

## **Good Friday** ***Peter***

When did the cock crow for you? When did you realize that despite your best intentions you had got it all wrong? You had it all planned out. The good you were going to do, the good you were going to say. You had learned all your lines. And then the drama started. And you jumped in, followed your cues and before you knew it you departed wildly from the script. Nothing had gone as you planned. You had said words you never intended. You had done things you never intended. And then the cock crew; then you realized what a complete mess up you had made of it.

Well, that was exactly how it was for Peter. After the Passover had been celebrated, the last supper, Jesus had hinted darkly that he would have to leave them. Peter, always loyal, always the first to speak his mind, said that wherever Jesus went he would go with him. In fact, he said, he would lay down his life for Jess. And he meant it. He would have done. He intended to do so if necessary.

Jesus' answer was a rebuke to Peter's outburst of love:

Will you really lay down your life for me?  
Very truly I tell you, before the cock crows,  
you will disown me three times!

John 13:38

And on that Friday morning as Peter stood warming himself outside the High Priest's house, the cock crew and Peter knew that Jesus was right. He had disowned him three times. He had done the very opposite of everything he intended.

A few years later, Paul, writing to the Romans asserted that this was true for him as well:

For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.  
I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.  
For I do not do the good I want to do,  
but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Romans 7:14,18,19

And Paul claimed that this not just true for him but for everyone. Paul is Peter is. I am Peter. You are Peter.

But see how the risen Christ treats you. On the shore of Lake Tiberius he asks you a hard question

Do you love me?

John 21:15

You would have answered that easily three days ago - an overwhelming Yes! But three days on you know a little more about yourself, you have greater self knowledge. You have betrayed Jesus three times. And so you reply, a little shame faced,

Yes Lord, you know I love you.  
And don't ask me that question again.

John 21:16

But Jesus does,

Do you love me?  
Yes Lord, you know I love you!

And a third time,

Do you love me?

On this occasion John, the gospel writer, records that you are hurt by the question. It is like Jesus is rubbing it in and so you blurt out,

Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.

John 21:17

Only later do you notice that every time you claim to love Jesus he gives you a responsibility. Every time you tell Jesus, rather shame facedly that you love him, he asks you to do something for him:

Feed my lambs

John 21:15

Look after my sheep.

John 21:17

Feed my sheep.

John 21:17

You have just betrayed your best friend. You have just failed utterly in the smallest responsibility. And Jesus' response is to give you more. You have shown yourself utterly untrustworthy – and Jesus puts his trust in you again. Three times.

That is how Jesus dealt with Peter. I am Peter. You are Peter. That is how Jesus deals with us.

N Clews

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