

April 4, 2021
Easter Sunday

Fixation

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Bear with me as we go into this Easter sermon. The gospel I picked for this morning isn't your typical gospel reading for Easter; but I think you will see why it was chosen. First of all, let me put things into context for you. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the events of those days Jesus took His disciples to an upper room, where He celebrated the Passover feast with His disciples. It is at this time that Jesus got down and He washed His disciples' feet; and said if I, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, then you must wash each other's feet. This is when He identified Judas as the one who would betray Him. This is when He instituted the Lord's supper. When all of that was finished, they ended by singing a hymn.

And that is where our gospel picks up. Then they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to them, 'you will all fall away for it is written, I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. Where is that written? Well, it is in the book of Zechariah, the 13th chapter, the seventh verse. When you hear of Jesus quoting the Prophet and telling the disciples this is about you. I think you would agree with me it was not real good news for the disciples. Jesus had already told them two times that He was the Good Shepherd. We find that in the gospel of John. What does He say about the Good Shepherd and His sheep? Well, He says, 'I know my sheep and my sheep know me.' He goes on to say, 'the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.' And so, when Jesus quotes Zechariah, it's very clear what He's doing. He is saying 'I'm the Shepherd, you're the sheep and even though I know you and you know me; you are all going to desert me.' That's when Peter, the disciple with the foot shaped mouth, because he's always the one to speak up right away, says 'even though they will all fall away I will not.' Boy, if that isn't like a phrase straight out of the 21st century! Point the finger at others, sow dissension and discord, even though they might all fall

away, I won't. This kind of sounds like a lot of the stuff in our politics nowadays doesn't it? Jesus comes back and He says; 'truly I tell you.' And understand again, that word 'truly' in the Greek, it is Amen. It's a statement of fact. It literally means, yes it is so. It's very strong, yes it is so! I tell you this very night, before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times. This is spoken directly at Peter. You Peter, this is so, you will deny me three times before the rooster crows twice. Peter comes back with the but, "if I must die with you, I will not deny You."

We see here something we talked about this past week on Monday Thursday, the sin of pride. The word but, in the English language, I've said it before, it's like an eraser. If someone says I love you but; do they really love you? There's a provision coming. And so Peter uses this to basically erase everything Jesus just said. It is contradicting Jesus. He's correcting Jesus. 'I will not deny you even if I must die.' He wasn't alone. Those other disciples had heard what he had said; even though they all desert you, I won't. They all said the same.

But Peter wasn't alone in another way; all of them, he and the disciples, the other ten that were there they were all fixated on the negative news that Jesus had delivered. Let's be very, very, honest. He, they, and we have a very strong tendency to focus on, become fixated on, negative news. But, there's the eraser, some might say there wasn't any good news. Jesus had just quoted scripture. He would be struck, they would scatter, their failure to follow Him, would be the fulfillment of scripture. Who wants to be remembered for failure, being fulfillment of scripture? This was a sad, it was a humiliating, it was an angering message. But there was nothing good, right? You see that's the problem with sinful humans when we fixate on negative news it literally leads to spiritual blindness, deafness, forgetfulness, and all too often rash responses.

Jesus did say, 'you will all fall away, but.' And Jesus uses the word but, so it erases all that business about you're all gonna fall away. But, after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Now there's some really good news! Number one, He will be raised up. Number two, obviously He won't hold a grudge against them. Now why would I say that? Because number three, He says he will go before them and meet

them in Galilee. You see the disciples heard one piece of bad news, 'you're all going to scatter.' What they didn't hear, what they were blind to, were three pieces of good news. Two of them of epic divine proportions. Number one, Jesus is going to overcome death. He is going to fulfill all of those prophecies about death, swallow up death, be raised from the dead, bringing Salvation, fulfillment of all of the prophecies. And, number two, He won't hold a grudge. Because it was their sin that was being on display, right there with Peter and his pride, and the pride of the other disciples; you know we won't leave you either. It was their sin that was on His shoulders. But here's where we now have to bring this into today, and it was our sins that were put on Jesus's shoulders. It was the sin of all mankind that killed Him. And when life has bad news, and that right there is bad news, our sins killed Jesus. We can't fixate on that or any other bad news because we must remember the hope. It is so easy to focus on bad news.

This dates me a little bit, but I remember back in the late 60s early 70s my dad used a song in his sermon. It was a modern song. It was Silent Night. The person began to sing Silent Night; and then in the recording studio they began to play sound clips. Clips of the Evening News, clips of the sounds that were at the Watts riots when they burned the city of Watts down, sounds from Woodstock, and all sorts of public gatherings and protests, and they just kept adding more and more and more until you couldn't hear the person singing Silent Night. Then all of a sudden, all the sound was cut off and you were left with Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. The message was, don't let all of the noise drown out the message of Christmas.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are in a pandemic, we've been in this for over a year, we hear all sorts of contradictory news, we've been through, we have experienced the shutting down, the restriction of you know entertainment, to work, to worship. At the same time we're seeing a progressive agenda being enacted and shoved down our throat. We read and hear of crises on the border, we hear about our government is spending so much money, but where is it going to come from? It is going to fall on our kids. We keep hearing more and more and more bad news and we have to make sure that we don't let Easter be drowned out.

We need to remember hope. We need to remember what Paul wrote in Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the Salvation of all who believe." It is the power of God, by faith in the truth and the Bible. The gospel message is truth. Jesus was born, He did go on a three-year ministry journey, where He performed miracles and He taught truth. The envious religious leaders killed Him, but He rose. He defeated death. He does not hold a grudge against us, and He has gone before us, ascended into heaven, to prepare a place for us, so that we might be where He is. That is what He said. He will return, He will take us home and He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Dear brothers in sisters in Christ, welcome to Easter! He is risen! He is alive and He is here! Every time we celebrate Holy Communion, He comes to us through that bread and through that wine. Our risen Lord is with us. He continues to come to us and let us fixate on these things and become blind and deaf and forgetful of all the garbage that the news or society, or whoever wants to try to put in our head. He is risen! He is here! He walks beside you day by day and He will never leave you nor forsake you. This is the Easter message.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.