

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

"He Lives In You"

Gospel Lesson

Luke 22:54-62 (NRSV)

⁵⁴Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." ⁵⁸A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

Bible/Sermon Focus

When thinking about Peter's denial of Jesus this week I couldn't help but hear this story in a new way. I always thought Peter weak for denying Jesus, just a man who, when the going got tough, chose to deny his morals and values and go along with the crowd. It's easier to follow the crowd, after all. But I am beginning to see Peter in a new light, one of survival. There was a real possibility that Peter could be killed if people knew he ran with Jesus. And when it comes to survival, people will do a lot of things that they may not otherwise.

This is true of Simba in *The Lion King* as well. He runs away in shame and fear, and he runs away in survival mode. He makes a new life for himself because he has to, in order to survive.

Mia McKenzie, creator and author of *Black Girl Dangerous* has a blog post titled, "On Getting Free." In that post she writes:

A long time ago, when you were a wee thing, you learned something, some way to cope, something that, if you did it, would help you survive. It wasn't the healthiest thing, it wasn't gonna get you free, but it was gonna keep you alive. You learned it, at five or six, and it worked, it *did* help you survive. You carried it with you all your life, used it whenever you needed it. It got you out — out of you're a**backwards town, away from an abuser, out of range of your mother's un-love. Or whatever. It worked for you. You're still here now partly because of this thing that you learned. The thing is, though, at some point you stopped needing it. At some point, you got far enough away, surrounded yourself with people who love you. You survived. And because you survived, you now had a shot at more than just staying alive. You had a shot now at getting free. But that thing that you learned when you were five was not then and is not now designed to help you be free. It is designed only to help you survive. And, in fact, it keeps you from being free. You need to figure out what this thing is and work your [butt] off to un-learn it. Because the things we learn to do to survive at all costs are not

the things that will help us get FREE. Getting free is a whole different journey altogether.

Getting free is what Jesus offers us. And getting free is way beyond what a mind *just surviving* can even imagine.

The belief in resurrection and redemption is truly a leap of faith, especially for a person who has not yet witnessed it. Jesus could not have been clearer about what his fate would be, but the men, Peter included, could not grasp it. It was not until the women came to the empty tomb and then shared their witness that the individual and social imaginary could begin to conceive of a life beyond the horror, terror, and shame that came with the cross.

But there is hope beyond what we can conceive. There is redemption and return to community for the most lost among us. There is not a shame, not even a death, that can keep us from the love of God.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Disney's "Lion King" in relation to this week's sermon.
2. When have you found yourself in survival mode, living in a way that kept you safe even if it kept you from thriving?
3. Peter was not able to approach Jesus' crucifixion with the ability to imagine a life beyond that suffering. When have you not been able to see past your own suffering?
4. Are we a community that is ready to receive those who are coming back home?
5. Which character from the "Lion King" do you resonate with the most?

Prayer

Holy God, grant us the ability to imagine life beyond our pain. Help us to put our trust in you even when we cannot see your grace welcoming us back into community. Thank you for calling us to come back home, over and over. Thank you for redemption, for Easter Sunday morning, for second chances ... and for third. Thank you for a community that holds your story for us when we cannot. Amen.

*Are we a community that is ready to receive
those who are coming back home?*