

# The Book of Redemption



*Messages by various speakers on the book of  
Luke at the Streetlight Mission Church  
in the 6:30 p.m. services of March 2007*

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March 4, 2007  
Pastor Paul Aasman

**Luke 21:3** “‘I tell you the truth,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others.’”

***Rich Gifts in God’s Eyes***

Reading: Luke 21:1-4  
Text: Luke 21:3

Dear friends of Streetlight Mission Church, brothers and sisters, and guests,

There is a saying (I don’t know where I picked it up) that you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. If you love, you cannot help but to give. Jesus saw that this widow, when she gave her two copper coins, was giving out of her love. When a person gives you cannot always tell if they love, but Jesus knew that she was giving out of her love. Anybody who loves God and his salvation in Jesus Christ will be careful to pay attention to what she did. So it’s a pleasure that I may speak about that with you this evening, because I know that there are many who love God for his love in Jesus Christ, and I wish that it would be true for all.

How do we understand this giving of two small copper coins into the temple treasury? In order to understand this event, and to understand the words that Jesus spoke about it, we need to understand a little about the context of Old Testament giving. In

the Old Testament, Israel (God’s people) gave a certain amount every year: a tenth. In the Old Testament that was *the law*. God said that you *have to* give ten percent of all that you receive, of all the growth that you experience. You have to give a tenth to God. That was the law.

Now, it wasn’t just a hard law that was enforced. It was a law by which Israel was supposed to show their joy, their love and their faith. The tithe was supposed to be a joyful gift. God arranged the giving of the tithe in a very special way. When Israel brought the tithe to God, they were supposed to bring it to the temple, and show the tithe to the priest because the priest was supposed to examine the gift which the Israelite was bringing, to see if it was a reasonable, mathematical tenth that they were giving. After the priest had examined it, the priest gave back the tithe to the person that was giving it, and they were supposed to take it and have a large party, a great feast. They might have brought some flour, meat or wine. And then they would have a really good time, a fellowship feast and a fellowship offering in the presence of God. So God said that when you give your gift to him, you are to do it with *joy*. It is not to be given in a grudging way. When you give him your tithe, he wants it to be a joyful event, a time of celebration. And make sure you buy some wine! There is no other time that God said to buy some wine, but when it comes to the celebration of giving the tithe, he wants you to buy some

wine, because it is supposed to be a happy time. In this way God emphasized that, yes, there is a law: you *have to* bring ten percent. But when you bring your ten percent, give it joyfully, as an expression of your love for him. Give it as an expression of your dependence on him. God also teaches Israel in the Old Testament, and it remains forever true, that they are only temporary residents, passing through as guests in this world, because the earth belongs to him. The earth is God's, and you have to acknowledge and recognize that by giving to him what he claims for his own. Give him ten percent.

To give a gift to God from the money that we earn and the growth that we experience, is really important. In our Tuesday night Bible study, the downstairs group, and in some of the other groups, we have finished Acts 20. At the very end of Acts 20 the apostle Paul quotes Jesus, and he says, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: It is more blessed to give than to receive." It's really true! It is more blessed to give than to receive.

This is something that, at a time in the Old Testament, God complained about to his people. In the book of Malachi, God says to his people that they are supposed to bring him a tenth, and they're not doing it. God complains that when they do bring gifts to him, then they're bringing him sick animals with broken legs or near to dying. God said that he was not pleased with what they were doing. God taught his people that to give is a blessed thing.

For he said to his people in the very last Old Testament book, the prophecy of Malachi, chapter 3:8, "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your field will not cast their fruit, says the Lord Almighty. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the Lord Almighty." God challenges us to believe that to give to him is a great blessing to us. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Now, Jesus is standing near the temple, near the treasury box where the people come into the temple sanctuary in the outer courts (only the priests could go into the temple building itself), just inside the gates where there was the collection box for the temple treasury. And Jesus sees this poor widow (she has no husband because he has died, and she may or may not have children to raise – we don't know in this case). He sees this widow put in two small copper coins, a very insignificant amount of money. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth: this poor widow has put

in more than all the others.” Jesus Christ sees in what she did something just so beautiful in his eyes.

