

2018 FHUMC Winter Message Series: "At the Rail"

Series Lens: Using Peter's responses to Jesus as a way for us to respond to Jesus.

Series Theme Verse: "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

Series Blurb: We begin the new year and our Sabbath Jubilee by rekindling our passionate spirituality. For six weeks starting Sun., Jan. 7, we are going back to our first Love, and recommitting ourselves and our church to our foundational relationship with Jesus. We will follow Peter's words to Jesus as he struggled to follow Him closely; we are much like Peter! Each Sunday during this series we will invite people to spend time at the altar prayer railing during worship to put their hearts with God's. We'll see you at the rail!

Sunday, Feb. 4, 2018 Holy Communion

Message #5: "I Never Will!"

Theme: We struggle with a fickle conviction (a fair weather faith!) in following the Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 26:31-35

Peter's Response: Matt. 26:33 "Peter replied, 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.'"

Memory Verse: "Keep my steps steady by your word; don't let any sin rule me." -Psalm 119:133

Blurb: Have you ever made God some grand promise during a time of crisis, only to slip on your commitment when things got better? God has lots of experience with people like that! Thankfully, He is gracious and pushes us to start again. Come this Sunday to seek God more radically, and to be filled by His Spirit to do it when things are bad or good!

Setup: Small sheets of normal copy paper with "I am committed to Jesus" in every bulletin.

Frixion "erasable" pens for people to use (office supply stores carry them). (The Frixion brand uses heat to make the ink "erase" or disappear, which will be important for next week.)

WORSHIP OUTLINE:

Opening Song: *Reckless Love* -Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

PP: Picture of me on historic Class Meeting benches at John Street UMC, New York

Grow Moment: Joining one of the church-wide small groups.

PP: Memory Verse

"Keep my steps steady by your word; don't let any sin rule me." -Psalm 119:133

Memory Verse

Let's try it together.

"Keep my steps steady by your word; don't let any sin rule me." -Psalm 119:133

Worship Set: - Sanctify*Onward, Christian Soldiers* (Kids lead actions)*Good, Good Father**Different*

Worship prayer - Andrew

Skit: “The Fisherman in the Coffee Shop 5” (Andrew and Michael)**Bumper Video****Message:** At the Rail: I Never Will!**PP#1:** At the Rail

I Never Will!

“Peter replied, ‘Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.’” -Matthew 26:33

At the Rail: I Never Will! Matthew 26:33, “Peter replied, ‘Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.’”

PP#2: *Image of a curvy road (with curve sign?) by a dam (Jamestown, if possible); Or, the picture of this motorcycle: http://databikes.com/imgs/a/c/h/h/f/yamaha__xv_535_1988_1_lgw.jpg*

I was cool in college. I had a brand new black two-door chevy Beretta and a Yamaha Virago 535 motorcycle. I would take the motorcycle out for a ride, and I particularly loved the curvy road along the reservoir. I was also kinda cocky! One time I took my roommate out and went whipping through the curves. On the sharpest curve, I leaned so far that my foot peg scrapped the pavement and lifted weight off my rear tire enough to send us sliding into the ditch, with my right buttocks scrapping the pavement as we went.

At the emergency room, they took out a wire brush and told me to grip down hard on the table I was leaning over. In order for the abrasion to heal, they told me, the wound would have to be opened up and cleaned out. I don’t know, ladies, because I’ve never experienced it. But I think I would rather have birthed a child!

It is necessary to open up wounds and clean them out if they are going to heal.

PP#3: *Image of fingers clutching a prayer rail, or a table, or something.*

Sometimes the prayer railing can be a very painful experience. You see, when we open our hearts to God, and ask Him to come in, the dangerous thing is, God does! And when God comes in, He works on us to make us into the person He created us to be. And to do that, God begins to target our sin, our failures, and wounds. Not to judge us or condemn us, but in order to bring healing.

Sometimes the prayer railing can have finger marks like that emergency room table I was on!

PP#4: *Image of Peter boldly asking Jesus to wash all of him at the Last Supper.*

Peter left his finger marks on his prayer railing!

We’ve been following Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples while on earth, and listening to

how he responded to Jesus, and we've been trying to use his words, his responses, as ways that we can respond to Jesus when we get real, and open our lives to Him at the prayer railing.

