



Following at a Distance

Luke 22:54-62

MARCH 1, 2020

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Thematic Scripture

Matthew 26:69-75 (CEV)

- ▶ ⁶⁹ While Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, a servant girl came up to him and said, “You were with Jesus from Galilee.”
- ▶ ⁷⁰ But in front of everyone Peter said, “That isn’t so! I don’t know what you are talking about!”
- ▶ ⁷¹ When Peter had gone out to the gate, another servant girl saw him and said to some people there, “This man was with Jesus from Nazareth.”
- ▶ ⁷² Again Peter denied it, and this time he swore, “I don’t even know that man!”
- ▶ ⁷³ A little while later some people standing there walked over to Peter and said, “We know that you are one of them. We can tell it because you talk like someone from Galilee.”
- ▶ ⁷⁴ Peter began to curse and swear, “I don’t know that man!”
- ▶ Right then a rooster crowed, ⁷⁵ and Peter remembered that Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will say three times that you don’t know me.” Then Peter went out and cried hard.

Study Focus

Reasons We Fail to follow Jesus closely.

- It is safer to follow at a distance, allowing distractions of the world to prevent us from going deeper in our faith than surface religious activity.
- Like Peter, Joseph of Arimethea, Nicodemus, and the other disciples we allow our personal agendas to keep us in the shadow of the cross.
- Fear, blind ambition, worldly desires, rejection, emotional baggage, etc. will prevent us from following close to Jesus.

Recommendation

- The season of Lent provides the student the opportunity to recommit his/her life to following Jesus more closely thru the practice of spiritual the disciplines of fasting, journaling, Bible study, solitude, and prayer.

Following At A Distance

“Called to Serve God for Such a Time as This”

Lenten Scripture: Matthew 26:69-75

Background Scripture: Esther 2:5-18; 4:1-5; 7:1-8

Lesson Scripture for Sunday, March 1, 2020

“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14

Persons Following At a Distance

Biblical Characters

- ▶ Esther
- ▶ Moses
- ▶ Paul
- ▶ David
- ▶ Deborah
- ▶ Peter

Modern Day Persons

- ▶ Bishop Leontine T. C. Kelly
- ▶ Nelson Mandela
- ▶ Harriet Tubman
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Jamal Bryant
- ▶ Alicia Garza
- ▶ Opal Tometi
- ▶ Patrisse Cullors
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Cost of Taking Up the Cross and Following Close

- Esther and Bishop Kelly at various times in their lives followed Christ at a distance. They discovered that choosing to follow Christ closely required personal sacrifice.
- Following Jesus close involves abandoning selfish ambition in favor of service God's way.
- As Jesus gave of Himself for us, we sacrifice ourselves for others. Jesus' cross becomes our cross, His sacrifice becomes our sacrifice. It may mean risking rejection.
- Following Jesus closely requires us to reach out to love people who aren't always the easiest to love.
- Following Jesus is risky because it's all about relationships – our relationship with God and with others on God's behalf.

“Being Called Into Ministry”

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiHJdjHYvCQ>

Video – Being Called Into Ministry – Bishop Leontine Kelly

Bishop Leontine Turpeau Current Kelly



- ▶ Divorced single mother of 3 children
- ▶ High school social studies teacher.
- ▶ Wife of a Methodist preacher.
- ▶ Called to ordained ministry in 1969.
- ▶ Pastor of Grace UMC, Edwardsville, VA
- ▶ Pastor Asbury UMC, Richmond, VA
- ▶ First African American woman UMC pastor in Virginia
- ▶ First African American woman to be elected Bishop
- ▶ Advocate for racial and gender justice

Choosing to Follow Up Close

Esther

- ▶ Esther could have chosen to follow Jesus at a distance by ignoring Mordecai's request and remaining silent.
- ▶ She could have kept her Jewish identity hidden and saved herself.
- ▶ God placed her in the role of queen for this time – to save her people. Failure to move from the shadows brings personal loss and missed opportunities to fulfill God's purpose.

Bishop Leontine Kelly

- ▶ Overcoming grief to accept the call to pastor her husband's church.
- ▶ Overcoming the stigma of sexism to become the first African American woman pastor in UMC in Virginia
- ▶ Overcoming the stigma of age to Raise the granddaughter of her husband as her own daughter.
- ▶ Overcoming racism, sexism and fear of rejection to be considered for the position of Bishop in the Southern and Western Region of UMC
- ▶ Overcoming expected position to fight against apartheid in South Africa

Following Close Means

I choose to follow Christ's path. I won't give up, let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go until He comes, give until I drop, preach I know and work until He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. I belong to Him.

Queen Esther

Read Esther 2:5-18; 4:1-15; 7:1-8

What do these passages tell you about Esther?

What are the events that changed her life?

How did she respond to these events?

What events have had a major impact on your life? How did these events impact your relationship with God?

Bishop Leontine Kelly

- ▶ What events pushed Bishop Kelly into full time ministry?
- ▶ What are some reasons that she would not have entered ministry earlier?
- ▶ Can you think of other persons whose life may resemble Bishop Kelly?
- ▶ How was Bishop Kelly like Peter following Christ from a distance? How did her life resemble Esther?
- ▶ Bishop Kelly invited her class to enter into a period of Benedictine Silence. Let's practice the discipline this week to seek clarity of God's purpose for your life.
- ▶ Next Week's Lesson: Nelson Mandela/Moses - Exodus