

The Twelve: Solidifying the Rock, Part 4

Luke 6:14

Luke 6:12 to 16 goes like this, "In these days he," that is Jesus, "went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

We've started our survey of the twelve with Simon Peter, of course. Who else would we start with? He wouldn't allow us to start with anybody else because he's always jumping in front, right? He has that kind of personality that sort of thrusts itself front and center, demanding our attention whether you like it or not. That's Peter. But again, it's not because Peter is so remarkable, that in and of himself that he's prominent. The fact that he's prominent, the fact that he is put into this

place not just by the Gospel writers, but by Jesus himself. The fact that he's put there is because he's so common, because he's so relatable to us.

I believe that God chose Peter to occupy such a prominent position among the Apostles because we all know a Peter, and also because there is a bit of Peter, in every single one of us, truth be told. Peter represents every true believer. He's grounded in faith. He is instructed in hope, and he is serving the Savior in love. The first lesson that Peter learned is listen to Jesus Christ and to him alone; heed Jesus' word and his alone. Listen to him.

Second lesson Peter learned from Christ. Second lesson: Love Jesus Christ more than anything else. You're like, I thought you just said that. Yeah, I did. I said, learn from Jesus Christ, listen to him and don't listen to anybody else. Now, love Jesus Christ more than anything else. You're like, those things are parallel. You're right. They are parallel. I just want you to get it, okay, to see this, though.

There's another lesson here in this text. We need to skip ahead a bit in the story. And we're going to go here in Peter's life to the end of Jesus' earthly life. As Jesus is making his way to the cross, there are so many Peter moments leading up to

the cross, and they're so instructive for us. By the time Jesus was headed for the cross, you remember that Peter had been watching Jesus at this time for more than two years. Daily, he'd walked with him. He'd observed him. He'd learned from him. They ate meals together. They were in homes and around campfires. They bedded down at night, whether under a roof or under the stars.

As John also wrote, 1 John 1:1, Jesus was someone whom they had heard with their ears, seen with their eyes, someone they looked upon, someone they observed closely. He was someone that they had touched with their hands, their hands had handled, whether it was just casual contact or even just a warm embrace. Peter was intimate company with our Lord Jesus Christ. And all of that exposure caused Peter to grow in his love and in his affection for Jesus Christ, to, to deepen his conviction in the truth and to strengthen his devotion to him. Again, not perfectly, but the overall direction in Peter's life was bent toward following Jesus Christ, learning from Christ, serving him.

And over the course of Peter's instruction, what he learned through daily interaction with Jesus Christ, it really had to do with the true nature of divine love. He needed to learn the

nature of divine love. Listen very closely because I want you to understand this, it's a very important point. From time to time, we watch Peter trying to serve Jesus faithfully, but he's doing so according to what seems right to him. Have you ever been tempted to do that? I have. Peter tries to demonstrate devotion to Christ, and he's motivated throughout the text by a kind of love, you might say, but every time he tries to serve Christ with his own version of love, which is a humanly-defined, naturally-understood version of love, every time he tries to serve Christ with that kind of natural, human love, he fails and Jesus has to rebuke him in love.

Remember earlier after making the good confession, Jesus predicted the sufferings that he would endure before the glory that would follow, right? Well, Peter rebuked him for that. Peter got in his face, he said, Matthew 16:22, it says, "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you.'" Peter's obviously feeling a little like we used to say in the Navy, feeling a froggy. He's feeling a little bold. He's just been conferred upon him, he's just been conferred with great authority as an Apostle: Keys to the kingdom, whatever you bind, whatever you loose. It's all coming through you, Peter. So perhaps he's feeling a bit bold at this moment, went to tests that out. He's

taking a test drive in his newly delegated authority. And yes, of course, he got it very wrong.

Once again, we need to see in this moment how God used Peter to teach all of us such a vital, vital lesson. Whatever Peter's motives were for rebuking Jesus at this point, I assume the best motives here. When Peter rebukes Christ, he thought he was being loyal to Jesus Christ. And apart from Jesus' rebuke, if that hadn't been in the text, we would have probably all cheered his actions. That's exactly right. We wish we could have been so bold as to try and steer Jesus away from the death of the cross. We don't want to see this, this short circuiting of the Messianic glory. After all, Jesus is coming as the Messiah to restore glory to Israel, fulfill all the Old Testament promises. What does a cross got to do with that?

