

Bible Study for Sunday March 15 on Wed. March 18 topic – Denying Eyes

“Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning, Was there ever grief like His? Friends through fear His cause disowning, Foes insulting His distress” (*LSB* 451:2). When Jesus predicted that all His disciples would be scattered when the Good Shepherd was struck down, they vehemently denied that they would forsake Him. But as always, the Lord’s Word comes to pass, and Peter goes so far as to deny that he even knows Jesus. But Jesus will not deny the will of His Father, and He steadfastly takes up His cross and lays down His life for sinful deniers like Peter and us.

We read Mark 14:26–31, 66–72.

In Mark 14:10–21, it had become clear that one of the Twelve would betray Jesus; this lesson shows that the rest would deny Him by falling away. The Greek word (σκανδαλίζω) translated “fall away” in 14:27 appears in Mark 4:17 in the parable of the four soils and is translated the same way.

- 1. Read Mark 4:14–20. What type of soil do the apostles of Jesus prove to be when they fall away from Him on Holy Thursday?

What would they subsequently need to see and experience in order to become good, fruitful soil? Luke 24:36–49.

Like Judas’s betrayal of Jesus, the apostles’ falling away from Him was a result of their own sin, so they bore guilt for it. However, this also happened in order to fulfill the Scripture, which required the death of the Good Shepherd. Just as God had “given up” Jesus to death on the cross, so also would He Himself strike down Jesus on the cross in order to spare us from eternal death. Jesus cites the Scripture from Zechariah 13:7, which prophesied this.

- 2. Read Zechariah 13:7–9. If the apostles had known this passage do you think it would have changed their actions?

What is the positive and empowering part of Zechariah 13:9 for believers?

Jesus specifically promised, “After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (Mark 14:28), so the disciples should not have despaired. But Jesus knew they were going to fall away. Peter “doubles down,” as it were, by insisting that even if all should fall away, he never would. The rest asserted the same, but after Gethsemane, Peter is the only apostle to appear again until after the resurrection, and his own “falling away” is most dramatic.

- 3. Read Mark 8:27–33. Compare and contrast Peter’s behavior in this earlier scene with his actions in the high priest’s courtyard when he is confronted by a socially insignificant servant girl.

This is similar to Peter's behavior after Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Peter tried to deny that Jesus' words were true and even rebuked Him. In turn, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (v. 33). *In the courtyard where is Peter's focus once again?*

After Jesus had rebuked Peter, He went on to instruct His disciples (including us) on the costs and benefits of following Him.

-4. Whom does Jesus call on His disciples to deny and then do in Mark 8:34–38? What is at stake for them (and all of us) in this calling from Him?

What does Jesus say will happen to those who are ashamed of Him?

-5. In John 20:19–23, what does Jesus do in order to restore His fallen disciples? What message does He deliver to us in order to comfort us when we have denied or fallen away from Him?

How can the Office of the Keys that He has given to the Church help Christians work with other sinners who are repentant?

Peter had denied Jesus publicly, while the others had fled in fear. Jesus later has a special appearance to Peter in order to assure him that he has been restored to the office of shepherding Christ's sheep, in spite of his previous denials.

-6. What is so fitting about Jesus' restoration of Peter in John 21:15–19? How do the final words of Jesus to Peter echo His earlier saying about self-denial and cross bearing?

Peter would go on to boldly proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and risen, the only name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). He and the other apostles also would write to Christian congregations to warn about threats to the one true faith.

-7. According to 2 Peter 2:1–2, for what must the Christian Church constantly be on the lookout? What is the greatest of lies? What are the consequences of following it? See 1 John 2:22–23.

Conclusion

The prospect of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Jesus is a daunting one. The essence of sin is self-centeredness. The cross is heavy to bear and pains our sinful flesh. And following Jesus promises a life of scorn from the world and even persecution. But Jesus promises that "the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13), and that the Lord will give us the strength to endure every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) and will be the one responsible for carrying us through to the end: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24).