



## Mark 14:66-72

Ash Wednesday, March 5, '25  
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

**And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, <sup>67</sup> and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." <sup>68</sup> But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean."**

**And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." <sup>70</sup> But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." <sup>72</sup> And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.**

**"What do you think about the Christ?"** (Matthew 22:42) That's an important question, isn't it? That's a question that Jesus asked from time to time, to the Pharisees, to His disciples. And the same question is asked of you this evening: What do *you* think about Jesus? *Who* is Jesus? I have no doubt in my mind that each of you, if we went around the room this evening, would say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. You would confess *here today* that He is your Savior from sin *and* your hope for eternal life. The *problem* is that you're not always here in church among like-minded Christians. *Most* of the time, you're out there. You're living among people that *don't* share your faith. And out *there*, that answer can be a lot harder to give.

Peter learned that lesson the hard way. He had been asked that question along with the rest of the disciples: **"Who do you say that I am?"** And Peter gave that excellent answer! **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** (Matthew 16:15-16) And he was right of course! His emphatic answer was the correct response. . . of course, Peter was not *always* so emphatic in response to that question.

Later on, in fact, just a few short hours before the events of our sermon text, Jesus would warn Peter: **"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."** And of course, Peter denied it, just as emphatically as ever: **"If I must die with you, I will not deny you!"** (Mark 14:30-31) That followed shortly after the claim that **"even though they all fall away, I will not."** (Mark 14:29) But sitting there in that upper room, face-to-face with Jesus and surrounded by the *other followers* of Jesus, those proclamations came rather easily. There was nothing at risk *there*.

But things started getting a little *riskier* as the evening wore on. Soon, it wasn't *just* Peter and Jesus and the other disciples. *Soon*, they were surrounded. There were soldiers, there were temple guards, there were adversaries. And they were taking Jesus into *custody*. But Peter *had* made that promise: **"Even though they all fall away, I will not."** And those words very well might have been in his mind as his sword came swinging down toward that servant's head—mercifully, it only met with the man's ear. He had kept his word, so far. He would not deny Jesus! But there as Peter ran to Jesus' protection, Jesus was *still* just an arm's reach away. Surely, Peter's emphatic defense of Jesus was made much easier by the proximity of his Lord. Perhaps Peter thought that Jesus would join in and do something miraculous, as he had seen Him do so many times before.

But when Jesus didn't do *anything*, and instead went *willingly away* with the soldiers, suddenly everything changed for Peter. When push came to shove, Peter turned tail with the rest of the disciples and ran—they *all* ran away from Jesus.

Perhaps it was pride that brought Peter's scurrying feet to a halt along that dirt path. Perhaps he recalled again his claim that he would never fall away, that he would be willing *even to die* for Jesus. Whatever it was, he decided he had to go back. He couldn't *abandon* Jesus. He couldn't actually be together *with* Jesus, but at the very least he could be close by. He could try to follow along and figure out what was happening—hey, *maybe* he would even have the opportunity to help Jesus!

Maybe what he *should* have done was thought again on Jesus' warning: ***"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."*** The rooster hadn't crowed yet, but it would, and it would soon.

We did not live in a rural area when I was pastor in Florida; we lived in a pretty densely populated little city. And so, you could imagine my initial surprise that first night when I was woken up a few hours before dawn by the shrill crowing of a rooster. Turns out, there was a neighbor just down the street that raised lots of chickens, and the chickens were free to roam the neighborhood as they wanted. It wasn't unusual to see them wandering through our backyard. And it took me a while to get used to the early morning crowing of the rooster. Like clockwork, every morning—an hour or so before the sunrise—the rooster's crow would cut right through my dreams and startle me awake. And it was **The Crowing of the Rooster** that woke Peter up as well.

