

## LENTEN SERMON 2 , 2020

In the name of Jesus:

Last time we met I told you about my cataract surgery. My doctor likened having cataracts as to having a dirty windshield on the car. If you have cataracts, the windshield to your eyes are dirty, hazy, foggy, and you can't see clearly. But when you have new lens in your eyes after a cataract surgery, it is like you have a new windshield, and you can see clearly the world around you.

It has been said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. Look into a person's eyes and you can see what the person thinks and feels. Jesus says in Matthew 6: 22-23: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Tonight we look at other ways our eyes are dirty windshields, how they can fail to see Jesus clearly, especially when we, like Peter, deny Jesus.

Before Jesus was betrayed He was in the Upper Room with the eleven apostles. Jesus had sung a post-Communion hymn and then headed for the Mount of Olives. There were only eleven with Jesus because Judas had

already departed to get staged for his betrayal. Jesus told the group they would all fall away, in fulfillment of Zechariah 13:7, "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Now Peter thought that Jesus was talking about everyone else but him, as he said to Jesus, "Even though they all fall away, I will not" (Mark 14:29). Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times" (v. 30). But Peter said emphatically, "If I must die with You, I will not deny You" (v. 31). They all said the same!

They all said the same thing, not just Peter. They all denied that they would fall away from Jesus. Not possible, it ain't happening, Or so they thought. They had good intentions, but their good intentions ended up being empty intentions. They were not only denying Jesus' words, and telling Him that He didn't know what He was talking about, but they were also denying the prophecy from the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

The rock group called The Eagles sand a song called; ""Lyin' Eyes" Even though you try and disguise your intent with a smile, the song writer tells us, it is not enough to hide lying eyes. If our eyes give away lies to one another, then how much more can the omniscient Lord Jesus see lying and denying in the eyes of His disciples of all times and places?

If you looked into the eyes of the Apostles that night, what might their eyes

tell you? What did they tell Jesus? Perhaps it would be a look of horror at such an awful prospect of walking away from Jesus, then a look of disbelief as they processed what Jesus was saying as they tried to process how they could defend their words and actions to their Lord.

The eyes of the Apostles that night were like dirty windshields. They weren't really seeing Jesus and letting His Word sink into their ears and hearts. They were blinded by their own strong delusions, lying to themselves and ultimately lying to the Lord. They weren't focused on Jesus, they were focused on themselves, their own perceptions and plans, having their minds on the things of man instead of the things of God.

The other ten apostles would go on to deny Jesus by falling away, in spite of their strident protests to the contrary, and we see Peter verbally deny Jesus in dramatic fashion during his cross-examination by a little servant girl and some bystanders. Ultimately they all fell away, but there was One who was the last Man standing, Jesus, the only One making the good confession, the only One who would not deny His Heavenly Father, the only One who would be willing to go the cross to make sinners His own.

When Jesus had quoted the prophecy of Zechariah, He had actually added a couple words to it that I left out earlier. He said, "*I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*" (Mark 14:27). This is a quote from the Lord God of

Israel Himself: “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, against the Man who stands next to Me,” declares the Lord of hosts. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered’ ” (Zechariah 13:7).

Who is the Man who stands next to Yahweh? Jesus. He is the One against whom the Father bids the sword awaken. “I will strike the shepherd,” says the Father. No, it wasn’t Judas who handed Jesus over to be crucified, it was ultimately the Father Himself who handed over His Son to be crucified. It was the Father’s will that Jesus drink the cup of God’s wrath, emptying the cup of wrath to the very last drop. It is just as Isaiah says in Isaiah 53: it was the Father’s will to crush the Messiah so that the masses would be accounted righteous in the Father’s sight: “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him *stricken*, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was *pierced* for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4–5, emphasis added). “I will strike the shepherd,” said the Father, and Jesus was stricken with all of that, for you.

But that’s not all! Jesus told them they would all fall away, but then He said: “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (Mark 14:28). His words about their falling away and denial did prove true, but even better, so did His prediction of the resurrection and His subsequent

appearing to the apostles. To these denying and doubting apostles, Jesus entrusted the teaching and baptizing that would go out to all nations and turn deniers of God into confessors, into followers of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So what happened to Peter? He seemingly was the only one who had the guts to get close enough to Jesus' trial. While we can fault Peter for failing to stand up for Jesus, are we really any different? How many times have we stood by silently when someone spoke words contradicting our Lord's Word? How many opportunities to confess the Gospel to others have we passed up for fear of giving offense?

But let Peter be an example to us all. For Peter realized his sin and confessed his sin. Unlike Judas, who did have a change of heart but tried to deal with his guilt on his own, Peter had true, godly sorrow (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10) over his sin, which prepared him for the forgiveness he would receive on Easter, when Jesus appeared to the apostles, showed them His hands and side, and spoke the forgiving "Peace be with you."

Still later, in Galilee, Peter got a special singling-out that left no doubt he was restored from being a denier and was placed into the office of confessor. At the Sea of Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee), Jesus showed up for a breakfast on the beach with some of the disciples, including Peter. Jesus

gave Peter a threefold admonition to feed His sheep, which negates Peter's threefold denial, and then, "Follow Me," Jesus said to the restored Peter. And now He says the same to you. "If anyone would come after Me," Jesus says, "let him *deny himself* and take up his cross and *follow Me*. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:34–36, emphasis added).

Through your Baptism into Christ, you have been given a gift greater than the whole world. You have lost your life in this world for the sake of Christ and have now found your life in Him and His kingdom, where you are saved from sin, death, and hell. You now look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. "Come, follow Me," Jesus says. Come, for it is a truly joyful journey. Amen.