

## **We're All Peter**

'A priest called his bishop. "There's a parade coming toward the church. There's a man out in front who is in a white robe and he has a long beard. What should I do?" "Be nice to him. It may be the boss".' Or, it may just be a man in a costume leading a parade! As a metaphor for the End Times in which we're living, our Lord told us ahead of time, very long ago, that many imposters and charlatans would come claiming to be the Lord, and would fool many. So our Lord warned us, take care that we are not hoodwinked. This warning is all the more relevant now, as the signs of the prophesied Second Coming of our Lord proliferate. The sense of anticipation is indeed building. And His people, us, must be prepared. If we're not serious in being ready for His coming, at any hour, when it seems least likely even, then, like the five foolish virgins who hadn't prepared enough oil for their lamps ahead of time, the Lord is telling us that even some of us who think we're ready could be shut out and left behind, saying He never knew us. None of us would ever want to hear that. So, get serious in following the Lord. Learning about Him. Spending time reading His word. Studying it. If we don't do even that, then how could anyone claim that we're students and disciples and followers of the Lord if we don't even bother to do any homework?

Recall the Last Supper. Lord Jesus sadly announced that one of them would betray Him. All vehemently denied they would ever do such a thing. Of course, the guilty one, to avoid drawing suspicion onto himself, equally denied the possibility. But the leader of the disciples, Peter the Rock, was especially passionate and emphatic that even if everyone else deserted the Lord, even if he had to die with Him, Peter would never, ever do such a thing! Well, a mere few hours later he would do exactly that. To give whatever small amount of credit that is due, while the other disciples did indeed flee to avoid being arrested along with Lord Jesus, Peter tried to prevent the arrest by violence, brandishing his long dagger and managed to do nothing positive, cutting off one man's ear, a servant of the high priest. Not helpful in the least. The servant may well have been innocent of any ill will toward the Lord. Regardless, our Lord created a new ear, restoring the servant's ear. I'm sure the servant was immensely grateful!

Well, Peter did follow the "posse" that arrested the Lord, at a safe distance! But when push came to shove, he'd joined a bunch of servants warming themselves around a fire in the courtyard of the high priest's palace, gasp!, he was recognized. Now what to do? He couldn't let on that he was one of the Lord's disciples, now could he? Or could he? Why not? What was he afraid of? Peter extricated himself from that group of folks. Danger averted. But the girl saw him later, made her assertion again, and this time was joined by others who'd noticed Peter's "country-

bumpkin” appearance, and worst of all, his accent. His Galilean accent truly was a giveaway. Peter had to maintain his cover, supposedly in order to remain close to the Lord. So he again denied knowing the Lord, this time with an oath! See how easy it is to swear, allowing cuss words to just fly out of our mouths? Using such language is not without consequence. We cause damage to ourselves and others when we resort to such language.

Well, Peter heard the rooster crows, and through an opening into the house, the Lord looked straight into Peter’s eyes. Heart-stopping shock, Peter had just done what he’d earlier sworn he would never do—betray the Lord. He had messed up so bad, worse than he had ever imagined he could. In fact, he was so down on himself, he couldn’t forgive himself for betraying his Lord, Teacher, and Friend, and carried this guilt continually. Until the Lord, just prior to His ascension back into heaven, as John 21:15-19 records, corrected Peter’s self-condemnation, by revealing that not only had the Lord forgiven Peter, but that Peter had to forgive himself, to move on to become the inaugural leader of the holy Church which would be born just a few days hence!

At the Last Supper, Peter made boasts of his future fidelity to the Lord which proved to be just hot air. Peter, though he had the best of intentions, could not imagine the circumstances that would soon transpire. Neither can we. We can never assert that we will always do such and such, and never do this or that. We have to humbly recognize our fallenness and imperfection; that we truly

can do nothing apart from the grace of our Lord and the empowering of Holy Spirit. We will fail every time we try to do anything in our own strength, even if it's for the Lord. Because we're simply not built to live without God. We are not complete without the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus living inside us. We can not live in any truly meaningful, peaceful and effective way without God.

The faithful folks who marched yesterday in Coalition Life's March on the Arch for life epitomized what a peaceful assembly of people is supposed to be. Some groups recited scriptures, others prayed the Lord's Prayer, still others sang hymns of praise to God. It was inspiring, and uplifting. There was a joy that filled the gathering as we lifted up the name of Christ Jesus, the very Lord of Life Himself. This clearly revealed that Holy Spirit was with us and empowering us to complete our witness to Him and His love of all the life that He creates as a blessing to His earth. Few, if any of us, know how we affected other people around us—the police escorting us, the few scattered pro-abortion folks along the route, the few who think they're "moderates" by asserting that outright banning abortions causes hardship for some. Such folks are only looking at things from an earthly, human perspective, devoid of any spiritual understanding of Who God is and What He does.

So yes, we're all Peter. But Peter was restored and soon led the church as it was born. We, too, just need to plug in to Holy Spirit in serious prayer. And we'll be filled with joy and certainty of the everlasting hope of endless comfort and life with the Lord.