But we learn through Jesus' stern rebuke that apart from understanding the truth, which Jesus had told Peter by this time and apart from understanding the truth, Peter's attempt here at loyalty actually turned out to be disloyalty. Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man." Listen, Peter's good intentions weren't benign and harmless. His good intentions aren't like, hey, you got an A

for effort, Peter. No, you get a rebuke. Peter thought he was rebuking Jesus out of loving concern, but Jesus had a totally different view. He identified the source of Peter's concern. It's nothing short of Satanic. Why? Because the cross was the plan, because without the cross, there is no salvation. Peter didn't understand that.

Look, when we don't see things God's way, when we get things wrong, we tend to give ourselves quite a bit of a pass, don't we? We're like, you know, I was trying. I mean, God knows my heart. Have you ever said that? God knows my heart. Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter, though, and he identifies the true origin of Peter's thinking. It's not the things of God, but the things of man that are motivating you. These are satanically inspired, these things of man. That's a powerful and a poignant reminder of how much you and I need to learn. You see, like all of us, Peter had to learn what it meant to serve Christ, not with his own version of love, not with whatever seemed best to him, not with whatever came to his mind. He needed to serve Christ with an other-worldly love, with a love that comes from God and no one else. His thinking, his will, his actions, his service to Christ, all of it needed to come out of a love that does not originate here on earth. It comes from God and God alone.

Peter needed to learn about the kind of love that drove Jesus, what we've come to know as *agape* love. He needed to learn this kind of divine love, a self-sacrificing love that is willing to crucify self for the ultimate good of everyone else around you. It's that *agape* love that was utterly foreign to humanity until Jesus Christ came to die for his people on the cross. Let me tell you, just, this is a very brief aside, but it's a footnote that I think is important. There are four words for love in the Greek language. And *storge*, it's kind of a familial kind of love. *Eros*, it's more of like a romantic love. There's *phileo*, or *philos*, *philia*, which is kind of like, more of like a common human affection kind of a love. Then there's *agape*, this supreme sacrifice for the ultimate good.

*Agape* was not a word that was in much circulation at the time. It was almost a word that was set aside a bit and kind of reserved exclusively for the philosophers to philosophize about. The real common love, the real profound love, the one that really marked everyone, everybody rejoiced in and said, this is love, is the *phileo* kind of love: brotherly affection. It's interesting, though, that through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we come to see a love that he describes as *agape*. He *agapao*-ed the world. It's defined by his sacrifice. It's defined by his doing the will of God. It's defined by his being completely and

totally conformed to the truth. It's defined by his sacrifice, by his giving all the time, whether he's washing feet, or whether he's dying on a cross. That is the love "by which all men will know you are my disciples."

When we bear the mark of that kind of love in our lives as we love other people, everybody knows who we belong to. That's our badge. This is the kind of love that Peter needed to learn. It's the kind of love we all need to learn as well, right? So to illustrate this we're going to read a few passages that happened during Jesus' final week. These are passages where Peter is portrayed as less than his best. These are not very flattering of him, but they're very instructive for us, and to him.

First, I want you to turn to John 13. In John 13, this is, introduced to the setting of this Upper Room Discourse. John 13 through 16. That could go through Chapter 17 if you include Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, but Jesus is getting ready to impart one final, most foundational lesson before he's lifted up on the cross, and it's this lesson about love and before teaching the principle, he illustrated it through action.

We read this before, but look at John 13:1, "Jesus knew his hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end,"



or to the uttermost, to the *telos*. And “During supper, when the devil had already put in the heart of Judas Iscariot [...] to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, he arose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, he took a towel, tied it around his waist, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

That’s a powerful, incredible act of condescension, and really, for any of the disciples because none of them had done it. None of them wanted to do it. It was so incredible that Jesus did this, their Rabbi, their teacher, their Lord. But Peter didn’t want to allow it. Again, he was judging from a human perspective, and this seemed utterly inappropriate to Peter. But Jesus thinks very differently. Look, we read this already, but let’s read it again. “Jesus,” verse 6, “came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, do you wash my feet?’ Jesus answered him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.’ And Peter said to,” Jesus, “‘You shall never wash my feet.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.’”

