

## Loyalty and Betrayal

*This was preached at Amanda's farewell service. Note also that the reading was interleaved with Mark 11:8-10, to highlight the contrast in professed loyalty at the start of the week with Peter's betrayal later in the week...*

### Introduction

- At some time or another all of us hit rock-bottom:
  - its not a pleasant place to be
- I wonder if me even mentioning it brings back uncomfortable memories, painful recollections?
  - what was the lowest point in your life?
- For me one was a falling out with a work colleague
  - perhaps for you there was the death of someone you loved
  - or, like me, something going wrong in a work situation - maybe redundancy?
  - or illness?
  - or a relationship breakdown - an estrangement from a son or daughter, or the end of your marriage?

### Up

- Peter arrived in Jerusalem on a **high**
  - Peter's confession of Christ back in chapter eight
  - growing clarity that Jesus was indeed God's Messiah, the promised liberator of Israel
  - realisation that he, Peter, was in at the heart of things... one of the chosen three (Peter, James, John)
  - and then there was the Triumphal Entry itself, the crowds, the euphoria, the anticipation!
  - even the clearing of the Temple (**the first shot in a rebellion?**) would have left the disciples with an adrenalin high!

### Down

- By the end of the week, things look different!
  - what's the phrase, "**a week is a long time in politics!**"
  - the opposition of the Jewish authorities has intensified...
  - ...and now Jesus and the disciples are on their turf, Jerusalem itself, not up country in Galilee
- The pressure is on, and its less clear where all of this is going
- And so we read one of the most tragic incidents in the whole of the Scriptures:
  - the **down** of Peter's denial of his Lord

### Factors in Failure

- Fear - for own safety
- Fear - of what others think
  - Peter was on his own, without other Christians around...
  - Peter was leaning on himself, not his Lord
  - Peter was trying to prove himself, not accept his Lord's welcome
- In light of Peter's denial, was all that up to Jerusalem empty?
  - does all that Peter has experienced mean nothing?
- It does mean something - indeed, great truths!
  - but it isn't the full picture;
  - it doesn't know about the Cross; about the depths of the love Christ has for Peter
  - perhaps for Peter Jesus is to here a leader, a hero, not yet a Saviour?

Why record this incident?

- Why was this included?
  - almost certainly Peter's own memories, his telling, his insistence?
  - because it amplifies and clarifies the love that Jesus has for Peter... and for us
  - we might sometimes think of the look across the courtyard as one of condemnation
  - probably rather one of love!

**Up Again!**

- (John 21:15) *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." (16) Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." (17) The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.*
- Maybe we could redo our reading from earlier, only this time interspersing the denials with Jesus' tender, gentle, wound healing invitations to declare faith!
  - Peter has now met the crucified Lord, the one who gave his life for Peter

**Conclusion**

- Whether you up or down in life at the moment...
  - meet the Saviour
  - the same Saviour who looked across the courtyard, not in condemnation, but in forgiving love
  - not afraid, because he loves you