There he had been, standing around a fire trying to stay warm together with a number of servants. It was a cold night, and Peter was just trying to stay comfortable. The fact was, however, he was terribly *uncomfortable*. He was no longer together with Jesus. He was instead in a situation with a lot more at risk than when he had been in that upper room surrounded by friends. And so, when the statements started coming from a young girl that Peter was a disciple of Jesus, he panicked. His prior, enthusiastic support and zealous defense of Jesus was now nowhere to be found. And now, when others joined in and identified Peter, and with soldiers not very far away who could arrest him *too*, Peter had to put on a convincing performance. ***"He began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know this man of whom you speak.'"***

And that was when it happened: ***"Immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept."*** The crowing of the rooster woke Peter up. It woke Peter up to the fact that he was not as strong as he thought. It woke Peter up to the fact that he may have been willing to confess his faith in Jesus when it was *easy* to do so; but the second that even the *hint* of opposition crept in, Peter ran away—with his feet, with his tongue, anything to get away. The crowing of the rooster woke Peter up to the reality that he loved himself *far* more than he loved Jesus.

I wish we had a rooster that would crow in our ear and wake us up like that. Because we do the same thing as Peter. We *deny* Jesus. We deny Jesus when we have the opportunity to share our faith with someone, but instead we panic and keep our mouths shut. We deny Jesus when we accept God's love freely given to us, but then refuse to show love to our neighbors, preferring instead to harbor hateful grudges, refusing them forgiveness. We deny Jesus every time we give in to temptations and do the very things that we know without-a-doubt are offensive to our Savior. *We deny Jesus*. If only we could hear the shrill crowing of a rooster every time we did so—something to wake us up!

Well, we do have that, don't we? God gives you an alarm in your heart to wake *you* up—it's called your conscience. It's the voice of God's Law written in your heart, and when He created you, God put it there for a purpose. He put it there to wake you up, just like He put the rooster there to wake Peter up. And when we fall into sin, when we deny Jesus, and our consciences are burning within us—it's my prayer that we would wake up and that we would each turn and see what Peter saw.

It's not here in our text, but in Luke's account of these events, he tells us about something else that happened once the rooster's crow had woken Peter up. ***"While he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter."*** I've always wondered what was in Jesus' eyes as He looked at Peter. Certainly, sorrow was in His eyes, as He knew that Peter had just denied even *knowing* Him. But I'm also certain that *in* Jesus' eyes was *utmost love*—even as He looked at Peter.

And even if he couldn't decipher everything that was in the look that Jesus gave him, Peter *knew* that his Savior loved him, and he *believed* that his Savior forgave him. How do we know that? Because the Bible gives us clear evidence of Peter's repentance and faith. It was Peter who was one of the first disciples to run and see the empty tomb just a few days later, on Easter morning. It was Peter—the very same one who cursed and swore and said, ***"I do not know this man of whom you speak,"***—this very same Peter later went on and *boldly* spoke up about Jesus to thousands on Pentecost. And even when things became risky, when Peter actually *was* led away in chains by soldiers because they *knew* that he was a follower of Jesus—still Peter would not stay silent. He confessed his faith in Christ.

But for a moment there, in the courtyard, Peter *had* given up on Jesus. And so thanks be to God, Jesus did not give up on Peter, and He hasn't given up on you, either! Because, after looking at Peter, Jesus went right on to His trial before Pilate. He endured the mockery, the beatings, the harassment of the soldiers. Finally, He even poured out His life's blood on the cross. He did all of this so that sin could be forgiven—Peter's sin, your sin, my sin—every denial forgiven by Jesus.

So, if you hear **The Crowing of the Rooster**, if you hear God's Law sounding out the alarm in your heart, and if you are woken up to the sickening reality of your sin—do what Peter did. Turn, and see Jesus. And don't keep any of that sin away from Jesus, instead hand it over to Him and be forgiven of it. Because you know who Jesus is. He is *your* Savior, the one who looks at you with love in His eyes.

And if you are ever asked about Jesus—"What do you think about Jesus?"—my prayer is that you're ready to give a good answer. Whether it's a comfortable situation in here or an uncomfortable situation out there—I pray it makes no difference. But even more importantly, I hope you know the answer to the question "what does Jesus think about you?" If you've got any doubts about that question, then this season of Lent is the time to get rid of them. Because during Lent, the attitude of our Savior toward us sinners is written plainly for all to see. It's *written* on the cross! Thanks be to God, in Jesus' name. Amen.

***"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 4:7) Amen.