

**“Circling the Drain”**  
**The Gospel According to Mark 14:66-72**  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Church history is marred with difficulties; sometimes such trouble was between professing Christians who hated each other. In opening with this true illustration, please understand that I have no axe to grind; my purpose in sharing this is to make a tie between the sermon text and a very sad, but relevant, chapter from Church history.

In the year 1553, Jeanne D’Albret, Queen of Navarre in France gave birth to a son – Prince Henry Bourbon. Young Henry regularly attended the Huguenot church (Protestants in France were called Huguenots). In 1562, when Henry was 9 years old, the Huguenot Wars began. While worshipping in a barn near Vassy, 60 Huguenot men, women, and children were massacred by a group of Catholic soldiers. The Huguenots retaliated and fought back. In the next decade, there was much bloodshed on both sides. Henry became a leader of the Huguenots, but he longed for peace.

When Henry was 19, he agreed to a marriage to a Roman Catholic girl named Marguerite. Marguerite was the sister of the king of France. Many hoped this marriage between a prince of the Huguenots and a princess of the Catholics might bring about peace between the warring parties.

The royal wedding took place in August 1572. Catherine de Medici, the mother of the bride, arranged for the Huguenots to be killed during and after the wedding in a horrible massacre. 10,000 Huguenots would die in Paris alone, and an additional 70,000 were killed throughout the French countryside. A great mourning went up throughout France. Henry, faced with certain death during the massacre of his fellow believers, denied his Huguenot faith...and a rooster crowed for Henry.

Four years after the massacre, Henry converted to be a Huguenot again. But, 13 years later, in 1589, he reverted to Roman Catholicism when he was offered the crown of France. Lured on by the hope of stopping the continual fighting between the Huguenots and the Roman Catholics, Henry denied his childhood faith a second time...and a rooster crowed for Henry a second time.

As King Henry IV, he gave the Huguenots the right to establish churches and schools. He gave them a number of cities and jobs. These rights were written into the Edict of Nantes; Henry wanted peace, but it never came to pass. The fighting continued, and in 1610, Henry was murdered in cold blood.

I cannot imagine the suffering of that time, nor the blight such fighting still is on the cause of Christ. Yet, many cannot imagine Peter denying His Master three times when Jesus was at His lowest. The passage of sacred Scripture before us today reveals the ease with which Peter denied Jesus. The same ease applies yet today as we also regularly deny our Lord Jesus.

**Mark 14:66-72:**

<sup>66</sup>Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. <sup>67</sup>And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.”

<sup>68</sup>But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.” And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

<sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, “This is *one* of them.”  
<sup>70</sup> But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, “Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*.” <sup>71</sup> Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”

<sup>72</sup> A second time *the* rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.”

You’ll recall that we passed over a verse in the sermon text we examined last week. As Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to the Jewish high priest, **Mark 14:54** teaches, “...Peter followed (Jesus) at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.” Today’s passage picks back up at that point.

We just read what Peter was doing as His Master and Lord was being grilled by the Jewish religious elite. It’s not the kind of thing Peter would probably want included in his obituary. But this accounting of His three-fold denial of Jesus is included in all four gospel accounts – Mark’s account is before us. The others are **Matthew 26:69-75**; **Luke 22:54-62**; and **John 18:15-18**.

In verses 66-68, we see Peter’s first denial of Jesus. Peter is standing near a servant girl who worked for the high priest (Caiaphas). She recognizes Peter as one of Jesus’ disciples. She asks, “You were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” (ESV/MSG) Though she was correct, Peter quickly denied it, saying as we might today, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” As he goes out to the porch, a rooster crows. This is the same Peter who boldly affirmed in **Mark 14:29**, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.”

Peter’s second denial takes place in verses 69 & 70a. The same servant girl sees Peter a little while later. Others were now also warming themselves by the fire. She said to them, “He’s one of them.” (MSG) Peter once again denies the truth. This is the same brash disciple who declared to Jesus in **Mark 14:31**, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”

Peter denies Jesus a third time in verses 70b-71. This time, the people standing next to him said to Peter, “You’ve *got* to be one of them. You’ve got ‘Galilean’ written all over you.” (MSG) When I was younger and was challenged on the truth of something I did or said, I defended my words by sometimes saying, “Cross my heart and hope to die.” If only Peter said that instead of what he did. In reply to a third challenge of his allegiance to Jesus, Peter cursed and said, “I never laid eyes on this man you’re talking about.” And, off in the distance, a rooster crowed a second time.

The guilt and shame built to a point that Peter could no longer contain it. Verse 72 reveals that Peter wept. **Matthew 26:75** and **Luke 22:62** add the adverb “bitterly” as in Peter “wept bitterly.” He collapsed in tears.

We read some terrifying words of our Lord Jesus in **Matthew 10:33** – “But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” This surely would apply to

Peter, who heard these words from Jesus' lips. Yet, here he is denying he knew Jesus to people who knew the opposite to be true.

