5th Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows - 1964

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 18: 25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

ARE NOT YOU ALSO ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES?

Are not you also one of His disciples? The question cuts through all of the thin veneer and brings us face to face with the reality of our relationship wi Christ. Are not you also one of His disciples? Of course, a great deal depends o who is asking the question. In the warm intimacy of the other disciples Peter was quick to tell His Lord: Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee in any wise. In the palace of the high priest, however, it was a different story. Are not you also one of His disciples? - I am not!... Tonight, in the warm, quiet comfort of the church it is comparatively easy for all of us to profess our loyalt as disciples of Christ. But how will it be tomorrow - at work, in the office, at school, in our homes, toward husband and wife, children toward parents, parents toward children, toward neighbors and all those whom we may happen to meet. A moder cynic has declared that preachers are mis-guided, blinded, self-deluded fools if they imagine that what they preach to their people on Sunday is in any way effecti in their lives on Monday. He goes on to say that the same man who gives all the appearances on the weekend of being a Christian - devoted to his church, his wife, and his children - who chats with his neighbor over the back fence - is an entirel different person when he enters the business world on Monday. Who of us would dare to deny that the question put to Peter is not completely modern and relevant for us today: Are not you also one of His disciples?

In the short space of a couple of hours the question confronted Peter th three times. Three times he denied before them all saying, I do not know the Man. Peter knew all right, Peter knew, for his own words confessed this truth: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He knew, for Christ had drawn him into the inmost circle of disciples - This is the Man whom wind and waves obey - This is the Man before whom death recedes: Maiden, I say unto thee arise - This is the Man with His face out-shining the sun and His garments whiter than snow on the Mount of Transfiguration - This is the Man before whom Moses and Elijah, the greatest men of

Israel's day, were humble.. This is the Man who had looked him in the eye and warn him of his faithlessness: Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny Me three ti

We all stand beside Peter here. We have seen all the things that Peter saw and we have heard His gracious words for us. And we have forgotten Him as Pet forgot. We are so terribly concerned about the world and all its thoughts. We ar concerned about our standing and their opinion. I ask you people to stand up and confess your Lord - to witness to His truth and love - I ask you what He means to you and what He does in you and through you, and you will blush as I have blushed a thousand times and you will seek some other thing to talk about - the weather, o your children's school - the cars you drive, the new parsonage you built. It is s much easier that way. This makes no sharp demand on me. With a new house to fron for me, with all its elegance to feast the eye and give me status, it is far easie to talk about things than of the Living God - far easier to talk about budgets, an programs, and activities, and socials, and projects; but when it comes to what the world needs most - the shining sparkle of the clear-eyed faith, the strong confession of Christ's blessed Name, the willingness to carry out beyond the cockcrows a a thousand dawns the duties and the pledges and the promises we have made - that i a different, harder thing.

Are not you also one of His disciples? A few hours before Peter gloried in the place he had at Jesus' side. But now, suddenly, he wants no more of Him - the Rock grows weak, the fears grow great, and Peter swears he never knew this Lor He neither walked with Him nor ate with Him - He cursed His name - but, even so, h cannot hide - his speech agrees thereto. The way he talks and acts proclaims out loud where he has been and whom he has loved the night before. Peter, the Galilea rock - Peter, the bold confessor - Peter, the fearless fisherman - turned coward, and traitor, and cheap curser. Who can explain him in his denials and fears? Who can explain us?

The glory of this story lies in its end and in the answers which our hearts must give us tonight. When Peter forgot and cursed and swore that he never

His Lord, who was it that remembered? When Peter, who had no business at the fire of the world got caught, who was it that could hear his fuming, and his cursing, and his Galilean accent? You know the answer perfectly. You know, because right here you find yourself caught by His eyes - and so do I. The Lord turned and look at Peter, and Peter remembered the Word of the Lord. AND PETER REMEMBERED - What a blessed thing is memory! Peter could remember when this Man had called him to b a fisher of men and he followed Him - completely captivated by His person and the wonder of His ways. From that hour on he called Him his Lord - he called Him the Son of the Living God - he wanted to go nowhere else, but to be with Him. Those were glorious days - the thousands coming, eager for the Words of his Lord. At His feet were the sick, and the lame, and the halt, and the blind, and His enormous pity helping everyone - the many bewildered, and frustrated, and idiot people of His time - an aroused populace living under the cross of desolating superstition, who came from all the land, drawn by the power of this Christ. He helped them all! And Peter saw all this, and heard all this, and it thrilled him to the very roots of his being. He was bold to confess that this was the Man from Heaven - this was the Son of the Living God. This was what Peter had to remember on that fateful night!

So many years lie between us and Peter. We think we have learned so many things. Yet, what does any of our wisdom or knowledge mean - unless we remember th miracle of His love, unless we remember His Words of joy, and hope, and assurance? Unless you and I have learned to think of Him as a living Presence - unless we know that His eyes are truly upon us now - unless we feel that He is here, we have no reason to remain. Unless He means all the world to us tonight, then this House of God means nothing - then all of our singing and all of our worship mean nothing. Unless He means all the hope of eternity for us, then there is no hope at all. Unless there is in Him who looks at us tonight the joy of the Resurrection and the hope of seeing Him again, there is no rhyme or reason in anything we are doing here

Do you want your children happy as the angels in heaven over the joy of

Christmas and the glory which came when He was born? Do you want their pledges of faithfulness at Confirmation made to a Living Lord - to the glorious Son of God Himself? Do you want to be able to have the assurance that your marriage vows are blessed by Him who has promised His Presence with us everywhere? Do you want to be able to be sure of seeing your loved ones again in the New Jerusalem beyond the grave? Do you believe that the Gospel is more than words - that Jesus has the words of eternal life? Then you must not deny Him - then you must give Him His place in your life, hour by hour, day by day. Or, if you have denied Him and His eyes are upon you, then know the way of repentance and the open arms of forgiveness waiting for you. Remember His love and His promises: Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out - Come unto Me - I will give you rest - Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.

You and I are called to be the sons and daughters of the Living God. You must know that you are more precious than the whole world. You are His own, bought not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. You are the temples of the Living God. Your smallest child, brought to this little chapel in baptism, is more important than great congregations gathered to sing loudly the praises of a God whom they do not love. Your child, just one of them in Sunday School or worship, is more precious than the whole world. Your family, those who gather with you day after day under the shelter of the Almighty, is destined to be a part of the family of God forever in heaven. That is why we have come here tonight - to hear His Word and to remember - to worship and adore - to know that His eyes are upon us. And surely, we cannot leave without being concerned about the hundreds of our congregation who are not here - without being determined to speak to them about their soul which is so precious in the sight of our Lord - without reminding them of their promises of faithfulness and devotion. Are not you also one of His disciples?

After His resurrection Jesus sought Peter out. Three times He asked Him: Simon, son of John, do you love Me? With the tears again streaming down His cheeks

Peter answered: Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You. God grant th that may be our answer tonight, born of real repentance: Lord, You know that I lov You. And then, let us go out with Christ's great commission ringing in our ears: Feed My lambs; feed My sheep!

Amen.