

**“CHANGED LIVES-SIMON PETER”**

**PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE**

**REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON**

**“CHANGED LIVES-SIMON PETER”**

**John 13:1-15**

**March 19, 2008**

**6:00 P.M. Service**

Dr. Fred Craddock tells about something that happened many years ago while he was driving cross-country. He had stopped at a small diner somewhere in the South to refresh himself with an early breakfast and some coffee. He had been driving through the night and now it was getting close to dawn. And he was sleepy.

As he waited for his breakfast order to come, Craddock spied a black man who had just come in and had sat down on a stool up by the lunch counter. The diner’s manager then began to treat the black man with a contempt that was clearly borne of deep-seated racism. The manager was rude, insulting, demeaning toward his black guest. As he sat in his booth a little ways away from the counter, Craddock wrestled with whether to say something to chide this manager for his shameful, racist conduct.

Meanwhile the black man quickly slurped down some coffee and fled into the darkness. Craddock remained silent. **“I didn’t say anything,”** he confessed. **“I quietly paid my bill, left the diner, and headed back to my car. But as I walked through the parking lot, somewhere in the distance, I heard a rooster crow.”**

One Sunday Fred Craddock was a guest preacher at a church and he preached a sermon with that story in it. After the service, a man came

up to him in the narthex, shook Craddock's hand vigorously, and said, **"Thank you, pastor, for that powerful sermon. That really hit home! Oh, but by the way, what was that business with the rooster?"** <sup>(1)</sup>

Simon Peter hears a rooster crow and he remembers Christ's words, ***"I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"*** (13:38) And Simon Peter wept.

Nothing that happened that evening had gone as Simon Peter expected. It was just before the Passover Feast. The disciples had gathered with Jesus for a meal. They did not know it would be the last meal they would share before his crucifixion.

Suddenly, without warning Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter. Simon expressed bewilderment. ***"Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"***

Jesus replied, ***"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."***

***"No,"*** Peter protested, ***"you shall never wash my feet."***

Jesus answered, ***"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."***

***"Then, Lord,"*** Simon Peter replied with his customary bravado, ***"not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"***

That was typical Simon Peter-speak. Later in the evening Jesus announced that one of them would betray him. Judas fled from the room. Then Jesus said to them, ***"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I***

*tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.*

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Simon Peter asked him, *“Lord, where are you going?”*

Jesus replied, *“Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”*

Peter asked, *“Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”* That’s Simon Peter, all right.

It was then that Jesus gave his sad prophecy, *“Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”*

Sometime ago there appeared a scathing article in a theological magazine about the late Albert Schweitzer, the great missionary. The author attacked Schweitzer's theology as dated and obsolete and the man himself as muddle-headed, misguided, and off center concerning the fundamental teachings of the New Testament. Toward the end of the article, however, he paused to say, **“Perhaps we should not judge Schweitzer by his word, but by his deeds; not by his books, but by his Christian discipleship; not by his theological conceptions, but by the fact that he took up Christ's cross and carried it to Africa and did not laid it down.”** <sup>(2)</sup>

Simon Peter did not always say the right thing, or do the right thing. But he took up Christ’s cross, the cross of servant hood. As we leave this service tonight, let us do likewise.

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1. Cited by Pastor Scott Hoezee, <http://www.calvinrc.org/sermons/2002/mark13Advent02.html>.

2. Source unknown.