Jesus Christ is about to give everything for us. In Luke 21 we are near the very end of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the last week before his death. So this might be Tuesday, and on Friday he will die. Jesus Christ is about to give everything out of his love for us. And he sees his giving reflected in this woman’s giving because this woman only has this small amount of money, these two tiny copper coins, to live on. But instead of using it to buy bread, she comes to God’s temple and she feels compelled to give it to the Lord. It is a reflection of what Jesus Christ himself is about to do for us.

That needs to be reflected in our giving, too. We give of ourselves to God. Jesus was delighted in what she did, because what she did showed her faith in God. She loved God and nothing is too much to give to God. Even if I give everything, it doesn’t come close to expressing the love I have for God, nor does it fully express my complete trust in God. I can give everything that I have to live on to God, and God will still take care of me. It is more blessed to give to God than to receive. Jesus delighted in what she did because it showed faith.

There was another man in the early Christian church, named Epiphaneus, who said that if in the Old Testament they gave ten percent in order to show their love for God and their

thankfulness for his grace, then we, the New Testament people, if we were to give one hundred percent to the Lord, still wouldn’t come near to showing all of our thanks to God. One hundred percent of my income wouldn’t fully express my love for God and my trust in him, because I rely completely on him.

God wants us to give to him in a way that shows joy. When we give to the Lord, we should do it happily. We should do it without grudging. When we give to the Lord, it should express in some manner the faith that we have in him. That’s what the Lord praises this woman for: she gave everything. Out of her poverty she put in all that she had to live on. She expressed her faith. When we give, we should express joy in God and faith in Jesus Christ.

How much should we give? That is totally up to you. We don’t need to give ten or twenty or thirty percent. God does not lay a law down. The era of laws is past. That was part of the Old Testament era.

How much should we give? That is totally up to you. But give to the Lord in a way that expresses faith in him. Give to him in a way that shows your joy in Jesus Christ.

March 11, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Luke 21:28** “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

***Your Redemption Is Drawing Near!***

Reading: Luke 21:5-28  
Text: Luke 21:28

Brothers and sisters, friends of the Streetlight Church Community,

The day of the Lord is coming near, and we need to be ready for the appearance of Jesus Christ as he returns upon the clouds. To remain alert and awake is a difficult thing for us. Jesus very often warns us that we need to stay alert; we need to keep on thinking about the fact that Jesus Christ is coming.

The Lord Jesus Christ started this chapter talking about that. He says that things are going to happen: you’ll read in the newspapers about world events and things that are happening in creation, but there are also things that you won’t even have to read about because they will happen in the sky, in creation, in the world. Things are going to be happening and you can respond to those things in one of two ways: you can either become afraid and say, “What’s happening? I won’t survive this!” *or* you can put your trust in God and find comfort. Jesus Christ wants on the one hand, to warn us, and on the other to comfort us. He warns us that

we need to be alert because he is coming back, but he also comforts us, saying that we should not be afraid about the things that are going to happen.

Now in the verse of our focus, verse 28, Jesus says that when these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads. Take a position of confidence. Stand up, lift up your head, don’t be afraid, don’t be cowering, don’t try to hide, and don’t crawl into a hole. Stand up! Be bold! Lift up your face because Jesus Christ is coming, and you can look for him. So, when should we do that? When should we stand up and have this attitude of boldness and be looking for Jesus Christ, asking, “Where is he?” Right now!

But when I think about this passage, it says, “When these things begin to take place,” and I wonder, “What are these things that should be taking place?” There are some who think that “these things” refers only to the verses 25 and 26, that there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars – whatever that might be. Maybe eclipses, or maybe changes in the patterns of the sky – maybe the North Star no longer a constant point. Who knows what kinds of things that might be? People who look at the stars would know better perhaps. On earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. So people will be terrified because the sea is rising and falling. That brings images to mind which are not hard to imagine. We think of the tsunami, for

instance, and the terrible devastation that happened, or other things, such as the talk these days about global warming and the rising of the sea, and the swallowing up of huge portions of the ocean coastline. People are upset about that. “Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” That would be an amazing thing: that the stars no longer have the same patterns compared to the night before or compared to the year before; or perhaps comets appear in the sky and people become very agitated about that. Last week there was what they call a lunar eclipse, and people get all worked up about that as well. Yes indeed, nations of the earth easily become anguished and perplexed at natural things that happen in the universe that we live in.

