

The Passion of Christ with Peter's Eyes

Sermon – Maundy Thursday April 13, 2017

I will read for you one more time the following verses:

*“Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Jesus, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’ But Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on **human things**.’*

Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it’. (Matthew 16:22-25)

Peter is a very interesting person of the Bible. His original name was Simon. Shortly before Jesus died, in a dialog, Jesus changed his name, saying: “You will be called PETER, which means ROCK.” Often the Bible is using both of his names, like Simon Peter, which shows that this disciple was acting partly in old ways, based on his old personality, but he struggled also to act as a new Christian.

Peter is the more active and the more outspoken person amongst the disciples. If Jesus does something or says something, he is almost always the first one to act or to reply. Peter has his opinion and he is activating himself quickly. He seems to be a great servant of the Lord. Even the movies created about Jesus's life present Peter as a well put-together person, who is almost dominating the disciples. The biggest problem with him is that, after a while, Peter wants to dominate even Jesus.

Peter first met Jesus at the lake of Galilee, where he was fishing. After an unsuccessful night, Peter gave up. He was very tired, upset and hungry, and was not able to bring home anything to his family. On that morning, Peter met Jesus, who asked him to let Him into his boat and to go back fishing. Then Peter followed Jesus commandment and his boat was filled with fish.

After a big success, Peter realized that Jesus is not a “casual” person. He has power. He can do miracles like nobody did before. Jesus called Simon to be his disciple but, at that time, Peter was not the person who Jesus could use for His mission.

Peter was around Jesus for three years. Peter saw how Jesus healed so many ill people, how he multiplied five loaves of bread and two fishes, how he calmed down the sea, how Jesus cast the demons out from a person, but, at one point, Peter got into an argument with the other disciples about who was the most important amongst all of them. He did not see either that Jesus was the most important.

Peter heard quite a few times that Jesus mission was to die for this world in order to save us from our punishment, but it seems Peter did not take it seriously. The psychological question is: WHY did Peter not take Jesus mission seriously?

In our Scripture reading, Jesus is telling to the disciples that he **MUST** go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

It seems that Peter did not hear the end of the sentence Jesus told them. We will see that in our Easter Sunday's message, and please try to remember this scene. Peter heard **ONLY** the first part of the sentence Jesus said: I **MUST** go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.

Peter was totally against what Jesus said and did not agree with Jesus plans. Why?

Because Peter had his own plans with Jesus and Peter built all his plans around Jesus, who had power, who did miracles.

When Jesus talks about his suffering and death, look what Peter does. We read that: "Peter took him aside and began to **rebuke** him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.'"

Why do you think Peter said these things to Jesus? Because Peter was sorry for Jesus? Not really. Because he started to worry about himself?

If Peter had the courage to open up and tell honestly his worries, he would say:

- Jesus, you cannot die. If you die, all my dreams and plans are gone.

- I followed you because I saw you can make miracles. I followed you everywhere to make my name well-known by the people of Israel.
- I did what you said Jesus: I shared bread with 5,000 people because I wanted THEM to see ME as your servant.
- I wanted to walk on the sea to show the disciples that I am more than they are.
- I walked with you Jesus, because I knew that one day you will be very famous and I can be famous on your side, too.
- I followed you because I was hoping you will be the King of Israel and I will have a high position next to you.
- You will sit in a high throne and I will be seated on your right hand as your most faithful servant.
- Sorry Jesus, I hope you are not expecting me to give up ALL my dreams and plans about MY famous future just because you want to die!

Peter was not able to understand why Jesus took the cross on his shoulder, why Jesus accepted the thorn crown, why He did not say anything when He was surrounded by false accusations, or why Jesus did not do something when he was mocked and humiliated.

Peter followed and served Jesus for a long time for his own selfish desire, to be famous and to get into a great position one day. It is very sad that today some people do things in Jesus name just because they want a “position” and to rule the congregation. They do all these things without seeing their real intentions. (I am not talking about Calvin members).

But let me ask you please: Do you serve this congregation because you want to be a **dominating leader**, because you love yourself and your own goals, or because you love Jesus and you want to be a **servant leader**?

Do you understand Jesus? Do you understand that Jesus did and suffered all these things to save you and to pay for your sin? Do you understand that Jesus wants to give you eternal life in His eternal glory?

Do you understand that, even today, Jesus wants to change the Simons into Peters? Are you setting your mind on divine things or on **human things**? Are you ready to deny your human goals?

Are you ready to change?

Are you ready to give up who you are and let him work in you, to make you what Jesus wants to make from you?

Are you ready tonight to embrace his cross and are you ready to lay down your life into Jesus's hands to be saved and changed? I hope we are all ready for changes.