

MIDWEEK OF LENT 4: PARTICIPANT
WEEK 5: WEEK OF MARCH 31
THE COURTYARD
Luke 22:54–62

OPENING

O God of light, Your word, a lamp unfailing,
 Shall pierce the darkness of our earthbound way
 And show Your grace, Your plan for us unveiling,
 And guide our footsteps to the perfect day.

From days of old, through blind and willful ages,
 Though we rebelled, You gently sought again
 And spoke through saints, apostles, prophets, sages,
 Who wrote with eager or reluctant pen.

Undimmed by time, those words are still revealing
 To sinful hearts Your justice and Your grace;
 And questing spirits, longing for Your healing,
 See Your compassion in the Savior's face.

—“O God of Light” (LSB 836, vv. 1–3)¹

INTRODUCTION

In this section of the Passion Narrative (Luke 22:54–62), Luke relates Peter's denial of Jesus in the courtyard. At the heart of this scene is the contrast between losing one's life and saving it.

Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus taught His disciples, “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (9:24). That teaching becomes concrete in this text.

Peter looks like he is willing to lose his life. He follows Jesus to the high priest's courtyard. Yet, when questioned about his relationship with Jesus, Peter denies Jesus in order to save his life. By seeking to save his life, he loses it. His denial of Jesus is the way of death.

Jesus, however, is literally losing His life. Here, He is taken to trial and, from there, to His crucifixion. By losing His sinless life, however, Jesus rises to save the lives of sinners. The way of death for Jesus becomes the way of life for all.

Luke surrounds Peter's denial (22:55–60) with the story of Jesus' faithfulness (vv. 54, 61). He wants us to read both of these together. When we look at Peter's denial and reflect on our sin,

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Luke wants us to see Jesus, looking at sinners and willingly dying for their sin. This vision of Jesus comforts all sinners. Jesus lost His life for sinners that sinners might be forgiven and find their true life in Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the heart of this text is Peter's denial of Jesus (vv. 55–60). Luke records three conversations with Peter in the courtyard and, with each conversation, the stakes are raised and Peter's denial becomes more fervent. Read through the three conversations and identify how the challenges become broader and Peter's denial grows greater with each one.

2. When the rooster crows, Peter remembers the words of Jesus predicting his denial (v. 61). These words bring about repentant sorrow for Peter. For Luke's reader, however, they offer something more. Read Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial in Luke (22:31–34) and reflect on how this prediction shapes our meditation on this event.

3. While all Gospel writers include the rooster's crow, Luke is the only Gospel writer to include the moment when Jesus looks at Peter (v. 61). What is the importance of that glance?

4. The verses from our opening hymn (*LSB* 836, “O God of Light”) turn our attention to the watchfulness of God and His work through His Word. Identify how the hymn describes God working through His Word. Then meditate on how God works that way for Peter in the larger Passion Narrative and how God works that way for you.

CONCLUSION

In this text, Luke reveals how the word of Jesus was fulfilled. Jesus predicted Peter’s denial and it came to pass. Jesus also, however, predicted Peter’s repentance and called him to strengthen his brothers in the faith, and that happened as well.

When our eyes are focused only on our sin, we can be led into despair. For that reason, it is good to remember the words of Jesus. Jesus turns our eyes away from our sin to see His work of salvation. He offers us the comfort that, even when we fall into sin, He is praying for us, watching over us, and offering us His Word and work that forgive and bring new life.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, You watch over our coming and going and are acquainted with all our ways. Seeing our sin, You sent Your Son to be our Savior and have laid on Him the just penalty of our sin that He might bring us the joys of Your salvation.

Receive our thanks for Your watchful care. Open our ears to hear Your Word and open our eyes to see Your work, so that with our lives opened by Your Holy Spirit we might share Your life with a fallen world.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.