

We started reading the Gospel of John at Christmas and Chapters 2-12 are all about Jesus public ministry, three years in 11 chapters. Starting last week, in chapter 13, we'll do four days of Jesus' life in 8 chapters. A huge chunk of the Gospel of John is Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday. These are major actions in the passion narrative and we are following these figures: Peter this week, Jesus and Pontius Pilot next week, then the trial and on Palm Sunday we'll go back and start the week again. This will give us the opportunity to do a deep dive into the events of the last week of Jesus' life.

John 18

When Jesus is on trial, so is Peter; both are being questioned. Jesus is in front of the people that matter, in a very real sense they are judge and jury. Peter is with the slaves, who can't even testify in a Roman court. Jesus is saying, "I am." Peter is saying, "I am not." Peter is asked, "Are you a disciple?" Peter denies who he is. Again he is asked, "Are you a disciple?" Peter says, "I am not." notice the play on the "I am" statements of Jesus. This is all about Peter's discipleship. Will Peter embrace what it means to be a disciple?

What does it mean to be a disciple? Another word for disciple is student or learner. Maybe a key component of being a learner is seeing your shortcomings—having an accurate picture of our strengths and weaknesses. Peter to all appearances is a loyal disciple, and we want to be loyal followers of Jesus. That's what is so disturbing about this story of Peter's denial. Peter was the unshakable disciple, he was the one that didn't want Jesus to wash his feet, he wanted to preserve Jesus' status as the rabbi and teacher. He came out of the garden with a sword. Yet

he denies being a disciple. What do we need to learn about ourselves? What would we deny about ourselves?

I'll speak for myself—there are many ways in which I am deeply flawed. We all have our own short comings but as Americans and people living in this post-Industrial revolution world we have the "sitting" disease. My maternal grandfather did work that kept him moving, little of what he did as a farmer and carpenter allowed him to be still. I am a pastor: meetings, writing, reading, visiting people these things mostly keep me still. Many of us have these sorts of jobs and lives. Now for most of us our work isn't going to be transformed to include walking out to the back pasture to bring the cows in to milk twice a day, but there are some things we can do in the everyday that can transform our lives. The Bible does not have a written exercise plan for our lives...it was written at a time when physical activity was part of daily life... but scripture does talk about the health of mind, body and spirit and how that is important. The Daniel Plan has recommendations. To start with we can make a fitness goal. What is something related to fitness you would love to be able to do? Write it down, outline the steps you'd need to take to achieve it and tell someone about it.

There are also small things that can make a big difference in our fitness. Take two minutes every hour to move but also use these times to strengthen your relationship with God. There is a whole list of these in the book but here are three:

- stand and thank God for particular blessings in your life
- stretch shoulders and arms thanking God
- stretch lower back humble and serve

10 more of these types of things in the Daniel plan book. Read, commit, tell and practice, and together we strengthen ourselves and our community in body, spirit, mind.

In today's reading, Peter is warming himself by the charcoal fire. Think about what that feels like in your body. It has been a long day for Peter. Something terrible has happened to a dear friend, so much so that you're not sure what it means for your life. Then in John chapter 21 we again have a charcoal fire. It is after Easter and Peter is on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by the places where he has lived most of his life. Doing what he knew how to do. There on the shore is another charcoal fire. Jesus is making breakfast. Peter can't wait for the boat to be rowed in, but jumps and swims to Jesus. Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" and tells Peter what discipleship looks like. And Peter says, "Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes Lord."

One of the things we do together is confession and absolution, it is an act of truth telling. In Peter's denial he is disclosing something about himself, "I am not a disciple," and at that point it is true. Whether fear, shame, shock, or anger—we don't know. We work through our feelings as Peter did ...over time. He moves from not a disciple and shame, to acceptance and clarity. "Yes, Lord!" must have felt so good. And all the while Jesus is truth telling, "I have always taught openly. I am light, life, good shepherd." In confession, we claim the truth of Peter in our lives, our humanness, and in absolution, we are given and claim the truth of Jesus in our lives, "I am light, life, and a sheep of the good shepherd." Pray that silently to yourself, "I am light, life, and a sheep of the good shepherd." "I am light, life, and a sheep of the good shepherd." Amen.