Jesus says, “When these things begin to take place, stand up.” I think, though, that when Jesus says, “When these things begin to take place,” he is not only talking about those things that we read about in verses 25 and 26. The natural disasters and the shaking of the stars and the tumults of the sea, and so on, these are the last things to happen before Jesus Christ, the Son of Man (another name for Jesus) comes on the clouds, full of glory and power. I think, however, that “these things” that must happen include more. It includes all the things described, beginning at verse 5.

Jesus Christ is warning us in verse 34, a little after our text. He says, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life.” Jesus Christ is warning us against allowing these things to happen to us – that we would be drawn away into dissipation. Now, I have to admit that I wasn’t quite sure what that word meant. I had a sense of it, so I looked it up, and it means to become too wrapped up in the pursuit of pleasure. So, dissipation is pursuing pleasure too much. It’s not a bad thing to do things that are pleasant. But dissipation means overly indulging in pleasure – just seeking pleasure itself and never being satisfied. So be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, you will become so preoccupied with the pursuit of pleasure that you will forget the more important things and you won’t look for the return of Jesus Christ. Watch out or your heart will get weighed down with drunkenness, against which the Bible often warns. Becoming addicted to alcohol and becoming addicted to other things that take away your alertness have the effect that you’re no longer aware of what you’re doing, and no longer aware of the things that are happening around you. Taking substances that change your awareness becomes an escape from the world that we live in. Jesus Christ warns us to watch out that we don’t make that a pattern. Your heart can get weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the anxieties of life. Your heart can so easily become so worried about things. If I walk

down the street, I'll get mugged – and therefore you don't dare to go outside. There are all kinds of anxieties that a person can develop. And Jesus Christ says we may not allow these things to happen. We may not become so wrapped up in the things of this world. That's also why Jesus said in our passage, "When these things begin to take place." The point is that Jesus says that he doesn't want us to become so wrapped up in this world that we stop looking for his return.

There are so many things that are happening that should remind us that Jesus is coming on the clouds of heaven with power and glory. We need to be waiting for him, because if we're not waiting for him, we may not be able to do what verse 36 says. In that verse it says that we will be able to stand before him.

So what are the things besides those mentioned in verses 25 & 26 which we saw already? Well, if you look back, there are actually seven things that Jesus draws to our attention, to look for these things.

In verse 6, the disciples have commented to him about the beauty of the temple, at the top of Mount Moriah in the middle of Jerusalem. It is a beautiful white, shining stone building and it's massive, and it's high and it's glorious and it's one of the wonders of the ancient world. The disciples point at it, and Jesus says – and here begins the warning – these are the things that must happen: "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone

will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." The entire temple structure will be leveled, Jesus says. Not one stone will be left upon the other. The destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, are coming. Of course we know that that did happen. It happened an awfully long time ago, almost 2000 years ago in the year 70 A.D. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by a Roman army because of revolt and rebellion in the land of Israel.

Now the second thing that must happen is in verse 8, "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them." Jesus warns many times about watching out for false teachers. There are so many false teachers in the world, and we need to be discerning. We need to be able to see what is true and what is false. And when we don't know, we should ask. We should talk among ourselves: is this a good teacher or is this a false teacher? There are many people who are teaching false things, and Jesus warns, "Do not follow them." So when we see a false teacher doing amazing signs and wonders that are clearly those of a charlatan, or clearly are just tricking the people for money, then we should say to ourselves that it is a sign that Jesus is coming and he told us to watch out for this.

Verse 9 warns, "When you hear of wars and revolutions." They say that in these days there are more wars than ever before.

We live in terrible times of warfare. When you hear about wars, about soldiers being killed, about bombs going off in marketplaces, about civil war that's so violent and barbaric, then think about how Jesus warned us. He said that these things must happen. Look for him on the clouds. Remember, he's coming! Don't stop looking!

