

The Twelve | Enrolled in the School of Jesus Christ

The Self-Confident Christian

Luke 22.28-38; John 13.32-38

3.31.19

Luke 22.28 *"You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; ²⁹ and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

³¹ *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* ³³ *But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"* ³⁴ *And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."*

³⁵ *And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?"* They said, "No, nothing." ³⁶ *And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one."* ³⁷ *"For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment."* ³⁸ *They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords."* And He said to them, "It is enough."

John 13.34 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

³⁶ *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"* Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." ³⁷ *Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."* ³⁸ *Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."*

We've been walking with the Greatest Educator who ever lived and we've been observing His program – HOW Jesus Christ formed the character of His twelve young protégés. It wasn't a "data-dump", not simply loading them with facts/information but shaping them...and yet, today's episode makes clear that education (even the finest) is NOT REALLY what human beings NEED MOST.

People sometimes say that if the world were JUST educated then we'd realize our potential and all our problems could be solved: THIS passage disagrees.

At the end of three years with the greatest Mentor and Teacher there ever was – these disciples still haven't changed much. It's evident that they need something MORE than instruction –

they/we need rescue from outside ourselves (“extra nos”).

Today, the student-body president speaks for all the students; he shows his “school spirit” – Simon Peter asks, “Lord, why can’t I follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.”

And the Rabbi interprets this as a malignant form of bravado and the worst kind of inflated self-esteem. It’s included in all four Gospels (Matthew 26.35 and Mark 14.31 say the other disciples joined in the swagger). Luke says that Satan got involved (22.31) and yet somehow this embarrassing exposé of apostolic foolishness has a wonderful outcome and has helped billions of people.

Let’s look at:

- 1) A Spiritual Ailment That Education Can’t Fix**
- 2) Jesus Christ’s Modest Proposal**
- 3) Using this Proposal to Help Yourself and Others**

I looked back at a sermon I preached on this text from 1995 and I used an illustration I’ve used like ten times SINCE then...My Irish grandmother (Kitty Burke) came from Ireland as a housekeeper when she was sixteen years old. She had a very sharp wit and in her later years when she’d see a large woman in a small outfit she’d say in her County Cork brogue, “Ah, the poor thing, doesn’t have a mirror at home.”

And of course she knew the woman DID own a mirror but when SHE saw herself in the mirror she didn’t see herself as other people saw her.

The fact is – it’s hard to see one’s self; it’s very difficult to make an accurate self-assessment. We can easily see the faults and fashion “faux pas” in other people but very difficult to see them in ourselves...we all have an appalling self-ignorance.

John Calvin said that we don’t know God because we don’t know ourselves and we don’t know ourselves because we don’t know God. In other words, “If you could really see what a train-wreck you are – you’d cry out to God for help and if you could really see how holy God is you’d see what a train-wreck you are.”

Peter and the disciples don’t see themselves very accurately. They’ve gotten glimpses (Luke 5.8) but they are still ignorant of themselves and still unaware of what Jesus Christ has come to do...“How ignorant ARE they?” you ask. Well, in the Luke passage they’re fighting about how is the greatest disciple. After three years with Jesus and they’re still hung up on this.

It said “a dispute arose among them” – the word “dispute” is used only twice in the NT “philonikia” and it means “love of victory” – they were in perpetual competition – even as Jesus was telling them to love one another – they loved WINNING!

Then Peter says, “Lord, where ARE you going? Why can’t I go with You? I’m gonna help You be a winner! And even if I have to lay down my life for you!” (All the other winners pipe in, “Yeah! Us too!”)

And Jesus says to Peter, “WILL YOU? Will YOU lay down YOUR life for Me? Don’t you see what I have come to do...even after I just washed your feet? And don’t you see your NEED of Me?” (Poor thing doesn’t have a mirror at home!)

So, Peter, I’ll give you the mirror you need. I’ll rescue you from your terrible self-un-awareness and I’ll give you a good excruciating look at your own self – before the sun rises tomorrow – you will deny Me three times. Then you’ll really see what your made of and THEN you’ll see that YOU CAN’T SAVE ME, you can’t even save yourself. YOU NEED RESCUE “extra nos” (from outside yourself and your own potential).

You know, we tell our children, “You can do it!” and there’s a place for that. We want them to succeed (to win) or at least to do their best. We want them NOT to be quitters. We want them to feel secure in our love... we tell them they’re smart, kind and important. You don’t want to coddle them...but also don’t want to shame them or berate them...

We don’t want to be “helicopter parents” (hovering and taking away all the obstacles and DON’T wanna bribe the admissions counselors!) – but in the midst of it all what we really want is for them to see themselves accurately... AND to know God.

And what Jesus Christ is saying here – to His disciples, to us... to our children/grandchildren is – whatever potentialities you might unlock...whatever victories you might win... whatever causes for which you might live and die – there’s ONE THING you just can’t accomplish for yourself – it can’t come from within. It has to come “extra nos” from outside yourself.

