

Lent Devotional April 3, 2026

Scripture

John 13:36-38

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."

Devotion

The Rev. Minh Phuong Towner '13

"God's Sustaining Grace"

Have you ever made a bold promise, only to break it? Maybe you told a friend, "I'll always be there for you," but life got busy. Or you vowed to God, "I'll never fall into that sin again," only to stumble days later. In John 13:36-38, we meet Peter in such a moment. His heart is sincere, his words are passionate, but his confidence rests on shaky ground.

This conversation happens between Jesus and Peter during the Last Supper. Jesus had just washed His disciples' feet (vv. 1–17) and predicted Peter's betrayal (vv. 21–30).

The atmosphere was tense and intimate. Here, Peter is known for his impulsive courage. In Jewish culture, loyalty to a rabbi was a matter of honor—and it was personal as well. So, Peter's pledge "*I will lay down my life for you*" was not empty words but resonated with sincerity. Peter truly believed he could stand firm, even to death. Peter's boldness reflects this expectation; he imagines living out his loyalty through physical courage. However, Jesus knows Peter's weaknesses: that human strength falters under pressure.

In Roman culture, crucifixion was one of the most shameful deaths imaginable. To follow Jesus to the cross was socially and politically unthinkable. Peter's claim shows his misunderstanding of the cost of discipleship; here, Jesus speaks of a different kind of discipleship: through suffering and death.

Jesus exposes Peter's presumption: "*Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*" The triple denial contrasts with Peter's triple affirmation later in chapter 21, and this shows that failure is not final when God's grace restores. Like a GPS warning, "*You're about to take a wrong turn,*" Jesus gives Peter a spiritual warning—not to condemn, but to guide him back later.

In life, we ought not to let confidence like Peter's guide us; instead, let humility be the way. Victory comes because we abide in Christ; it does not rely on our self-effort. When we face our failure, it does not mean we face the end—we need to believe that there is hope for us to be restored through God's grace. As a branch cut off from the vine withers quickly, our strength apart from Christ is dry and powerless. But when we are connected to Christ, we thrive.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us even when we fail. Teach us to depend on Your strength, not on our own strength. When we stumble, remind us that there is hope for restoration through Your grace. Thank

you for Your unconditional love and Your ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us. Help us to follow You faithfully, even when the path is hard. Amen.