In verses 10 & 11, He said, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven." Again, nation against nation, and then bigger: coalition against coalition, kingdoms against kingdoms. It makes you think of the world wars that happened in the times of our parents and grandparents. We know about earthquakes, about famines and pestilence, and when there's no rain any more and the fertile fields do not produce crops and people starve to death because of it. When we see these horrible things happening, and when we read about them in the newspaper, then we should remember that Jesus told us these things would happen. "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads." Look to the Son of Man. He's coming! It's a warning: make sure you are ready.

Verse 12-19 is a large section describing the persecution which is going to fall upon the followers of Jesus, those who call upon the Name of Jesus. They will be drawn to assemblies, they will be forced to stand before judges, they will be accused falsely,

they will be thrown into prison, they will even be put to death. Jesus says, "Do not worry about that time, what you will say, for I will give you words. You will be my witnesses." And sometimes the greatest witness that you will give is not the witness of words but the witness of the death of one who is willing to take a stand for Jesus Christ. There are many who have been martyred for the faith and who have given testimony by their very deaths. When persecution rises up, then remember how Jesus told us that these things have to happen. Don't be afraid; don't crawl into a hole. Look at the skies. He's coming on the clouds in power and glory!

Then verses 20-24 describe for a second time the destruction of Jerusalem. Armies would surround the city and it would be a terrible thing. It's really another way of saying what he spoke about earlier in verse 6, when he said that not one stone of the temple will be left upon the other. But in verse 6 he was talking especially about the temple. Now in verses 20-24 Jesus is talking about the city, and therefore the whole nation and the desolation of the whole Jewish people. They would be crucified on crosses along the roads to their major cities by the hundreds and even by the thousands. So we read in the history of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Israelite nation in 70 A.D. They would be crucified, they would be sold as slaves, they would be killed, they would be put in the galleys of the ships of the Roman Empire, they would be sent to the mines and be worked to death there. Terrible

things would happen and Jesus warns about that. And Jesus tells the Christians at that time not to crawl into a hole, not to be afraid when these things happen, because he has told them they would happen. They come before his return.

And then, finally, come verses 25-27 which we have seen already. So Jesus speaks about seven things. Some of them overlap.

The apostle Paul speaks about suffering, about times of trial and testing. The apostle Paul says that we have to live lives of turmoil – we *will* live lives of turmoil. He writes to the Romans, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Of course we rejoice in Jesus Christ returning and bringing glory with Him. But then Paul adds, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering.” We also rejoice in the famine and in the earthquakes and in the warfare. We rejoice in the betrayals that we experience and the persecutions that we endure. We rejoice in the shifting of the stars in the sky and the tumults of the seas. We also rejoice in the disasters. We rejoice in our suffering, Paul says in Romans 5, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character and character produces hope. Jesus Christ says that suffering makes us hope. Suffering keeps us alert until the return of Jesus Christ, when at last the glory will be unfolded for us and given to us. It is so important for you to be instructed by the warnings of Jesus. It is so important for all of us

to be in tune with the things that are happening around us, so that we may be reminded by these things that our Saviour is coming. Jesus has such a beautiful way of expressing it. He says, “Stand up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

March 18, 2007  
*Mr. Jim Witteveen*

**Luke 22:17-20** “After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”

### ***The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Suffering***

Reading: Luke 22:17-20  
Text: Luke 22:17-20

Good evening, everyone!

We sang a very appropriate song before the message, about standing in the power of Christ (“In Christ Alone”). And the passage that we read together has everything to do with why we stand in the power of Christ. The words of the passage that we read together are probably familiar to all of you: this is my body

which is given for you, and this is the cup which is poured out for you. I'm sure most of you are familiar with these words if you have either seen the Lord's Supper being celebrated, or if you have participated yourself if you have done profession of faith. And soon, the Lord willing, we may be starting to celebrate the Lord's Supper here at Streetlight Church, and that's a great blessing.

But what does it mean? What is this passage telling us? What do we learn from it? The first thing we need to do is, we need to look at what was happening. We know the heading is "The Last Supper". You may have heard of it because there is a famous painting called "The Last Supper" by Leonardo daVinci. But what was the last supper? It was a very special meal and it was part of what was called the Passover celebration.

Jesus had sent his disciples into Jerusalem to find a place where they could celebrate the Passover together. Peter and John, the disciples that he sent, found the room and prepared the meal, and the passage that we read together tonight describes what happened during that meal.