Simon Peter changed course, flipped, flipped sides there. He said, "Okay, Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Give me the full bath! "Jesus said to him, 'The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.'" That's Peter, right? He's vacillating from one end of the spectrum to the other. He doesn't really know what he's talking about, but he keeps talking anyway. He's all for it, whatever it is. Jesus wanted his Apostles to understand that this act of condescension, it's not exceptional. It's actually to be the normal manner of relating to one another among Jesus' true disciples. This is the way the church is to be known, by its humble and sacrificial love for one another.

Skip ahead. We'll just skip some of this. Go to verse 33. Jesus said there, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. And by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." *Agape* for one another. It's an expansion of what Jesus said earlier in verses 13 to 17. He said, "If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Christians are to be known for that

kind of love for one another. We're to race one another to take the position of humility with each other in service, to consider one another as better than ourselves, practically serving each other as in the most menial of tasks and everything in between, doing what no one else wants to do.

Now, Peter has seen Jesus' example. He's heard Jesus' teaching, but this is Peter. He's not fully listening. He's, he's only partially tuned in at this moment and hearing. Notice what got his attention. It says, "Jesus said," verse 33, "a little while I am with you," and, "where I am going you cannot come," and that's where Peter opens his mouth, and we wince a little bit because we know what's coming, right? Look at verse 36, "Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow after.' Peter said to him, 'Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.'"

What Peter intended as a strong affirmation of his personal loyalty, Jesus saw in that statement an inherent weakness. Jesus could see what Peter was unable to see, that human emotion and

sentiment is unable to withstand the onslaught of temptation. What Peter couldn't see is how profoundly he needed to know and understand Jesus so he could be transformed in loving devotion. Human love crumbles under the faintest of pressures. Human love blows away with the gentlest of breezes. Only divine love can stand the storm, can make a man stand for Jesus Christ.

Peter made the same strong affirmation of loyalty again that night. It says in another Gospel that they went out on the Mount of Olives and Jesus told his disciples, "You will all fall away because of me this night." Guess what Peter said? Na-ah. Maybe they will, but not me. "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.'" So Peter doubles down and said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." Peter wasn't the only one saying that, either. All the disciples said the same thing, but he was the first one out of the gate, characteristically strong in his affirmation of ultimate loyalty, "even if I must die with you."

Well, time came to test that and not even testing it with danger, not even with a sword. You're in John's Gospel, go ahead and turn ahead to John 18. John 18. Let's see how this played

out in Peter's life, see how Peter's self-professed loyalty to Christ, how it worked, exactly what happened here. John 18 verse 1 there, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees," pretty resourceful guy, isn't he? He came with, they "went there," and they came, "with lanterns and torches and weapons. And then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am he.' And Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground." As if to say, you're only taking me. Okay, got it? Your only, if I go with you, you understand who's in charge here. I'm going with you. You're not taking me anywhere. And you're leaving these guys here.

"So he asked them again," verse 7, "'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that

I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go.’ And this was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: ‘Of those whom you gave me I have not lost one.’ Then Simon Peter, having a sword,” I, I for somehow, really sympathize with this narrative, “having a sword, he drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword back into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?’”

Peter, he, he knew Christ’s power. Christ had power over demons, disease, sickness, physical deformity. Peter knew about his sovereignty over the creatures, especially the fish. He knew about Jesus’ power over nature, commanding wind and waves, which obeyed his rebuke in an instant. Here, Peter sees the entire Roman cohort knocked to the ground at Jesus’ word, so he’s emboldened. The same way he stepped out in faith and walked on the water in Matthew 14. Here he steps out, he thinks in faith. He draws out his sword. He’s ready to take on the soldiers, the officers. He cuts off Malchus’ ear, but he’s not intending to just cut off his ear; he wants to go for his head and cleave his head. Malchus ducks, so he misses, slices off the ear. Jesus turns around and rebukes him.

Matthew's account, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back in its place. [...] Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father, he'll at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" The kind of love would keep Peter close to Christ, that would keep him truly loyal, that would keep him from falling away. It's a supernatural love. It's one that comes from the father and is manifest in fidelity to God's Word, just as Jesus is showing here.

That's true love and Peter was, at this point, still dull to understand the nature of this true love. It was based on human feeling. It was expressed in bravado, in foolish acts of heroism. "Put your sword into its sheath;" Peter, "shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me?" He's been telling Peter about this moment. He's been being very clear, and now that it's upon them, the inevitable march to the cross begins, as does the inevitable fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of Peter's defection and denial. This is setting up the biggest lesson that Peter would ever learn.