To know God and to know yourself is BEYOND you – to be made right with God, with yourself and with others – YOU MUST SEE THAT YOU (and all people) ARE FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED and FALLEN AND JESUS CHRIST came to do what YOU AND I COULD NEVER DO FOR OURSELVES!

When Jesus Christ says to Peter, “Where I go, YOU cannot follow Me...” He’s saying, “YOU, Peter, cannot die for Me – until I have died for YOU!”

Peter is still thinking that OLD/DEAD way – the way everything in this world-system works – quid pro quo (this for that) – you do THIS for God and then He does THAT for you. And Jesus is saying, this is NOT a quid-pro-quo transactional relationship (we’ll see it even more overtly next week in John 15) – this is a relationship where YOU ARE TOTALLY UNABLE TO FIX YOURSELF – I have to do it for you with NO HELP!

I am about to face the enemies YOU could never defeat – this is a fight you can't win.

He tells them they're about to face the end of the world as they know it – muster together all your resources and you will still be infinitely outmatched: "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one."

In other words a Cosmic Battle is about to ensue – I will face the malevolent spirits that have plagued humanity (Col 2.13-15), the accusations of the Law and I will face the just displeasure of My Father – the Justice of God that My people deserve – WILL ALL COME DOWN ON ME! "I will be numbered with the transgressors (as Isaiah predicted) – I will be treated like the ultimate sinner and I'll do it for YOU!"

And the disciples say, "Hey, we have two swords, Lord! Is that good?"

And Jesus Christ says, "Ya!" (They still don't get it – they don't see themselves/need and they don't see how much He loves them and what He's willing do to rescue them).

Now, how do we use this passage – how are we to benefit from this part of the Good News as we live life in this coming week?

First, be clear on what the Gospel really IS: see that Jesus Christ has succeeded in that Ultimate Arena where WE cannot succeed. He lived the life of Perfect Love to God the Father and the life of Perfect Love toward people. He met my requirements as ONLY HE COULD.

He settled the Great Dispute and He came off victorious. IN HIM (represented BY Him) I am victorious – my bad record is dead and buried. God the Father sees me as if I am as righteous as Jesus Christ Himself. My record was given to Him and His record is given to me.

Second, I can lose the bravado. I am learning to stop touting my achievements and instead learning to boast in HIS. I can put away that virtue-signaling where I'm on this treadmill of performance trying to convince the perpetual courtroom judges that I'm a winner, that I'm good enough, smart enough and that MY LIFE IS EXCITING AND FUN (#Blessed).

I pled guilty in the one courtroom that really matters – and because of Jesus Christ – God the Father pronounced me not only innocent but RIGHTEOUS – salvation "extra nos" (from outside myself).

Third, remember that Peter's ingrained karma approach to life (what St Paul would later call the elementary principles of this world – Col 2.8 et al) that idea that WE CAN DO IT – and when we've done it THEN God owes us blessings and a good life – for Peter that transactional way of looking at life and at God and others died HARD. It was like a stubborn, poisonous vine in the garden of his heart. It even rears its toxic head in Galatians CH 2...

Here Jesus predicts it and then it happens later that night – Peter swears and curses to an insignificant slave girl – Peter the Rock denied his Savior.

And THEN there was the great restoration (John 21.14ff) which we'll explore another time... but the great thing is that EVEN this treason against the Kingdom of God, this colossal failure is a) known by Jesus Christ before it happened (God knows about ALL your sins before you commit them and loves you still! – Jesus calls him “Simon, Simon...” a tender address) and b) it's somehow, mysteriously purposed by God to help other believers.

Peter's denial is a redemptive failure - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Because of His Savior's prayers, this tragic failure, led to a turning in Peter – a change – that tenderized Peter the Rock – no longer the boastful winner... “Life is not what I thought it was twenty-four hours ago” – it's not so black-and-white and Peter is much less self-assured, self-confident and in control.

He's standing on one solid Rock (and it's not himself!) and he's amazed at grace and able to hold it out tenderly to others. He's been saved from his own rotten self-confidence and later he would write using the same Greek word Luke used, “once you have turned again” and Peter would write: For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have turned again to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.” (1Peter 2.25)

Does that have a hollow ring to it – like it was written by some “ivory-tower” egg-head? No!

It was written by a fisherman who, through the experience of redemptive failure, had become a shepherd, a man who had failed and been forgiven and accepted and welcomed and restored and commissioned... written by a brother. Simon, Simon, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers...” How many brothers and sisters over the centuries have been strengthened by Peter's failure – when Peter achieved low self-esteem!

And how many people around you – right NOW – might be strengthened by YOUR redemptive failures. It's not that you have to go out and fail in a big sensational way... Just share with others, what's already taken place in you.

Because YOU have known the grace of Jesus Christ – you can have the courage and security NOT in your own healthy self esteem but in God's great victory and the tender, almighty Shepherd to whom we've have turned again and again...