We are guilty of similar denials. We can deny Jesus by absolute silence, not saying anything at all, when biblical truth should (*must?*) be brought into the conversation. We could also deny Jesus by our actions. Just live the way non-Christians live and we actually deny Jesus – that can be shacking up with a person of the opposite gender to whom we're not legally or biblically married; or participating in an affair with someone not our spouse. We can also deny Jesus by the words we speak. Among the possibilities is to confess that we're Christians and then out of the same mouth, sputtering profanity (taking the Lord's name in vain) and speaking lies and falsehoods.

*What was Peter's problem?* It was simply this – **he chose to disown His Lord rather than to deny himself.** Jesus tells us exactly the opposite when we studied what He taught earlier in this very gospel account (**Mark 8:34-35**), "...Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Yet, this three-fold denial was also the turning point in Peter's life. Here in the most painful and memorable of ways, Peter saw himself as he really was, repented, and was remade into the great apostle. (Ferguson, 252)

**Applications:** (By way of a series of questions)

1 - While Jesus was undergoing a sham trial before the Jewish leaders, Peter was reluctant to identify himself with Jesus. It can be easy for us to be hard on Peter. We may deceive ourselves into thinking that we would have done better than he did; I remind you, this is Jesus' preeminent apostle we're talking about! ***Do you reluctantly identify with Jesus?*** Consider the possibilities, for they are many. As believers in Christ, we have opportunity to walk with Him each and every day. We will live differently from those around us who are not born of God. It may be the prayers we say before a meal in a public restaurant. It may be attending worship with our church family on Sunday, even if it is the only day off from work that we have! *From this point forward, will you walk with Jesus?*

2 - ***Do you refute that Jesus is God?*** Many people believe in a higher power than themselves. They have a perception of God that one cannot find in sacred Scripture. The Bible is clear – Jesus Christ is as much God as the Father is and the Holy Spirit is. As such, Jesus' words are not merely the red-lettered ones you may have in your New Testament. Since Jesus Himself is the Word of God – He was present before He created the heavens and the earth – every word in the Bible (including the black letters). We dare not let the lie continue that Jesus never said anything about today's social issues because they may not be found among the teaching of the gospel accounts. Those 4 books are very important ones, it's true. But they are no means the only ones in which Jesus speaks – there are 62 more books in the Bible where Jesus speaks!

3 – In denying Jesus, **Peter compromised his walk** to the servant girl of the high priest and the people standing with him as they warmed themselves over a fire. Whatever it was that they knew about Jesus was now nullified by Peter's self-preserving words, though he was a disciple of Christ. *Are you one to seek compromise when it comes to the Bible's teaching concerning the important moral issues facing our culture today?* Such important issues include the reality that **all** life is important to God, to include unborn human life! The Bible speaks clearly into the sexual confusion of our culture - Sexual activity is reserved to be enjoyed only within the bounds of holy matrimony! To that end, the Bible teaches that marriage is a union of one man and one woman in covenant union until one spouse buries the other!

If you waffle in such issues as abortion, sex, and marriage, you probably aren't spending adequate time drinking in God's Word, nor are you taking advantage of participating in one of the many Bible studies and prayer groups held just about every day (and some days there are multiple choices). Know what the Bible actually teaches, and then stand upon it.

4 - *Do you weep over your sin like Peter did?* Of course, that would mean you have to consider yourself a sinner. The Apostle John puts it this way in **I John 1:8-10**:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Pray that God would give you a greater sense of the great need you have for Jesus to wipe away each sin, and the strongholds of sin you hold precious in your life.

"No temptation is too small to overcome us. Let us beware of making light of temptations because they seem little and insignificant. There is nothing little that concerns our souls. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. A little spark may kindle a great fire. A little leak may sink a great ship. A little provocation may bring great corruption out from our hearts, and end in bringing our souls into great trouble." (Ryle, 333)

Across our country today, many congregations are observing Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. 46 years ago this coming Tuesday, on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case *Roe v. Wade*. The court determined that every state had the duty to give women unfettered access to abortion up until the birth of the child. It was a day whose infamy overshadows December 7, 1941 in the memory of the church in America. Since that time the lives of some 50,000,000 babies were taken in the womb with the full protection of the state and the knowledge of the church.

Abortion in America is perhaps the greatest evil in our history. As a culture, we're circling the drain. The American holocaust dwarves the evil of Nazi Germany in both numbers of the dead, and the numbers of we who know what is happening. To be silent is to be complicit. It is to tell our children and grandchildren that we are as guilty as those Germans who knew, and were silent. Of course our pews are filled with the guilty. The same is true of every sin we preach against. Of course the grace of God in Christ trumps even this great evil.

But the same Jesus who died for our sins calls on us to let the children to come to Him. When we are silent, when we treat abortion as a mere social problem or political issue, we expose our complicity. So we must preach faithfully. Proclaim the holiness of God whose image the least of these bear. Call for repentance from the pulpit God placed under your care. Preach the same good news that He preached, that the captives are to be set free, that those marching toward death are to be rescued. Preach, and take the heat. Walk by faith, and preach by faith, in season and out of season.