

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/1/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

I have on my desk a small weather vane with a rooster on the top. I keep it there to remind me of Peter's denial of knowing CHRIST in the courtyard of Caiaphas house while JESUS was on trial. It is so easy to abandon our loyalty to the LORD when other things distract or threaten us. The real problem is that we put our agenda ahead of CHRIST's.

Last Sunday, we heard how Peter tried to talk JESUS out of going to Jerusalem where HE would die on a cross. Peter was focused on JESUS' crowds, miracles, and teachings, and he wanted them to continue. He understandably didn't want that to end. Yet JESUS knew what HIS death would mean, not just to Peter, not just to the twelve, but to everyone. HE was focused on the needs of all while Peter was fixated on his own wishes.

Two weeks before, we heard the story of the Transfiguration. On top of the mountain, Peter, James, and John witnessed JESUS talking with Moses and Elijah, the two greatest figures in Israel's history. Peter's plan? Build tabernacles, small huts for each of those three great individuals so they could stay on the mountaintop. I suspect, that if JESUS had permitted that, Peter's next step would be to build tabernacles for himself, James, and John. What a tremendous moment up there on the mountain and Peter wanted to stay in that moment. Or at least so they could come back and visit. He wanted it all for himself and his friends without thought of what others might need or want.

Thankfully, JESUS always keeps the bigger picture at the forefront. JESUS insists on going down from the mountain back to the valley and the needs of the many. JESUS insists on going to Jerusalem and dying for the world. JESUS is unmoved by anything that will turn HIM from HIS earthly mission.

Peter finally does seem to get it. But it doesn't come until after JESUS' death and resurrection. JESUS forgives Peter and then instructs him to take leadership of the Church. "Feed MY sheep." Peter still makes mistakes, slipping back into his own agenda like advocating to keep the gospel message only for the Jews. But GOD's plan cannot be stopped and Peter is corrected back to the course GOD wants him to follow.

The rooster is a good reminder of how easy it is to let our own concerns and wishes get in the way of what GOD has in mind. But it's also a reassuring message that GOD's plan will ultimately be done even if we make a selfish choice or go the wrong way. We may choose our way instead of GOD's from time to time, but the rooster's crow can call us back to what GOD wants for us and all creation.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey