



John 13.³⁶⁻³⁸

³⁶Simon Peter said unto him, "Lord, whither goest thou?"

Jesus answered him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

³⁷Peter said unto him, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

³⁸Jesus answered him, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

It is easy to understand the disciples' anxiety and sadness over Jesus' announcement, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come;' so now I say to you." Jesus was amazing. Over three extraordinary years, the disciples had come to depend upon him. What would they do and be without him?

We hear the disciple's discomfort at the news when Peter, undoubtedly speaking for each of them, pleaded questioningly, "Lord, whither goes thou?" This seems more than a request for information, data. Peter wishes to know Jesus' destination because he is as committed to following Jesus wherever he may go as Jesus is to leaving—or so he imagines. When Jesus repeats the unwelcome news of his eminent departure, we hear the disciples' growing panic in Peter's, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" Even a day, a minute without Jesus is, to Peter and the others characterized appropriately as "little children," too much.

Seeking to change Jesus' departure plans, Peter pulls out the trump card: "I will lay down my life for thy sake." How, then, can Jesus think of abandoning the disciples? How can Jesus think of leaving behind disciples thoroughly dedicated to him just as he would the Jews who rejected and harassed him?

But Peter's trump card fails spectacularly. Far from convincing Jesus to relent and change his plans, Peter's declaration is revelatory of Peter's profound lack of self-awareness. Peter knows little about himself. He thinks more highly of himself than he has a right to do. Jesus does not hold back in revealing Peter's lack of self-awareness. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." Peter will deny Jesus, not once. Not twice. But three times.

This is brutal revelation. As Peter sees himself, he is one who would give his life for Jesus. But the reality of Peter as Jesus reveals it is about as far from Peter's view of himself as is possible. Peter goes from a heroic warrior who dreams of coming to Jesus' aid to denier who can only contribute, albeit little, to Jesus' death!

As I read these verses, I can't help but go beyond Peter's lack of self-awareness. I can't help considering the lack of self-awareness that nearly all of us carry with us nearly every day of our lives. I can't help considering my own lack of self-awareness. It is embarrassing and shattering. I would rather turn my face away and not look.

But blindness about our true selves is impossible in Jesus' presence. He is a light that "shineth in the darkness." Though the "darkness comprehend[s] it not," he comprehends the darkness.¹ His light illuminates even its darkest corners. He can certainly, then, see into our souls. Jesus, says John elsewhere, "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."² Thus, the Psalmist confessed,

"O LORD, thou hast searched me,
and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
thou understandest my thought afar off."³

No matter how uncomfortable, we would all do well to allow Jesus into our lives to reform our lack of self-awareness and to reveal our true character. Though it may not be pleasant, Jesus is not only a great revelator, but a great teacher, an even better comforter, and the greatest of Saviors as we will see as we continue our examination of John's report concerning Jesus' final mortal hours.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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¹ See John 1.⁴⁻⁵

² John 2.²⁵

³ Psalm 139.¹⁻²