

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

A Work In Progress.

God is shaping us into the likeness of Christ.

Scripture: John 18:12-27

Rev. Steve Filyk

March 27, 2022

Opening Hymn: O For a Thousand Tongues [374] or This is my father's world [328]

Choruses: All to Jesus I surrender and Our God (Tomlin) OR Everlasting God (Tomlin)

Closing Hymn: Jesus Paid it All or My Jesus I love thee

Every Sunday people all across the world meet together.

We sing and we pray.

And then go into an ancient library, called the Bible.

We read a passage and consider

What it means for us today.

Some see the Bible as the key

to understanding human origins.

"In 1642, John Lightfoot published a "voluminous" calculation

of the exact date for the creation of the universe: September 17, 3928 B.C.

This date was reached after an analysis of the Biblical genealogies

found in Genesis, Exodus, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.<sup>i</sup>

Some see the Bible as the key

to understanding human origins.

And some see the Bible as the key

To understanding human destiny.

"televangelist Pat Robertson... came out of retirement on Feb. 28

to assert on "The 700 Club" that Russian President Vladimir Putin

was "compelled by God" to invade Ukraine

as a prelude to an eventual climactic battle in Israel.

Robertson said verses of the Old Testament Book of Ezekiel

support this scenario."<sup>ii</sup>

Some see the Bible as the key

To understanding the past or the future.

I think its purposes are broader.

I see the Bible as helping us to know God

And to know ourselves.

Today's Bible lesson supports this.

Today we are jumping ahead from our last lesson in the Gospel of John.  
 The last time I was in the pulpit we were reading from John 13  
 And heard how Jesus washed his disciples feet.

You will recall that Peter  
 Initially balked at his Rabbi  
 rubbing his dirty toes.

But when Jesus said it was essential to being in Jesus party,  
 Peter asked to be thrown into a bathtub.  
 Peter was all in!

Peter was 100% committed to Jesus.  
 Peter was all in!

Today we have jumped ahead in the Gospel.

All that Jesus was doing (his signs and miracles)  
 And all that Jesus was saying (talking about being one with the Father)  
 has so both angered and worried the authorities  
 That they decide to take lethal action against him.

In the commotion of apprehending Jesus,  
 “all in” Peter  
 Pulls out a sword and cuts of the ear  
 Of the high priest’ servant.

But this doesn’t stop Jesus from being arrested.

Once Jesus secures the liberty of his followers,  
 He voluntarily gives up his freedom  
 And is taken to the home of Annas,  
 (the High Priest emeritus) for questioning.

Loyal Peter follows at a distance.

What happens next is a test, a trial.  
 Not just of Jesus but of Peter.  
 They are presented to us side-by-side  
 So we can see the difference.

Bold Peter isn’t so courageous  
 When he’s away from the Jesus and the other disciples,  
 When he’s lingering at the entrance  
 to the High Priest’s courtyard.

When the young woman who was the doorkeeper  
 says to Peter, “Aren’t you one of this man’s disciples?”

Peter replies, "No, I'm not."

Later on as he warms himself  
 At a fire in the courtyard  
 others there say to him,  
 "Aren't you one of his disciples?"

Peter again denies it, "Not me."

When one of the Chief Priest's servants,  
 a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off,  
 says, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?",

Peter again denies it.  
 And a rooster crows.

This is significant detail.

After the foot washing we encountered two weeks ago,  
 Jesus talked about his betrayal  
 And talked about having to go away.

Bold Peter says that he will follow Jesus.  
 He promises to lay his life down for Jesus.

But Jesus tells Peter,  
 That Peter will disown him:  
 "Before the rooster crows,  
 You will disown me three times!"

Jesus' words prove true.  
 Loyal Peter fails to keep his commitments.

But not so with Jesus.  
 Jesus proves true.

In Annas' house Jesus is grilled with questions.  
 But he won't give up his disciples.

When it comes to his teaching,  
 Jesus challenges the High Priest that all is public record  
 And that the High Priest should talk to those who were there.

Jesus is insinuating what the High Priest himself knew.  
 If anyone had a problem with Jesus,  
 They needed to make an accusation against him.

Proper legal proceedings didn't include late-nite interrogations  
 Proper legal proceedings didn't involve asking the accused  
 to testify against themselves.

One of the officials didn't like Jesus' response and slapped him.

But even there Jesus doesn't back down or keep quiet:  
 He asks why he's been hit.

