Carl Thrun

Ash Wednesday

Luke 22: 31-34

Intro. Perhaps compliment people for their vast turn out to commemorate once again the Lord's passion and death. Right here during the next six weeks we will hear and God-Willing bring into our hearts the very essence, the crowning glory of our religion. We will recall once again the greatest battle of all time. We will see with our mind's eye the forces of hell with all fury and violence wage war against the very God Himself. And to our amazement and utter joy we will listen to the story of why this terrible and most gruesome battle was fought. It was fought for a stake. It was fought for a treasure. It was fought for you and me and all men. Jesus suffered and was crucified on the cross that you, everybody in this big, wide world might have eternal life. Think of it. -- Satan and all the powers of hell against God for you and for me. Unbelievable, but true!

The theme for these six Lenten meditations is: JESUS, LOVER OF SINNERS. The texts will all be taken from the Gospel of St. Luke. It would be well if each of you read through the Gospel of St. Luke during these next six weeks; and as you read keep this theme always in mind. See how Jesus truly did love sinners; how He healed the sick, the maimed, and the blind. Learn how Jesus loves you. May God, the Holy Spirit grant it!

READ TEXT

I. Proud, arrogant, enthusiastic, full of life and fight -- this was Peter. He knew all the answers. The Lord needn't worry about him. "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." The other disciples maybe, but not him. Peter had all the self-confidence in the world. Nothing could happen to him. Seated upon the throne of his self-confidence, Peter was ready to buck against all the forces of hell. Perhaps Satan was desirous of having the disciples, but the Lord need have no concern about Peter. He would stick with his Master.

II. Can you see the folly of Peter? It was sinful, arrogant pride. There was no humility in Peter's heart. Puffed up with his own ego, he was self-confident. He trusted in himself. We all know how within the space of a few short hours, before the cock crew announcing the arrival of the dawn, Peter had failed miserably. He denied his Lord not once, but three times. Peter relied upon his own ability and strength, and his own ability and strength failed him.

III. Have you come to church this evening with a misconceived notion of your own Christianity? Do you have the self-confidence of Peter? Is your Christianity built upon YOURSELF or is it in CHRIST? Are you sitting upon the plush cushions of pride and conceit, or do you look to the Almighty God and seek His help in overcome the guile and trickery of Satan? How often do you come to church and Bible class, there to rededicate your life to Christ? How often do you read and study God's precious Word, there to obtain fuel to fight Satan? Never get the idea

that Christianity is an easy thing. It is no express elevator to heaven with no stops inbetween. The forces of heaven and hell are constantly fighting within the Christian. Are you arming yourself with the armor of Satan which has its source in the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh? Or are you arming yourself with the armor of God which has its source in God's Word and the sacraments?

IV. Consider how often you have denied your Lord. You men, did you perhaps curse with the boys at work today, denying the Lord that bought you? When was the last time you told or heard a dirty story, identifying yourself with Satan and denying the Lord that bought you. When was the last time you had too much to drink and acted unbecoming a Christian, denying the Lord that bought you? You women, do you dress in all modesty or do you dress to seduce and tantalize men? Sex has its proper place in the home, but not on the street corner. Ask yourself whether Jesus would be proud of your wardrobe. You teen agers, when you go out on dates are your actions becoming that of Christians? Are you associating with other Christian boys and girls, or are you being swayed away into the filth and dirt of delinquency? You boys and girls, are you acquiring bad habits and sinking into Christian lazyness, or are you giving your energy to the Lord? All of you, examine yourself and see how you have failed the Lord that bought you.

V. Jesus only wants a humble heart. He wants no part of self-confidence, pride, and arrogance. Only when we are lying prostrate before Him, surrounded on all sides with our own unworthiness; where we can't even so much as raise one finger to aid ourselves -- only then will the Lord receive us. He wants us to trust only in Him. And so, He often allows Satan to tempt us, to give us grief, sickness, suffering, and pain whereby we will learn not to look to ourselves, but solely to Him for help.

VI. Jesus loved Peter. Jesus loves us. Jesus loves sinners. He traveled the road to the cross for sinners like you and me, not for anything else. There He bore our sins. Our guilt was upon His shoulders. All the suffering, the terrible agony was for you and me. He wants you and me and all others "to be His own and live under Him in His kingdom." What a comfort it is to know that our Lord and Savior Who went to so much discomfort to redeem us intercedes for us as He did for Peter before the throne of His Father.

Concl. May God the Holy Spirit give you a firm faith which has its focus only upon the crucified Savior.

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