

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT

Peter's denial, Wednesday of Holy Week

Welcome

Would we like to rewrite the history of our lives? Of course we cannot do this because what is done is done. Except strangely enough with Jesus this isn't quite true. Jesus can rewrite the history of our lives in such a way that we are no longer controlled by our pasts. Anna reflects on this in examining today's passage, Peter's denial.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 26.69-75

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

But he denied it before all of them, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."

When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man."

After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you."

Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed.

Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection

I'm sure we have all had moments where we have done something and almost instantly thought, "Oh NO!" and had that horrible sinking feeling in your stomach and racing pulse. Soon after I learnt to drive, I drove to a friend's house, and in the process of trying to park on their drive, managed to scrape my car (which was actually my parents' car!) against their parents' car. It was definitely one of those, "Oh no!" moments. But it was too late, I couldn't undo my actions and I can remember my stomach sinking and my heart rate increasing as I got out of the car to tell them what I'd done (thankfully, both sets of parents were very kind and understanding). I wonder if you can remember any of your own, "Oh no!" moments?

Today we remember one of Peter's "Oh no!" moments.

I've always felt that I could relate to Peter; he often seems to speak or act without fully thinking things through; he often seems to ask silly questions; and he gets things wrong. Essentially, he comes across as very human. And this story of Peter's denial in Matthew, which is also found in the other Gospels, is another example of his humanness.

Peter must have been terrified. Jesus had been arrested.

Jesus, who he thought had been going to save the people.

Jesus, who had healed people and raised people from the dead.

Jesus, who he knows.

Jesus, who he loves.

This Jesus has been arrested.

What would happen if people knew he had been one of his followers? Had been one of his friends? Would he be arrested?

So, he denies it once: “I do not know what you are talking about.”

He denies it twice: “I do not know the man.”

He denies it a third time: “I do not know the man!”

And then the cock crows, and Peter realizes what he has done.

This beautiful painting – “Peter’s Denial” by Rosana Casco – seems to embody how Peter was probably feeling; his body curled in on itself, with his head in his hands. The realization he can’t unsay what he has just said. He has let Jesus down, just as Jesus had predicted. He must have been devastated. Maybe his stomach sank and his heart raced.



But Peter’s denial is not the end of the story. When Peter meets the risen Jesus, Jesus isn’t angry, he doesn’t shout at him, he doesn’t tell him off. In the Gospel of John, we find the beautiful story of Jesus “re-instating” Jesus (John 21.15-17). Just as Peter denied Jesus three times, Peter declares his love for Jesus three times. And each time Peter affirms his love for Jesus, Jesus gives him a new command: “Feed my lambs”, “Tend my sheep”, “Feed my sheep”. Jesus doesn’t give up on Peter or reject Peter. He has already chosen Peter to lead his church – “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16.18) – and Peter’s denial doesn’t make Jesus change his mind.

Jesus knows Peter. Jesus loves Peter. And Jesus knows and love us too. As the words of Psalm 139 declare,

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

Jesus knows about all of our “Oh no!” moments; he knows us completely and loves us completely. It may be there is something in particular in your life that you regret and want to say sorry to God for, and Holy Week is a really valuable opportunity to bring before God those things, confident in the knowledge that he loves us and forgives us our sins. And just like with Peter, he is only too delighted to give us a fresh start and help us to let go of our “Oh no!” moments.

Anna

Points for Prayers

- To bring before God our ‘Oh no !’ moments and to allow God to give us a fresh start
- Our own need both to forgive and be forgiven
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers
- Prime Minister’s health and for government
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

We pray that ‘we might live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us’ (Ephesians 5:2)