In order to understand what's really going on here, we need to know first of all what the Passover was and what it meant to the people. The Passover was a Jewish celebration, and it went all the way back to Exodus. In Exodus God delivered his people from the land of Egypt. After the exodus he commanded them to celebrate the Passover, and every year they celebrated. The celebration went

like this. At the first Passover God commanded the people of Israel to kill a lamb and to prepare it in a final meal before they left the land of Egypt – before God delivered them. Before they ate it, they had to do something very strange: they had to take the blood of the lamb and put it all around the doors of their houses. It was very important, because God was going to judge Egypt. The people of Israel had been in Egypt for 430 years, and God was setting them free from their slavery. And God was going to judge the Egyptians by destroying all of the firstborn males in Egypt – every firstborn son, every firstborn animal was going to be killed in this judgment by God. It was a terrible judgment from God because of the way the Egyptians and their king, the Pharaoh, had treated the people of Israel. But while it was a terrible judgment for the people of Egypt, it was a great blessing for the people of Israel. They were going to be delivered from their slavery! They would be set free! God made it so that they could go to the land that he had promised them, the land of Canaan. Those who had put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts would be spared. God would see that blood all around the door, and he would *pass over* the place where those people lived. And that's why it was called the *Passover* celebration. The firstborn in Israel would live, and the whole nation of Israel would be delivered from Egypt. Then God commanded that this would be celebrated every year.

This is what Jesus and his disciples were celebrating. But this time it was a special Passover, because it was the last Passover. They were looking back in history to see what had happened to God's people. But at the same time, they were looking forward, to see what God was going to do. We can see that by what Jesus said. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me" – not in remembrance of Egypt, but "in remembrance of me." These are important words for us to remember. Jesus told his disciples that he wanted to eat the Passover meal with them before he would suffer. He knew exactly what was going to happen to him, and you have heard about it: God would turn his back on Jesus when he suffered on the cross; Jesus would feel the wrath of God, the absence of God. He would cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and there would be no answer. This is what he was about to suffer. He knew that he was going to suffer more than anyone else has ever suffered before, and more than anyone will ever suffer, and now he tells his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me".

So what were they remembering? What do we remember? And what does "remembering" mean? What we are remembering is this: Jesus is the new Passover lamb, the true Passover lamb. Remember, the blood of the Passover lamb was put around the doors of the houses in Egypt, and when God saw the blood he delivered his people. He set them free from slavery. Now we do

this in remembrance of Christ and of his suffering and his death. By the blood of Jesus his people are set free. But this isn't freedom from slavery in Egypt; this is freedom from slavery to sin! We are freed from death, from hell and eternal punishment. This is what Christ commanded his disciples and us to remember. Now when God sees his people, he sees that they have been washed, cleaned in the blood of the lamb Jesus Christ. God passed over the houses in Egypt and saved those people, and now he sees his people whose sins are covered in the blood of Jesus Christ. So this is what we remember when we celebrate the Lord's Supper and every time we gather together for worship. This is what we should remember every day.

But what is this "remembering" all about? Some of us have a better memory than others. Some of us forget where we put something, and I think of myself. At night, before I go to bed, I take off my glasses and I put them somewhere, and then the next morning I can never remember where I put them! So I have to spend time in the morning, after I get out of bed, looking for my glasses, feeling around because of course I can't see – all because I can't remember where I put them. But this is not the kind of remembering that Jesus is talking about. He's not telling us to have this in the back of our minds somewhere. It is much deeper than that. We need to think more along the lines of Remembrance Day, November 11, when remember past wars and what soldiers

have done for our freedom and the freedom of others. On that day there is a special ceremony, speeches, parades, and other special events. On that day, we don't just say to ourselves, "Oh yeah, I remember what they've done." No. It's a remembrance when we *celebrate* what the people have done for us, when people give thanks for those who have suffered and even died in wars, and for what they have done.

