

After The Rooster Crows

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Sermon for March 21, 1993

Assigned Text

Luke 22:54-62

We all know Peter's story. He told Jesus that he'd be willing to follow him...even to death. But Jesus knew better, and told Peter that by the time the rooster crowed, he would've denied knowing him three times. Peter was still sure of himself, he wasn't counting on being tested when he was most vulnerable, when he was the least prepared...and when the rooster crowed, it was to point out that he had indeed failed...just like Jesus said he would. And when the rooster crowed, Peter wept bitterly.

Yeah, we all know Peter's story, but I don't think that many of us know Alan's...and maybe we should...because it's probably a lot more like the situations we're likely to face.

It had been a number of years since Alan had made his decision, and it was an important decision to him. After being one of many people his age who had no problem with the idea of casual sex, and who believed that anything that went on between two consenting adults was just fine...especially if he were one of the consenting adults, he decided to wait until he was married before he had sex with anyone else. This came as a result of hearing some friends talk about sex as being God's wedding present. And after seven years of sticking with this decision, Alan figured that the statute of limitations should be invoked so he could consider himself a virgin again. This decision

was also important to Sarah, his girlfriend. You see, Sarah had never been one of those casual sex people, and as much as she loved Alan, she was still bothered by the idea that if they ever got married, there would've been someone else before her. However, the fact that he had made this decision even before she met him helped things out a bit. In fact, it was Sarah who gave him the idea of invoking the statute of limitations.

Alan was proud of the number of years he had gone. Maybe even too proud. It was easy for him to stick by his decision as long as he was with Sarah, because they both wanted to wait.

But Alan hadn't counted on Sarah not being there.

The day came when Alan and Sarah broke up. Sarah had been a large part of his life, and she let him know that he was loved by someone. Oh sure, he knew that God loved him, but as the old saying goes, he needed someone "with skin on," someone who wasn't contractually obligated to love him. When he and Sarah broke up he became very depressed...and very lonely.

Enter Monica. No, she's not who you think she is, and she didn't do what you think she did. She was a friend of his from work who knew how lonely he was, and thought he'd have a lot in common with her roommate. So

she invited him over for dinner to meet her, and then left the two of them alone.

After dinner they went upstairs to talk, and one thing led to another, and Alan didn't go home that night. Don't ever let anyone tell you that only women confuse sex with love. Guys do too, and Alan did that night. He was being tested when he was most vulnerable and when he was the least prepared to deal with it. Part of him knew that he should stop things real fast and tell her that he had to go, but another part was lonely and afraid of being laughed at if he told her why. And here was someone who wanted to be with him...when Sarah didn't.

I'm a city kid, so most of what I know about roosters comes from cartoons and commercials for Kellogg's Corn Flakes, so to me the rooster crowing means that a new day has come.

Well the rooster crowed, the next morning came, and realizing what he had done, Alan wept bitterly. Not just when he woke up, but all the way home from Monica's house, and for the better part of the day. And it wasn't just because he had failed in keeping to his decision, but worse to him, because he felt that he had used someone. In order to not feel lonely, in order to try to fill hole left by Sarah, he had used someone. And he wept bitterly.

What came *before* the rooster crowed? Failure, for both Peter and Alan. What comes *after* the rooster crows? Guilt, because both of them knew that they could have, and *should* have done differently. But maybe there's something else.

I mentioned that to me the rooster crowing means the beginning of a new day. This is important because of something I learned from some housemates of *mine* who were recovering alcoholics. They told me about there being a time when they realized that they had hit bottom, and needed to get help. Some people refer to this as the waking up in the gutter experience.

The rooster crowed and pointed out to both Peter and Alan that they had failed. That they had failed miserably. That they had waken up in the gutter. But there was something else very important that the rooster told them...it was a new day...the old day was behind them, and there was a chance to begin again. And that's another important thing I learned from my housemates, that you have to begin again every day. And we get a chance to begin again because of something else the crowing of the rooster symbolizes...the fact that the sun...or rather the Son...is about to rise. And the fact that the Son has risen, indeed, the fact that the Son died for us, means that we can be forgiven for what we did wrong yesterday, and can try again today, secure in knowing that *when* not *if*, but *when* we mess up today and tomorrow, that will be forgiven too. Every sunrise after the Son rose should remind us of this.

What comes *after* the rooster crows? There *is* guilt, but there's also something even more important...change and forgiveness.

What happened to Peter *after* the rooster crowed and after the Son rose? We know he changed. He wasn't quite so quick to make the cocky statements about following Jesus even to death. We also know that Jesus not

only forgave him, but trusted him with the care of his entire flock. And...we know that he eventually *did* follow Jesus even to death. Perhaps Peter was a better person and more useful for having failed, having to face it, and experiencing forgiveness.

What about Alan? He had a lot of work to do with himself. He spent a lot of time thinking about the many ways he had failed that night, what he could've and should've done differently, and how he would handle things if that situation ever came up again. He also had to come to realize that perhaps he had put too much faith in what *he* had done or decided not to do. He also had to accept the fact that he could be forgiven.

A few months later he met Ellen, and not wanting to make the same mistake twice, he risked being laughed at and told her before anything even had a chance to happen, what he would and would not do. She didn't laugh. She respected his decision.

Then remembering how much the idea had bothered Sarah, he told her about that night, fully expecting her to walk away. But an amazing thing happened...she forgave him,

and stayed with him, and is with him to this day. Perhaps Alan is also better for having failed, having to face that failure, and experiencing forgiveness.

And perhaps we all need to take a lesson from Peter and Alan, and realize that when the rooster crows, it's not always to accuse, but to tell us that we have another chance...and that we are forgiven.

The rooster crowed for Peter, and for Alan...and it crows for each one of us every day of our lives. Remember that this Lent. Let the crowing of the rooster point out where we've failed, let it remind us of our guilt...but also...let it remind us of the coming Son rise, and that we...you, me...all of us...can be forgiven. And *that* is good news.