We've heard Peter say "Yes" to commit to following Jesus, ask Jesus to call us to come to Him to surmount our fears and keep our focus on Him, honestly admit that only Jesus has the true words of life that we long for, and go "all in" as we profess Jesus as Savior and God's Son, and ask Him to wash us completely.

But at the end of Jesus' earthly life, Peter goes to the rail two more times, sort of as bookends for the climax of the Jesus story. As Jesus is betrayed, Peter proclaims undying allegiance to Jesus, and then a week later he faces the resurrected Jesus that he denied so totally since last they met.

We're going to look at this in two parts over the next two Sundays. Today we are taking up the painful part, when we respond with Peter our fair weather and fickle commitment to Jesus.

We need to open the wounds in order to heal.

It's the night before when Jesus will be crucified. Jesus at a special last supper with His disciples. During that meal, Jesus washes their feet, and Peter wants to go "all in." Yet Jesus forecasts that one of them will betray Him, and Judas leaves to go inform the Jewish authorities. Jesus takes the other eleven and goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He then suddenly turns to them and tells them that actually, not just Judas, but each of them will betray Him. Peter, of course, with a heart emboldened with love and commitment, pledges he never will.

PP#5: Matthew 26:31-35 (CEB)

31 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Tonight you will all fall away because of me. This is because it is written, 'I will hit the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will go off in all directions.' [Zech 13:7] 32 But after I'm raised up, I'll go before you to Galilee."

33 Peter replied, "If everyone else stumbles because of you, I'll never stumble."

Matthew 26, verse 31, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Tonight you will all fall away because of me. This is because it is written, 'I will hit the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will go off in all directions.' [Zech 13:7] 32 But after I'm raised up, I'll go before you to Galilee.'

"33 Peter replied, 'If everyone else stumbles because of you, I'll never stumble.'"

They have just celebrated a long dinner together. Judas has left as a traitor. Emotions are strong. So was all the wine they had just drunk. And in the quiet and safety of the garden, Peter's allegiance to Jesus is strong.

Have you ever made a pledge to God in a time of crisis? "Lord, if you get me through this, I promise I'll go to church, pray every day, give generously!" In the heat of the moment, passions are strong, and you really mean it. You are willing to do what you promise.

But then, what? Time goes by. Circumstances change. Brighter days relieve the worry. And little compromises lead to others, and soon we're not even trying to keep our promise. Our actions no longer align with our commitment.

When the Vikings had a good shot at the Super Bowl, the number of fans began to swell. As the end of the season approached, excitement and energy soared. Then, there was that spectacular last-second win of the first playoff game. After that, it seemed everyone was a die-hard Vikings fan! Oceans of people wore purple. Not just sports bars, but every coffee shop and snack bar heard buzz about "our team." Non-football fans turned on the game in Philadelphia.

By Monday, no one was wearing purple. I've lost track of how many times this past week I've heard, "I would've watched the game if the Vikings were in it, but now I don't care."

Allegiance is strong when things go well. And promises are fervent in the heat of the crisis. But it is when difficulties pile up, or time and crises cool, that commitment begins to fade.

Church, do you know what I'm talking about? Is the Holy Spirit identifying some sores, pointing to some wounds? It's hard being at the prayer rail!

PP#6: Matthew 26:31-35 (CEB)

34 Jesus said to Peter, "I assure you that, before the rooster crows, tonight you will deny me three times."

35 Peter said, "Even if I must die alongside you, I won't deny you." All the disciples said the same thing.

Peter says his allegiance to Jesus is unwavering. But then Jesus again forecasts failure. He turns to Peter, the boldest, the loudest, the most passionate, looks at him square in the eye, and says, you will deny me this very night not once, not twice, but *three* times!

Verse 34, "Jesus said to Peter, 'I assure you that, before the rooster crows, tonight you will deny me three times.'"

Peter responds with an even more passionate pledge of commitment. Verse 35, "Peter said, 'Even if I must die alongside you, I won't deny you.' [And here is where we all come in.] All the disciples said the same thing." Our voice is in there, too...yours and mine. We pledge our commitment to Jesus, our undying allegiance.

PP#7: *Image of Peter denying Jesus while around the fire.*

Peter really meant it, you know... in the moment. So do we. We feel *full* of love and openness to Jesus. But then, circumstances change. Time passes. And our actions don't always match our commitment.

