

Sermon Series: "The Darkness and the Dawn"—Lord of Life Lutheran Church—Westfield, IN—3/9/2003

Title: "Three O'clock in the Morning"

Text: Mark 14: 27-31; 53-54; 66-72

Intro: Ills.: Making Light of Poison

Theme: When the circumstances of our lives push us to the edge, we can either blame them for our drift from God or let Jesus use them to draw us back to an even stronger future walk of faith in him.

Scandalized Faith (Print and read Mark 14: 27-31)

- Preceded by spiritual pride
 1. *"Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor." Proverbs 18:12*
 2. Peter and the other disciples let their spiritual testosterone blind them to their destructive self-reliance
 1. Our misapplication of *Romans 10: 9: "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*
 3. We become scandalized by Jesus wanting to be Lord and Savior of our lives
 1. We believe never fall to illicit affair; unethical practice; addiction to substances; being consumed by consumables
 2. We are scandalized when Jesus' Word tells us of our need and shows us how to avoid the fall
 3. But yet we need to hear, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* John 8:31-32
- A spiritual deathtrap and snare to be avoided
 1. The word Jesus uses for "fall away" is *scandalized = snare, deathtrap*
 2. *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."* Luke 22:31-32
 3. **Print and read Hebrews 6: 4-9**

Shadow Faith (Print and read Mark 14: 53-54 & 66-72)

- Characterized by spiritual sickness symptoms which must be attended to
 1. **Ills.: Delayed doctor visits (pride, fear, procrastination)**
 2. Spiritual symptom of creature-comfort Christianity (*works against the theology of the cross Scripture teaches*)
 3. Spiritual symptom of religious cowardice (*letting fear rather than love motivate — fear is used by Satan not God*)
- The spiritually dangerous precipice of standing in the shadows
 4. You will be found out eventually
 1. *"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."* Matthew 10:26
 2. Peter with all of his stealth, subterfuge, denial still was not able to cover over his obvious connection to Jesus
 3. **Ills.: Tomb of the Resurrection** (given away by the scent)
 4. *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."* 1 John 1:7
 5. Your pocket-veto denial of Jesus in the moment of inconvenience may lead to a full-fledge disavowal of him in end
 1. *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."* Matthew 10:32-33
 2. Asking the candid self-reflective question, "What is important to me and why am I acting/reacting the way I am?"

Supernatural Faith

- Understanding, believing and accepting that saving faith is a God thing
 1. *"Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one*

can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." 1 Cor. 12:3

- Believing and accepting that no matter how far you have fallen, Jesus still can reclaim you
 2. Neither excusing nor blaming God for my stumble into temptation but trusting that he can forgive and restore me
 3. Jesus reclaimed Peter through "full" forgiveness (John 21) for restored kingdom service after his resurrection
 4. **Print and read 1 Tim. 1:15-16**
- Trusting that no matter how dark your present moment of challenge, the dawn of resurrection is up ahead
 5. *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9*

Making Light of Poison

Fallon, Nevada, is the arsenic capital of America. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the Environmental Protection Agency found that Fallon's water system delivers more arsenic to its customers than any other large town water system. Folks there even joke about it: "Arsenic? It only bothers you if you're not used to it." Tim Miller, who has lived in Fallon all his life, jests, "Arsenic is no biggie. I'll die of something. It's called life. Once you're born, you start dying." The arsenic levels remain high, not because people like drinking arsenic, but because they don't want to pay for the solution—a \$10 million treatment plant. Said one official, "This is Nevada. They don't want to feel government is intruding in their lives." Talking about sin often gets about the same response. It's not that we wouldn't like to get rid of it, but we don't like anyone—even God—telling us what we have to do. "Sin is no biggie," folks seem to say. "I'll die of something. It's called life."

Mark 14:27-31

²⁷"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' ²⁸But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." ²⁹Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." ³⁰"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today--yes, tonight--before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." ³¹But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

⁵³They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. ⁵⁴Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

⁶⁶While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. ⁶⁸But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. ⁶⁹When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." ⁷⁰Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." ⁷¹He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." ⁷²Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Hebrews 6: 4-9

⁴It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. ⁷Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. ⁹Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation."

1 Timothy 1: 15-16

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."