So again, it's not just something that happens to pass through your mind. It is deeper than that. This is the kind of remembrance that Jesus is talking about. He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is a command, not something that is optional. Not, "You may do this in remembrance of me," but, "You must do this in remembrance of me." He says that he is going to suffer and die, to feel God's anger against sin, to be nailed to a cross, and God the Father is going to turn his back on him. Jesus knows that all of these things are going to happen, but yet his concern is with his disciples. He's telling them what they need to do, even though he knows that he is going to suffer. He is not off by himself somewhere. He is giving them instructions about what they need to do. He says that they have to remember, eat this bread and drink this wine. He tells them that these are symbols of his body, which was broken for them, and blood, which was poured out for them. This is something that we should never forget at any time during any day of our lives. It is the most

wonderful, important, incredible thing that has ever been done for any of us in any of our lives. Christ's suffering and Christ's death mean something so important that we need to celebrate it every day of our lives. It means that we can live together with God in our lives in this life, and we can live together with God forever in the world to come.

In ourselves, we are forgetful people. We are prone to forgetting. I'm not talking about where we put our glasses at night before we go to bed. I'm talking about forgetting what God has done, not thinking about it, putting it in the back of our minds and not having it in the front of our minds at all times. In our sinfulness we forget. We lose our focus. We are looking everywhere, but we are not looking to God. We don't keep our eyes on Christ of ourselves. So Christ is telling us that he has suffered, died and poured out his blood for us. Now he is giving us this sign, this sacrament, so that we can always celebrate how he has set us free from slavery from sin, from death and from hell. So he says that we must remember and believe because the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for a complete forgiveness of all our sins.

March 25, 2007  
Pastor Paul Aasman

**Luke 22:62** “And he (Peter) went outside and wept bitterly.”

*Peter Deepens Christ's Suffering*

Reading: Luke 22:54-62

Text: Luke 22:62

Good evening!

I think that if I were to ask you to raise your hand to let me know who here trusts in Jesus, everybody would put up their hand. We're here because we are Christians. To be Christian means to be people who trust in Jesus. The question now is this: is trusting Jesus an easy thing? It's something that our passage of scripture certainly teaches us. It helps us to understand whether this is an easy or a hard thing. Our passage of scripture really teaches that it is a hard thing. You are challenged to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Is he your saviour? Will you say to him, “I yield myself to you, Jesus, in order that you may save my life”? It is not an easy thing.

The passage of scripture which was read describes how Peter said three times, “I do not know this man.” It doesn't come out of nowhere. It comes in a context that is helpful for us to understand so we can see why Peter says this.

In Luke 22:34 Jesus had already foretold that something terrible was going to happen. There we read Jesus' answer as part of a discussion and a debate, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.” So earlier on in the evening Jesus had said that Peter would deny him three times. It would be before the rooster crows, so that would be very early the next morning, on Friday. Peter's response to that was, “Never, Lord! I will never deny you! I will never say, to help myself or to save myself, that I do not know Jesus. I will lay down my life for you.” That's not what we read in Luke 22, but in the parallel passage in Mark and in Matthew, that's what Peter says. As a matter of fact, in Matthew it even says that all of the other disciples said the same, “We will never deny you. We will stand beside you through thick and thin. We will put our trust in you, and we will defend you.”

Jesus had foretold this while he was sitting with his disciples in Jerusalem. (Last week you heard a message about Jesus eating the last supper with his disciples.) After that meal, Jesus left with his disciples and they went to the garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus prayed. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus struggled in prayer for a long time, asking God to give him strength for the task he must do very soon. And then Judas came to the garden of Gethsemane. He came with soldiers, with temple police, and he kissed Jesus on the cheek. That was a signal to say,

“That’s the man, arrest him!” So the soldiers descended on Jesus and arrested him. Peter drew his sword and he struck at one of the soldiers and he struck off a man’s ear as he tried to defend Jesus, his Lord. “I will stand by your side through thick and thin. I will defend my saviour,” is what Peter was saying. “I’ll save you, Lord!” But Jesus said, “Put your sword away, Peter,” and Jesus picked up the ear off the ground and healed the man. He put the ear back on the side of his head – a fantastic miracle, an act of mercy in a very dark moment.