The soldiers come to arrest Jesus, and at first, Peter makes good on his pledge. He draws a sword and rushes in. But Jesus restrains him. "No, not like that, Peter." Peter is confused, and finally follows the soldiers who lead Jesus away. Soon Peter finds himself in the courtyard of the Jewish authorities. Soldiers are everywhere. There is a definite anti-Jesus buzz.

Suddenly, a servant girl in the crowd points at Peter and says, "Aren't you with that criminal?" Peter panics. Can't draw attention! "No" he whispers. Then by the fire a woman loudly identifies him, "I know this man is a follower of the criminal!" Everyone looks at him. Peter defends himself, "I promise you lady, I am not!" People press in, "You even talk with His same accent. You're from His town. You must be here with Him."

Peter panics and get's loud. "I told you, blankety-blank, I don't know Him. I swear to God!"

The rooster crows, and Peter realizes what he has just done. That was a wound that went deep!

PP#8: *Image of a small card that says, "I am...committed...to...Jesus"*

Now, before we apply this to our lives, remember that this is a two-part message. You need to come back next week to hear how Jesus comes back to Peter and leads him through healing for this wound, his denial.

Ready? Time to grip the prayer railing! Take out the card that came in the bulletin, the one that says, "I am committed to Jesus."

Few of us have ever denied Jesus like Peter did. But we all have fallen away. You and I have struggled to keep our commitment to Jesus steady. There are times we have been fair weather Jesus followers. Our actions have not followed our professions of commitment. You hear the yearning in your heart for more of Jesus than you have allowed yourself.

Remember, in order for wounds to heal, you have to open them up and clean them out. Jesus wants you to heal! So, I invite you to push yourself, to be bold in your seeking more of Jesus, to go deep, to be willing to open up, to be honest, and admit the ways that the Holy Spirit brings to mind the ways that you have denied Jesus, how you have not walked the way He has called you, that you have compromised what you profess by your actions.

PP#9: *The “I am...committed...to...Jesus” card w/“DENY” written on it, and the words struck out.*

As you do, take the special pens being passed around, and please, only use these Frixion pens. We’re going to use some science next week as we try to demonstrate God’s healing. Using the special pens, write “deny” somewhere on your sheet. And then, strike over the words as you own the ways that you, like Peter, have claimed, “I will never,” but then have. When you’re done, please share the pens with others around you.

Kids, you can do this, too. You know that you let Jesus down. And we need to admit that, in order to be forgiven. And if you want, you can scribble all over this sheet. Just please use the special Frixion pens. And come back next week if you want to see something really cool!

Take a moment, as your prayers of confession, with your commitment cards and special pens. Open your wounds to Jesus, and let Him begin healing.

[Pause.]

In a moment, we’re going to celebrate Holy Communion, and I’m going to invite us to receive the elements down here at the prayer railing. I’ll have you come down to the railing as there is room, either kneeling or standing, and after the first group is finished and leaves, more can come and fill in to receive.

I want you to bring your scribbled-out commitment cards with you as you come down, and, in order to begin your process of healing, leave them behind at the prayer railing, and walk away.

PP: Holy Communion

All of Jesus’ disciples have always failed Him, even from the beginning. But to each He has always offered forgiveness, healing, and a changed life going forward. But to receive that, we must walk with Jesus to the garden, to the courtyard, and to the cross. It is there that we see how Jesus won for us our forgiveness and second chance.

Going to the rail means remembering and proclaiming how Jesus gave Himself up for you.
On the night Jesus was betrayed

Lord’s Prayer

Holy Communion

We will receive the elements here at the prayer railing.

When you come for Holy Communion, come down the side aisles.

Bring your offerings.

As there is room, fill in—kneel or stand—at the prayer railing, or sit in the left-side pew.

Bring your commitment cards with you.
Leave your commitment cards at the prayer railing and walk away.
Return to your seats along the outside edges. Put your cups in the baskets against the walls.
Members of the prayer team are ready to pray with you along the back wall, if you wish.
If you cannot come down, we will also bring the elements to you as needed.
Come, and fill in as there is room.

Offering: *Oh the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus* -Sanctify

Closing Song: *There Is Joy in the Lord* - Sanctify

PP: Memory Verse

“Keep my steps steady by your word; don’t let any sin rule me.” -Psalm 119:133

Announcements: Wed. M&M: Meal: Potluck, More: Small Groups & Board Games.

Benediction