PAUSE

The stories of Jesus and Peter are quite the contrast.  
 Both have made big commitments.  
 Peter promised to stand by Jesus:  
 even lay down his life for his Rabbi.

Jesus declared publicly  
 His commitment to God's mission  
 And to his disciples":

"For I have come down from heaven  
 not to do my will  
 but to do the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me,  
 that I shall lose none of all those he has given me..."<sup>iii</sup>

But while Peter fails, Jesus stands firm.

The Bible teaches us  
 that the God we encounter in Jesus is strong and committed.  
 The Bible also teaches that humans are weak and unreliable.

The latter can be confirmed by our everyday experience.  
 Individuals cheat on their spouses  
 While nations bomb the refugee corridors  
 they agreed would be kept safe.

But this isn't the entire message about God  
 Or about humanity.  
 The Bible doesn't see us as worms  
 Compared to the glory of God.

To get a more fulsome story  
 We need to skip to the very end of the Gospel:  
 The passage known as the 'reinstatement of Peter.'

After the resurrection some of the disciples, including Peter  
go out fishing.

Jesus appears on the shoreline,  
Calls out some instructions,  
And helps them secure a miraculous catch.

By the time they bring the fish in  
Jesus has breakfast waiting.  
When they have finished the meal,  
Jesus asks Peter if Peter loves him.

Jesus asks Peter three times.

And each time Peter responds in the affirmative,  
Jesus affirms Peter's calling saying:  
"Feed my lambs."

Three times.  
Three times Peter denied Jesus.  
Yet Jesus gives Peter the opportunity for recommitment.  
And Jesus affirms Peter's call... three times.

The Bible teaches us that the God who keeps commitments  
understands our weakness  
and offers us second chances.

But even this isn't the end of the story.  
The Bible continues to add more details  
Of God's redemption of a man named Peter.

We are told in the Acts of the Apostles  
That Peter preaches boldly after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

We are told that Peter is arrested with the other Apostles,  
And that (after an interesting diversion) he too is questioned  
By the High Priest.

When he is ordered to stop speaking about Jesus,  
Peter boldly declares with the other apostles:  
"We must obey God rather than men!"<sup>iv</sup>

Jesus had been struck for his response to the High Priest.  
And this response of Peter and the apostles,  
Earns them a flogging.

But despite the threats and abuse  
They don't back down.

The Bible teaches us that humans are weak and unreliable,  
 And yet through the work of God's Spirit  
 We are shaped into a people who are loyal and committed.

Divine action in the human heart does something incredible:  
 It transforms who we are.

Peter had earlier said that he was willing to lay down his life for Jesus.<sup>i</sup>  
 Tradition tells us that he did it.

Jerome records that "at Nero's hands Peter received the crown of martyrdom  
 being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground  
 and his feet raised on high,

asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified  
 in the same manner as his Lord."<sup>v</sup>

PAUSE

As a child I remember seeing and hearing an acrostic: PBPGINFWMY. [SHOW SLIDE]  
 "Please Be Patient God Is Not Finished With Me Yet."

This acrostic which found it's way onto pins and refrigerator magnets  
 acknowledges that we are imperfect,  
 But that in God's hands we are growing.

God is restoring our lives.  
 God is reshaping our character.

PBPGINFWMY.  
 It is the story of Peter.  
 And it is the story of us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Timothy Heaton (content) and Matthew Rognstad. "The Age of the Earth - Creationism and Biblical Genealogies: Mike Janssen." 27 Mar. 2018, [apps.usd.edu/esci/creation/age/content/creationism\\_and\\_young\\_earth/bible\\_chronology.html](https://apps.usd.edu/esci/creation/age/content/creationism_and_young_earth/bible_chronology.html).

<sup>ii</sup> "Apocalypse now? To some evangelicals, Ukraine invasion spells the end of days." 18 Mar. 2022, [www.timesofisrael.com/apocalypse-now-to-some-evangelicals-ukraine-invasion-spells-the-end-of-days](https://www.timesofisrael.com/apocalypse-now-to-some-evangelicals-ukraine-invasion-spells-the-end-of-days).

<sup>iii</sup> John 6:38-39 NIV

<sup>iv</sup> Acts 5:29 NIV

<sup>v</sup> Contributors to Wikimedia projects. "Saint Peter - Wikipedia." 18 Mar. 2022, [en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Saint\\_Peter&oldid=1077768522](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Saint_Peter&oldid=1077768522).