



Mark 14:27–31

27 “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” 29 Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.” 30 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.” 31 But Peter insisted

emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

Reflection

If you're familiar with the Gospels, then you'll be familiar with the Apostle Peter. I wonder if there's a person in the whole New Testament that we can relate to more? He's mentioned 178 times; third only behind Paul and Jesus. Peter is portrayed so intimately, we almost feel as if we know him.

Peter's from Bethsaida, a fishing town, might as well be Minchinbury, just a place, only it's near the water, and he's got a brother Andrew. They didn't go to university, they fish for a living, just normal, work-

ing-class men. It's early morning, they've fished all night with nothing to show for it. Then Jesus shows up, cast your net one more time, it's teeming with fish. Peter, astonished, falls to his knees, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man'. Jesus says he'll make them fishers of men.

Peter's married, it's his mother and law that Jesus heals, lying sick in bed with a fever. Whenever the disciples are listed Peter's always named first. He's their leader, their spokesperson, the guy who asks the question they're all thinking. And so he's often the bunny. Like when the woman who'd been bleeding for 12 years touched the fringe of Jesus' cloak and Jesus asked 'who touched me?', Peter blurts out 'Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!'. Or there's that

moment during the transfiguration, up on the mountain, Jesus, his face shining like the sun, his clothes as bright as flashes of lightning, Moses and Elijah, down from Heaven, on earth again after 1000 years, talking with Jesus – and the best Peter can manage? Lord it's good I'm here, maybe I can make a tent for you and the boys? It's so embarrassing God himself has to cut Peter off with "This is my son, with whom I'm well pleased, listen to him!"

Peter's courageous. Do you remember in Matthew 14? The disciples are on boat, late at night and far from land. The wind and the waves are knocking them around and then they see Jesus walking on the water. They're terrified 'It's a ghost' but Jesus says 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid' and Peter, boldly, 'Lord, if it's you,

command me to come to you on the water', so Jesus says, 'Come'. And Peter, courageous, a fisherman all his life, steps out of the boat and walks on the water as if it were dry ground, only his courage slips, he sees the wind whipped waves, and begins to sink crying 'Lord, save me!' Peter's courageous only sometimes his courage fails.

He's a heart on his sleeve kind-of-guy. For Peter it's all or nothing. Remember in John 13 when Jesus tries to wash his feet? The job of the lowliest servant in the household? 'Lord are you going to wash my feet? No, you shall never wash my feet'. And Jesus says to that 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me'. So Peter, 'Then Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus, 'Peter, you're clean,

you've had a bath, I'm just going to wash your feet – can you let me get on with this parable?' He's a man of passion and action. When the women tell the disciples that the tomb is empty most don't believe them. For Peter it's a footrace with John to the tomb. John wins, on younger legs, but John stops at the entrance and just peers in. When Peter catches up he doesn't hesitate for a second, he bolts straight in. Or when the disciples spot the resurrected Jesus on shore. They're in a boat only 30 metres out but Peter dives in and swims to shore, the rest of the disciples come in with the boat a few moments later.

Peter's real name is Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter. Peter means rock. And Jesus said 'on this rock I will build my church' – but he's a shaky rock the night

before Jesus dies. Today's passage from Mark 14:27–31 is about him,

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Jesus didn't come to earth to conquer the Romans and take back the throne from

Caesar in Jerusalem like many in the Jewish nation were expecting. Jesus came to defeat Satan, sin and death in order to lead us into the eternal promised land of the new heavens and the new earth where he'll reign as king over the New Jerusalem forever. So Jesus' ministry has been more about angels and demons than his followers taking up arms against Roman soldiers. Only Jesus has told his angels to hold off, because he's got this. And so it's no surprise, the night before he dies, that Satan steps up his onslaught. He's entered Judas, and now he strikes at the remaining eleven, seeking to 'sift' them as well.

Jesus' metaphor in today's passage is a vivid one. His disciples' confidence is almost completely eroded in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, the night before Je-

Jesus dies. Jesus is leaving them. Where he's going they cannot follow. He's going to be betrayed. By one of them. And now, words they'd thought they'd never hear – their courageous leader Peter is going to disown Jesus three times before night's end. Jesus explains what's about to happen using the vivid prophetic metaphor – the shepherd is about to be struck, the sheep scattered.

But true to form Peter is quick to speak and quick to back himself.

“Even if all fall away, I will not.”

So Jesus puts him in his place. And before I read this well-known line I want to you to reflect on just how well Jesus knows what the next 24 hours hold for him.

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

Jesus knows exactly what’s about to happen, down to the tiniest detail because he has planned his death and resurrection since before the beginning of time. He knows intimately the minute, hour and nature of his death and all the circumstances that will surround it. Imagine that. But for today, it means he can speak with such certainty about Peter’s darkest hour. Peter will fail, but through the power of Jesus’ intercession in prayer, and his gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter will rebound in a most extraordinary way. He will live to strengthen his brothers and will live up to his namesake playing a foundational role in rapid

growth of the early Christian church.

Think & Pray

Clarence Macartney said of Peter,

‘His impulsive deeds, his frequent questions, his eager exclamations and confessions, the praise and honour and rebukes that were bestowed upon him, his sometimes manly and sometimes cowardly acts, his oaths, his bitter tears – all this makes Peter the great companion and the great instructor of his fellow men and fellow Christians.’

Peter’s sheer humanity makes him everyone’s teacher. And so consider Peter this morning as he approaches his darkest

hour. He's about to be shaken. He's in the grips of a crisis, his whole world lurching and now Jesus says this. Surely a dent to his confidence? And yet with the usual bravado he says words he'll later bitterly regret. Instead of trusting in Jesus, Peter says he'll do it in his own strength, and we know how that's going to turn out. But Jesus, as with everything, has got this. Prayer in Jesus' name trumps Satan every time. Peter won't come through this unscathed, but he will come through it as a far greater weapon when it comes to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

And so meditate over this episode in Peter's life today, as well as the power of prayer to overcome Satan's effects. And then pray against the world, the flesh and the devil. If you're being shaken, ask for

Jesus' protection, and for the same outcome in your Christian character as that of Peter.