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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we prepare to go through the season of Lent and ponder the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, I was reading again the account of Peter's denials of Jesus at the end of the 26th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I was struck by the fact of how it is a micro-cosm of life itself. The confusion around Peter in the courtyard seems out of control, just as our lives sometimes seem quite out of control, like a runaway animal or machine. With no sense of goals or awareness of consequences, this world and its inhabitants move along in a panicky rush.

I am sure that is how Peter felt as he went into danger. Like most of us, he felt capable and self assured. He could handle things, he thought. He would be all right. Then the trouble began. First there were questions, then accusations. Bit by bit his self-control was attacked—then it crumbled. "Weren't you ...?" "Aren't you ...?" "Didn't you...?" One word would not satisfy them. More words were too many. Peter could not speak up, but he could not be silent either. He moved to find a quieter place, but there was no escape.

In no place in this world is a person safe from attacks like that. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh give us no rest. One minute everything is reasonably sure; the next minute doubt and anxiety take over. People and forces we can't control close in on us and we become tongue-tied or stammer and lie or twist the truth in a vain attempt to put things in order.

Only God, of course, can overcome those forces beyond our control. He does so by dwelling inside us and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, transforms us from within. This is the point where we need to look at Jesus who was filled with the Holy Spirit. In spite of all that happened to Him, He was under control because He had handed control of His life to God His Father. He knew what He had to do: suffer and die in order to save us. In His lonely torment He assumed the chaos of life and sank into it, passing from cross to grave without a word of cursing or commotion. He did not and could not deny His orientation: He was with God and God was with Him.

Even though we are not God as Jesus was, the challenge to us is the same: to trust God and His plan for our lives. In fact, when you stop to think about it, we really have no other choice as Christians, because placing our trust in anyone or anything else is idolatry. The Good News is that God is in control, as Peter saw a short time later when he met his resurrected friend and Lord face to face. May God in His grace and mercy grant us this knowledge each and every day as we seek to live our lives to Him and to His glory.

In His love,
Pastor Skelton

