

Just No Excuse

Mark 14:26-52

Lent 2, February 28, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Do you think that the disciples did right by the Lord? Do you think it was right for the disciples to desert the Lord when Judas brought out the soldiers to arrest Jesus? Do you think it was right for them to flee when He got arrested? Does anybody believe that what they did was ok in the sight of God?

If you do think they are guilty, does it matter to you that the Lord predicted that they would desert Him? Does it matter to you that the Lord Himself said that they would fall away from Him?

For some of you, you might soften your judgment against the disciples a little bit, but for most of you, you would just chalk it up to divine foreknowledge. You would argue that because Jesus is God He knows what His disciples are going to do even if they do not. You would argue that He is telling them in advance what they are going to do, but that does not exonerate them of responsibility before the Lord for falling away from Him when He is being arrested.

Does it matter that Jesus quotes prophesy when He tells the disciples that they will all fall away from Him? Does it matter that Jesus quotes the psalms which say, "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered"? Does it matter that the "I" of that quote is God? The prophesy states that God will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. God is the one who ultimately organizes our Lord's entire passion and crucifixion. That includes the striking of the shepherd. The prophesy goes on to state that the striking of the shepherd will precipitate the scattering of the sheep. Now, does this matter in your assessment of the disciples? Or do you still think that they are guilty in spite of the fact that the Lord Himself said it would be this way?

Does it matter to you that the Lord brings His Word to pass? Does it matter that every Word that He has spoken has come to pass? In this way the Word of the Lord is creative and active. It does what it says. Thus as soon as the Lord utters the words, "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered," the Lord will bring it to pass. Does that matter to you? Does it matter that the Lord is bringing to pass the scattering of the disciples when the Lord is arrested? Or do you believe that in spite of the prophesy that the disciples are still culpable?

Is Peter innocent?

He is going to deny the Lord three times before the rooster crows twice? Is Peter innocent when He denies the Lord?

Doesn't the obvious fact that Peter is denying the Lord out of fear of being discovered to be a disciple of Jesus and put to death with Him seal Peter's fate as a wicked sinner?

Or does the fact that the Lord predicted that Peter would do this exonerate Peter of his responsibility before God? After all when the Lord speaks His Word, He brings it to pass. Since the Lord predicted that Peter would deny Him three times and the word of the Lord always comes to pass, doesn't it stand to reason that Peter was not responsible for denying the Lord three times, but rather the Lord made Peter do it by the power of His word?

Does anyone believe that at all? Or do you still hold Peter responsible for the sin of denying the Lord when the Lord needed Him most?

And if you condemn the disciples for these actions taken in cowardice even though through them the Lord brought about our salvation, then you also condemn yourself.

The Lord said that you are a sinner. The Lord said that you were born a sinner and would remain a sinner until redeemed. The Lord said that if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If that is the case and the Lord always brings about His word, then surely He is the source of sin and not us, right? If we were born sinners, we cannot help but to sin, surely that makes our sins ok, right? Surely God would not damn us for something that we were born into?

And some of you reveal that you believe this when you say to me regarding your sins, "I can't help it. I'm just a sinner."

Repent!

For if you will not exonerate the disciples for what they did when they denied and deserted the Lord, then you cannot exonerate yourself when you claim that your sins are beyond your control because you were born that way.

If you let yourself off of the hook, then you must let them off of the hook. There are no two ways about it. If you have spent your life condemning the apostles for their cowardice on the night of our Lord's arrest, then you have condemned yourself for your cowardice which refuses to resist sin, but rolls over and says, "I can't help it. I was born a sinner."

If neither you nor the disciples are exonerated, but stand guilty before God, what hope is there for you? The hope is that your sin and the apostles' sins are not the only things that our Lord predicted. He also said, "When I am raised, I will go before you into Galilee."

"When I am raised!" he says. "When I am raised!"

Your Lord asserts His resurrection with the same certainty that He asserts the sins of His disciples! He is just as confident about His own resurrection as He is that the disciples will desert Him in fear, that Peter will deny Him three times, and that you will sin. He is just as certain of His own resurrection as He is that you will sin against Him. One thing is as certain as the other.

He tells His original disciples that He will go before them into Galilee after He rises from the dead. This gives them something to look forward to in their despair. When they flee, they all know that they have done wrong. After Peter denies Jesus, and the rooster crows, Peter goes out and weeps bitterly. He knew he had done wrong. Even his act of boldly cutting off the ear of the servant of the chief priest did not comfort. Boldness does not make up for cowardice. But Peter had been told that this would happen. Peter had also been told that Jesus would rise and go before them into Galilee. The resurrection of Jesus is just as certain as the cowardice of Peter. The resurrection of Jesus is just as certain as the desertion of the disciples. The resurrection of Jesus is just as certain as your sin.

And He gives them something to look forward to. In the midst of their remorse, to keep them from despair, Jesus tells them that He will go before them into Galilee. They now have something to look forward to after they desert Him, deny Him, and flee.

Your sins have no excuse. You know that they are yours. You know the fact that the Lord predicted their coming and accurately described your sin condition before God does not make you innocent of wrongdoing. You are the one who is doing the wrong. It doesn't matter that God said this would happen. You are still the one in the wrong.

The resurrection of Jesus gives you something to look forward to even while you despair over your sins. And if you do not despair over your sins, then you are still in that damnable thinking that says it isn't really your fault because you were born a sinner and you cannot help it.

The resurrection of Jesus points to your resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus establishes your resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus shows you what your resurrection will be like. Your resurrection is coming because His resurrection came.

It gives you something to look forward to when you despair over your sins and shame. It gives you something to look forward to even in the midst of falling away from Him. It gives you something to look forward to even on the day of your death.

We have a name for that. It is called hope. When the disciples fled, they made possible the arrest of Jesus. The arrest of Jesus made possible His crucifixion. His crucifixion makes possible your hope. His resurrection guarantees it.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.