

## Old Fears

In our second reading from Mark this morning Peter denies Jesus, in doing so Peter let him down terribly Jesus however knew in advance that Peter would behave like this. And this knowledge wasn't just because of some purely 'supernatural' aspect of Jesus' divine identity. Jesus knew Peter well. After three years with him Jesus knew Peter's tendencies, his habits and his personality. Jesus knew that there had been several occasions on which Peter's actions were characterised by 'speaking now, thinking later'. So when Peter says he will never fail Jesus, Jesus knows Peter more than Peter knows himself. The fact that Peter denies Jesus three times is highly significant in terms of first century Middle Eastern culture, when if something was stated three times it was legally binding. Peter's threefold denial is therefore utterly comprehensive. But does Peter's denial change their relationship? No! Jesus loves Peter and trusts him to continue walking with him. Jesus takes Peter with him to Gethsemane; and there in the garden he invites Peter to join him as one of those whom he wants especially close to him in his darkest hour. Remember that Peter has already declared Jesus' lordship and been promised some kind of authority and responsibility. Matthew Chapter 16 verse 18 says; 'As so I tell you, Peter; you are the rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it' Even, then Jesus knew of Peter's weakness. Jesus' action of promising Peter such responsibility is entirely deliberate. It meant that the church could only be built on the basis of forgiveness. From experience Peter would come to know that he was lost without God's forgiveness. God knows our weakness God knows that we will get it wrong. Yet, still he continues to call us. If Jesus doesn't regard our weaknesses and capacity for getting it wrong, as barriers to fruitful relationship with him, why should we? Jesus came to establish God's rule and to bring Salvation. We don't have to be perfect to follow Jesus; indeed it is only when we admit our failings that we can really appreciate God's mercy.

Amen.