer specific to the theme of the study for that week, keeping with the theme, “Return to the Lord.”

Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13)

Prayer: Merciful Lord, on the night when You were betrayed in the Upper Room, You foretold that all the disciples would leave You, in fulfillment of Scripture. When Peter assured You that he would follow You to prison and even death, You met his words with the astonishing truth that he would instead deny You three times that very night. Fill us with steadfast faith and courageous confession in the midst of all the dangers and troubles that threaten the faith of our hearts and the confession of our mouths that You will confess us to Your Father in heaven on the Last Day. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

The wording of our text (Luke 22:54–62) shows us how passive Jesus is now, allowing Himself to be arrested and led away. The frightened Peter follows just far enough behind so as to not be noticed and risk being captured also. He loves the Lord Jesus but perhaps a little less than he loves himself. In these verses, we are reminded of the meaning of the First Commandment: “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” Peter’s boastful words in the Upper Room (Luke 22:31–34) were a bit hasty as now he begins fearing something more than God, loving something more than Jesus, and trusting something other than God’s promises and Jesus’ teachings.

QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 22:31–32, why does Jesus repeat Peter’s (Simon’s) name? What does Satan want with Peter? What does Jesus mean by “strengthen your brothers”?
2. In what way was Peter “following” Jesus in verse 54?
3. Who was the first one to recognize Peter? What did this person say about him?

4. How did Peter respond the second time he was recognized?
5. The third time came about an hour later—perhaps time enough for Peter to cool down, unless, of course, he was pondering the first two unwelcome accusations during that hour. What did the third person insistently say? What was Peter’s response this time? Since time is important in this pericope, what happens next?
6. We have seen Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and Peter’s denial. What is different when it comes to “returning to the Lord” for both these men? (Matthew 27:3–5; Luke 22:31–32 and John 21:15–17)

CONCLUSION

Things happen very quickly now. While Jesus is questioned by Caiaphas, Peter is questioned in the courtyard by those who recognize him by the light of the fire. Jesus’ words to Peter earlier that night in the Upper Room are being fulfilled. Peter had said he was ready to go to prison and even death with Jesus. But fear can get the best of even loyal men. The one who was so boastful before now shouts in anger at those accusing him of knowing Jesus. With the third denial of his Lord, Peter hears the cock crow. One disappointed look from Jesus jogs Peter’s memory, and he comes undone—running away in tears of shame.

CLOSING:

Jesus! and shall it ever be A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise, Whose glories shine through endless days?

Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend On whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No; when I blush, be this my shame, That I no more revere His name.

Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may When I’ve no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no joy to crave, No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then—nor is the boasting vain—Till then I boast a Saviour slain.
And oh, may this my portion be, That Christ is not ashamed of me!

(The Lutheran Hymnal 346, st. 1, 4-6)

Lord’s Prayer