Well, Jesus was arrested by the soldiers, and that was all that the disciples could take. Each of the 11 disciples fled, and Jesus was left all alone with no defenders. All the bold talking of the disciples – “We will never forsake you” – is proven to be hollow and meaningless because now they’ve all left him. Beginning in verse 54 we read that the soldiers seized Jesus and led him away, and they took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. He followed far enough away so that no one would be able to connect him to Jesus, but close enough that he might see what was happening. Now the question is, what did Peter finally do? Why is Peter following along, and what is he doing there in the courtyard of the high priest, standing around a brazier, with a fire going, keeping himself warm there? What he wants is to find a way to save the saviour. He wants to protect Jesus. He had tried to protect Jesus by taking out his sword and

defending Jesus, and now when Jesus has been forcefully taken away he thinks, “I’ll follow along, I have to do something!” He is looking for an opportunity, and he is sitting in the courtyard.

What is really interesting in this passage is that it tells us that Peter was close enough that he could actually see Jesus as he was on trial in front of the religious court, the elders of the people. They are standing around the brazier, and they’re trying to keep warm. These are cold nights, and it’s not very comfortable. In the light of the fire, a servant girl says, in the middle of a group of people there, “I know that man, that’s one of the people that was with Jesus.” Well, Peter’s thinking, “I’m here to save the saviour, and I can’t let a little thing like this woman recognizing me get in the way of the big task I have. And so here’s an occasion where I can tell a lie and it will be all right.” So he says, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” In verse 57 we read, “But he denied it. ‘Woman, I don’t know him.’” The woman had spoken to the people but Peter speaks directly to the woman: “Woman, I don’t know him. I don’t know Jesus.” And the light of the fire flashes and someone else says, in verse 58, “You also are one of them.” Well, Peter has already decided on his course of action. He’s got a big job, he has to save the saviour. He has already told one lie. He is committed; he has to follow it up with another one. “Man, I am not!” Peter replied. Two people have said, “He looks like one of the disciples.” And now a third person comes forward and he has

different evidence. He recognizes Peter's accent. It betrays the fact that he comes from the north, from Galilee. Verse 59 says, "About an hour later another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.'" "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Peter has already made up his mind that this is how he has to deal with these things. He has a big job to do, so he has to put out the bush fires, all these things that are getting in the way. He must tell these lies in order to keep them from trying to prevent him from saving Jesus. And then, just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.

Here is the amazing thing. Verse 61 says, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter." And then Peter suddenly puts things together. The rooster has just crowed. Jesus had said, "Before the rooster crows, you will have denied me three times." The weight of what Peter has done comes upon him like a ton of bricks, and he is crushed under the realization that he has denied the Lord three times. He had said, "I will stand beside you, I will not deny you." Jesus had said, "You have to trust in me." Peter would not trust Jesus, Peter wanted to protect him. As a result he ended up denying him. And when Jesus looks at Peter, surely there is a look of pain in the eyes of the saviour, acknowledging, "Peter, you just denied that you ever knew me three times."

Thus Peter has made the burden of Jesus Christ so much heavier now. Not only have all the disciples abandoned him and

fled from him, Peter, as the leader of the disciples, regarded as a spokesperson for them all, is now the one who says, "I have never known this man Jesus." And Jesus must go on. He must go on, continuing to love these people. He must go on and offer the ultimate sacrifice of his own life on the cross for these people. When Peter sees the Lord Jesus looking straight at him, he remembers and he realizes all these things and then, of course, Peter flees. He runs away. "He went outside and wept bitterly."

Is putting your trust in Jesus easy? It's not easy. To say, "I give my life to the Lord Jesus Christ" is perhaps the hardest thing you'll ever do. For what do we want? We want to say, "Jesus, I'll take care of you. I'll protect you." We don't want to give our lives into his care. That is not the natural thing that we would do. We want to protect him. And quite often it's only through a painful process such as Peter experienced, that at last we realize that we can't save Jesus. We can't save ourselves. The only hope we have is to say to God, "God, I have sinned against you. I am empty of all expectations in myself. Please God, save me. Allow the blood and suffering of Jesus Christ to be sufficient for my sins." That can be a very difficult thing. Each one of us must come to that discovery. Each one of us must learn to put his trust in Jesus Christ.

To be a Christian is not an easy thing. It is often a very painful thing. It will bring you to tears. But to be a Christian is to

experience fantastic riches in the love of God poured down through  
Jesus Christ, the one who saves us.