

Meditation / monologue

Peter speaks up

Over the last few years, the Sanctuary has been building up a growing family of meditations/monologues written from the imagined 'inside' perspectives of key people in the biblical accounts of the Christmas and Easter stories. (You can explore the full set of these at <http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-seasonal.html>)

This one gives a voice to Peter as he looks back, particularly focusing on the events surrounding his betrayal of Jesus...

Have you ever wished you could turn back time?

Not just idly, mind you... not just in passing. But with every sinew of mind and muscle straining to travel back to the past. As if raw longing could somehow re-write your history if you could only regret it hard enough, and you could somehow rub out what you said then, and ink in a new reality to shout out loud what you should have said – what you would say now – if you could just have your time over again.

This time, my time over again, I get it right. This time, my time over again, I speak up for him.

While he's being led like a lamb to the slaughter, this time I speak up for him.

While he's living out love incarnate, this time I don't lie and excuse my way out of the greatest friendship I've ever known.

Jesus of Nazareth? Yes I know him. I'm *proud* to know him. I'm still getting over the Son of God associating with the likes of me. Because that's who he is you know. He's the Light of the World; the Way, the Truth and the Life; the one we've been waiting for that the prophets promised. All these empty centuries and now he's here! Messiah walking among us... Messiah walking with *me!*

No, no; you've got it wrong. He hasn't done anything wrong. Nothing at all. He's the only one among us who hasn't... the only one who could cast the first stone at someone else. Not that he would, mind you. No. He's always on at the Pharisees about stopping putting law above love. That's why they hate him. That's why there's all these trumped up charges against him.

Yes absolutely, you're right. I was with him in the garden. Yes that was me you saw. You're right about my accent. I'm from Galilee - that's where Jesus found me and called me and made something of me and my life. Really quite something out of absolutely nothing mind you. Me and my brother Andrew, well we left our nets by the lakeshore and followed him. And we've been following him ever since...

Three years of mercy and miracles and mind-bending parables and teaching. Three years of life turned upside-down and made into life you never knew was possible. Real life; true life; life to the full. Three years of transformation... but you'd need to meet him, to get to know him, to actually follow him yourself, to really understand what I mean.

But no...

That's not what I said at all.

Instead, just like that, I threw those three beautiful years away. In less time than it took a rooster to crow twice, I'd drawn a line through it all. I'd betrayed him completely; denied him repeatedly. With every single syllable that came out of my mouth.

And so in agony I rewind the clock still further; to the night before. And there we are, sat together with the others for the Passover dinner again. And it's with searing heat then piercing chill that I hear him say again what he said that night. That that's exactly what I would do – betray him before the cock crowed twice. And I swore I wouldn't.

But I did. I swore again. Only this time it was to not knowing him, *never* having known him...

I just keep going over it all over and over again.

And then I let the clock run forward and he does what he does for me still – does what he does for all of us in spite of ourselves.

I denied him to protect myself... and he went and died in place of me.

I only looked out for myself. But he bore the weight of all of us. He bore the weight even of this.

It's too much. He took it all. And I couldn't even own my tiny part.

That black Friday got darker and darker till night fell before sunset and the whole created order seemed turned on its head. And in the midst of this cosmic battle, where was brave Peter the Rock then?

Hiding on the sidelines, skulking on the edges, sobbing when I realised what I'd done, but still doing nothing, nothing to speak up and say any different. Why didn't I run through the streets shouting the truth? Why didn't I force my way in front of the officials to plead for his life? Why didn't I go and find the women and stay with him in his last hours at the foot of the cross? Even if it was just to weep, no matter.... why didn't I go back and stay *with* him?

I know why. I was ashamed.

And yes, time has moved on forwards again and I've walked the whole path of it now. I've seen resurrection joy. I've breakfasted with my risen king. I've received his pardon for this, my worst betrayal. I've experienced his Spirit coursing through my veins and giving me more courage in a moment than in my whole life put together. I've seen his church start to grow and thrive. I've done miracles in his name.

But still, I will never forget.

Still, I'd change it all if I could; make him never need to ask me if I truly loved him after all. And still I make this resolve; never again will I not speak up for the voiceless. Never again will I not defend the poor and the vulnerable. Never again will I deny who my Lord is. Never again will I put my comfort or safety before his people and his priorities.

I will speak up. Come what may; I *will* speak up.