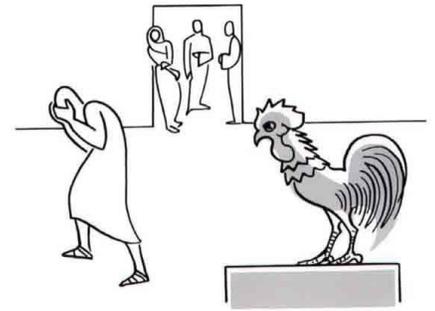


**ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH-WELS
SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
PEOPLE OF THE PASSION—SIMON PETER —
A MAN OF POWERFUL CONTRADICTIONS
LUKE 22:31,32,61,62 & JOHN 21:17
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³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” ...⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

John 21:17 ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Anaiah is 9 years old – a 4th grader? Her sister Camry is just 5 years old. Anaiah and Camry were walking across the road – holding hands the way they always do – when Anaiah realized a truck was bearing down on them. There wasn’t time for both of them to get out of the way. And so in an act of sisterly love and powerful courage – Anaiah pushed her little sister to safety and took the full impact of the truck herself! Their mommy ran out into the road as fast as she could. Anaiah wasn’t even breathing. The mommy screamed for help and asked anybody just to call the paramedics! The bus driver--Loretta pulled up and began CPR. They took Anaiah to the hospital where they discovered she had suffered a broken neck – internal injuries and both her legs were broken – one so badly it had to be removed! The rest of her life has been changed – because of that one moment – when she saw the danger – and pushed her sister to safety – suffering all the hurt to save the sister she loved! What a pale *pale* picture of all that Jesus did to save us. Jesus gave up his life – to the torturous death on a cross – to wash away all our sins. Jesus gave up his life – that we might have eternal life. This 4th midweek Lenten Vesper we continue to consider the little people of the passion. We have looked at Judas the traitor – the betrayer. We have seen Caiaphas – the Chief Priest who prophesied – it is better for one to die – to save the people. And we saw Nicodemus – quiet at first – visiting Jesus in the night. Then Nicodemus – bold to confess his faith as he claimed Jesus’ lifeless body to give it a dignified but hasty burial. And tonight we will see:

Simon Peter – a man of powerful contradictions.

- 1. Simon Peter shamefully denied Jesus, then**
- 2. Simon Peter boldly confessed Jesus.**

As we catch up in spirit with the Lord Jesus – he is talking to Simon Peter – *Cephas* – the Rock! Simon Peter is a man of powerful contradictions! Remember the time Jesus sent the disciples on ahead of him – in a boat – across the Sea of Galilee. ²²**Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.** ²³**After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.** ²⁴**But the boat was already a long distance**

from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³²When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" That was Simon Peter – out of the boat and walking on water. And that was Simon Peter – sinking – crying out for help! What contradictions. Simon Peter was bold to declare his love for Jesus. And it was Simon Peter who argued with Jesus when Jesus said he was going to die to save us. In one of the sharpest rebukes in all of Scripture Jesus **turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** Matthew 16:23 Simon Peter would be the disciples who was crucified upside down for his faith – upside down – because he didn't count himself worthy to die the same way his Savior died! What a man of powerful contradictions!

The devil – it has been said before – goes after Jesus' very disciples – because he already has the rest! The devil had hold of the hearts of Annis and Caiaphas – King Herod who had wanted to see Jesus for a long time – in order that he might see some miracle – the proverbial walk across my swimming pool! The devil had Pontius Pilate – who scoffed at the concept of absolute truth. Who scoffed at this carpenter crowned with thorns who claimed to be a King! What a prize if the devil could pick off Jesus' disciples! But if the devil was really so smart he would have listened while Jesus said, ²⁷**"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. John 10** You don't steal Jesus' sheep from the nail marked hands of the Good Shepherd! But that doesn't stop the devil from trying. So Jesus warned the disciples. Jesus said, ³¹**"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."** Flour sifters. You have to be closer to my age – to remember your mom sifting flour. We had a flour sifter in the cupboard. When my mom would bake – she would measure the flour – then pour it into the sifter. Ours was white with a red handle. You squeezed the handle – and a very heavy duty wire would go over the flour – along with gravity – pushing the flour through a screen. The flour would be like dust in a pyramid pile on the wax paper below – sifted! The devil wanted to sift Simon Peter – to expose any impurities – then to bake him forever in the furnaces of hell! It was a nasty thought – damnation is a nasty business! But then comes the Gospel part! Jesus said, ³² **But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."** And when you have turned back – not if – but *when* you have turned back – strengthen your brothers!" The final outcome is never in doubt! Jesus would not let Simon Peter be tempted beyond what he was able to endure. Simon Peter would persevere! And then with a humble and repentant heart and attitude – Simon Peter would encourage and build up his brothers with the means of grace – the Gospel – in Scripture and in the Sacraments!

