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"The Little (or BIG!) Peter in Each of Us: Pride" Text: Matthew 26:30-35; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

It was Thursday night. Jesus had just eaten the Passover with His disciples in the upper room. Even more than that, He had just transformed it - giving them the *new* Passover meal of His Body and Blood. He had washed their feet. He had spoken of betrayal. It was a night unlike any other, and would take a while to digest it all.

After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. A familiar journey to a familiar place. But on the way, more surprise. Jesus speaks of what is going to happen, and with an ominous warning: You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But Peter, not realizing yet the full significance and meaning of what Jesus said, confidently replies: No! It shall not be! Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

You have to marvel at, maybe even admire, such confidence; such a "can do" attitude. The problem is, it is not a confidence born of faith. It is *over*confidence. Spiritual pride. For what is Peter saying with his words? Not just that he will remain steadfast, but that Jesus' "*It is written*" is wrong. Or Jesus' interpretation of it is wrong. To Peter, it seems very possible that the rest of the disciples might fall away, but not him. You're wrong, Jesus. Not me.

To which Jesus replies, *Oh yes, you Peter*. In fact, maybe it could even be said that his falling away would be <u>worse</u> than the others. For not only would he fall away with them, but *truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will <u>deny</u> me three times.*

No! You're wrong again, Jesus, Peter insists. Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!

So, Peter is saying: God's Word is wrong. Jesus is wrong. Peter alone is right. Yes, *all the other disciples said the same thing*, went along with him, suddenly found their courage, too. But it's Peter who leads the way. Peter, whose spiritual pride is leading him down a wrong and dangerous path.

Could the same be said for you and me?

First, a distinction needs to be made. Pride is not necessarily wrong. You can be proud of your children, you can be proud of your accomplishments and the hard work you put in to achieve them. You can have that kind of pride and still thank the Lord for His gifts and the abilities He has given you.

But such pride in spiritual matters is different. Spiritual pride leads *away* from our Lord and His gifts and exalts me and my strength. And that's what makes it dangerous and deadly. That's why the Scriptures are filled with warnings against such pride. Such pride, which in full growth, can lead us to say, like Peter: *God's Word is wrong. Jesus is wrong. I am right.* We see that, actually, in no small way in our world today.

But is it in us? You and me? It is, and here's how you know it: because even as you were hearing those words, <u>you</u> were thinking, *that will never happen to me! I would never say that. I would never do that. Others? Maybe. Sure. But not me.* . . . Yet isn't that <u>exactly</u> what Peter said?

As Paul warned the Corinthians: These things took place as examples for us... they were written down for our instruction... let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

But there's good news for us in the reading tonight - it isn't all bad news. For after the shepherd is struck - struck for all of our sins, including our misplaced, overconfident, spiritual pride - *after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee*, He says. After the shepherd is struck on the cross and the sheep are scattered and all looks hopeless and lost, the Shepherd will rise from the dead and go and find His sheep again. He will gather them to Himself in forgiveness and love. He will go before them and care for them. Yes, they would leave Him, but He will never leave them. Not even death will be able to stop Him. *Chief of [prideful] sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me* (LSB #611).

Peter would soon know that. *God's Word is <u>right</u>*. *Jesus is <u>right</u>*. <u>I</u> am . . . a poor, miserable sinner. And he would weep bitterly. And in this Lenten season, we confess - we same the same thing - as Peter. When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride (LSB #425 v. 1).

Because the <u>only</u> thing worth <u>any</u>thing is not who I am or what I am able to do, but what Jesus has done for me. His atonement for my sin. His defeating of my death. His victory over my hell. His Baptism giving me new life. His Body and Blood feeding me. His life giving me life. So that we can say with Paul: far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14).

That kind of boasting, that kind of pride, may be dangerous, too - we are right around the one year anniversary of the beheading of those 21 Christian martyrs by the Mediterranean

Sea - *but it is not deadly*. Quite the contrary! It is, in fact, life-giving, life-preserving. For it is confidence in the one who not only rose from the dead to life again, but has promised the same for us. It is to confess the one who has gone before us not just to Galilee, but to heaven, to prepare a place for us. It is to know that *whether we live or die, we are the Lord's* (Romans 14:8).

For thus saith God's Word. Thus has Jesus promised. And God's Word is right. Jesus is right. And I . . . I am \underline{His} .

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.