Jesus was on trial – through the wee hours of the morning – in the cold damp darkness. Simon Peter and the disciple Jesus loved – followed – not too closely – by Annis and Caiaphas.

Standing by the people by fires keeping warm – they tried to see and hear what was happening. Last week we read, **“One of the servant girls of the high priest on duty at the door came by. When she saw Peter seated there in the firelight warming himself she looked closely at him and said, “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus. Are you not one of this man’s disciples?” He replied, “Girl, I am not. I don’t know him. I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about.” Simon Peter went out into the entry way and the rooster crowed. A little later, when the servant girl again saw him there, she said to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” Someone else saw him and said, “You are one of them.” Again he denied it, with an oath, “I am not! I don’t know the man!” About an hour later, another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” Those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.” One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?” Then Peter began to called down curses on himself, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.** Peter denied Jesus – just like Jesus said he would. In grace and mercy Jesus forgave and reinstated Simon Peter.

John 21:17 ¹⁷ **The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.** When we went to Northwestern College we studied Latin. We used to say, *“Latin is a dead language. First it killed the Romans and now it’s killing me!”* Not really! Learning Latin taught you how to learn language! We learned how to understand pre-fixes and suffixes – to decline a noun and conjugate a verb. Then came German – *Die Heilige Schrift* – the coffee and apple strudel translation Luther made – so the most humble *haus frau* could read and understand God’s Word! Then came Greek – so precise – it’s not open to lots of different interpretations. And then came Hebrews – in many respects profound in its simplicity! But Greek – in wisdom and love our Heavenly Father chose Greek to be the language in which to write down the New Testament – literally the Gospels! When Jesus reinstated Simon Peter – asking him 3 times if he loved him – even as Simon Peter had denied him three times – there is a richness of meaning in the Greek that’s easily missed in the English. It was the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he rose from the dead. Jesus helped the disciples catch 153 fish – a huge catch – and yet the nets didn’t tear or bread. **When the disciples landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread...When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”** Do you love me? Jesus uses the Greek word *agape* – that sacrificial, purposeful love that God shows – in [John 3:16](#) – **for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son** – kind of love. **“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”** *Fileo* – a much more humble Simon Peter uses the Greek word *fileo* – I love you as a dear and precious and trusted friend. Simon Peter was saying to Jesus – you can see into my heart. You know that you are my dearest friend! **Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”** Again Jesus asks – do you love me – *agape* – the sacrificial giving love – never mind the more than these part – do you love me – *agape*? Again Simon answers the same way – *fileo* – **He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”** You can see my heart. You know I count you my dearest friend! **The third time Jesus says to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”** This time Jesus uses the word *fileo*! Jesus isn’t asking him – do you love me with the giving sacrificial love. But do you love me as your precious and dearest friend? **Peter was hurt**

because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” If there was any doubt before—it was now painfully clear—even as he had denied Jesus three times—now he was declaring his love three times! A humble Peter makes no bold proud boast. Jesus asked *fileo*—and Simon Peter answered *fileo*—you are my best friend. He points to Jesus’ wisdom and authority as the Son of God. **Lord, you know everything. You know I love you! Feed—keep feeding my lambs and sheep!** This is the ministry in a nutshell—to feed and refresh Jesus’ sheep!

Keep feeding my sheep! There aren’t too many people these days—who name their children *Adolph* any more. But there are some. The Coors fermented grain beverage family—has an Adolph Coors the 3rd, 4th and 5th so far. Adolph Herman Joseph Coors III was on his way from his mountain ranch in Golden, Colorado—to the tannery he had turned into his brewery when he stopped—thinking the man beside the yellow 1958 Mercury parked beside a bridge needed help. An escaped convict named Joseph Corbett had spent 2 years hatching a plan to kidnap Grandpa Coors! What he wasn’t counting on was hard Grandpa Coors would resist! Coors wasn’t about to be kidnapped! He overpowered his prison tough—prison rules fighter/attacker—and started running back toward the safety of his car—when John Corbett the coward shot him in the back—shot him dead. Corbett stuffed the body in the trunk of his car and sped away. Seven months later Grandpa Coors’ body was found in a trash heap—a garbage dump! For some 17 years—Adolph the 4th was filled with a bitterness and anger—that I think—is pretty hard to imagine—and at the same time—pretty easy to understand. But when Jesus’ forgiving love fills your heart—there isn’t room any more for bitterness and hate. The day came when Adolph the 4th went to the prison to tell Mr. Corbett *I forgive you!* They don’t make prisoners see people they don’t want to see. Mr. Corbett didn’t want to see the people he had wounded 17 years before. So he didn’t! But Adolph the 4th sent him a letter and said—I forgive you! I don’t hate you anymore! What a wondrous example of the power of Jesus’ forgiving love. Jesus knows all the contradictions in our hearts and in our lives. Jesus died and rose again to wash away all our sins—so that we might forgive one another—even as Jesus always and completely forgives us. Let us feed his lambs and gather his sheep! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz

