

Homily – August 30, 2026

So I got to tell you, I really appreciate Peter. He is one of the disciples that I can understand because some days, he's got it down. He knows exactly what it means to be a follower to Jesus and be faithful, and then the next day he gets sold, get behind me, Satan.

Think about Peter. You know, the day we call, Monday, Thursday, He's sitting in the upper room with Jesus, and they're sharing this last meal together, and Peter so strongly says, Jesus, I will never deny you. I will always confess that you are Lord and Savior.

And then what happens when Peter is gathered in a group after Jesus has been taken by the Roman soldiers? What happens is what Jesus said would happen. he would indeed deny Jesus three times.

And one of my favorite stories is Peter walking on the water, and it wasn't frozen, and just looking, keeping his glance on Jesus, and he was able to walk, but the moment he looked away, he sunk.

And then today, we've got Peter. We just heard last week his testimony when Jesus asked, who do you say that I am? He so boldly said, you are the Son of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One. And Jesus said, you got it. And upon this confession, I will build my church. And then today, and we don't know how much time went between that text and the text we're looking at today. But today the text has Peter telling Jesus, no, no, you can't do that.

And Jesus says, get out of my way. I've got work to do. I've got a call from my Lord and Savior that tells me my job is to give up my life for the life of God's world.

Peter's humanity certainly shows. He shows in these encounters and so many others. Again, at one moment he is the strongest follower of Jesus. at another moment, he is weak.

I wonder if Peter's faith changed before his first confession that we heard last week and then this telling Jesus, no, you can't do that. And I don't think his faith changed, but I think the text today was Peter sharing his concern about Jesus. and not wanting Jesus to leave, not wanting Jesus to risk his life for this mission that he was on.

Peter knows that the Pharisees and the Sadducees are after Jesus. They want him silenced. They don't like this new idea of a new kingdom that all are equal, and all are loved and all are welcome. They have their traditions and they want those traditions followed.

So Jesus, in the midst of that kind of environment going on, Jesus now tells his disciples, look it. to fulfill the work to which God has called me, I must sacrifice my life. I must go to Jerusalem. I must allow myself to be captured and allow myself to die so that the work of God will be done.

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You know, we know what happens next. Peter didn't know that the Messiah would be raised again. Yeah, Jesus told him that. But in your mind, could you imagine, well, how is that going to happen? That's not going to happen. They kill him. Then this mission that he started is gone.

Peter indeed knows that Jesus is the Messiah. But he also knows that Jesus has been his teacher, his friend. and his Lord.

Peter left everything to follow Jesus. Now Jesus is saying that he intends to enter Jerusalem where the danger is greatest. And Peter wants to stop Jesus. I don't think he wants to betray Jesus, but he wants to stop Jesus because he doesn't think it is good for anybody.

Peter starts telling Jesus what to do. He wants to possess Jesus. And one could say that's because he was trying to project Jesus. But Jesus knows what his mission is.

Change had to happen. Jesus had to follow his call, and Peter had to get out of the way, no matter how much he didn't want to. You know, it doesn't make Peter bad. It just makes Peter human.

How many times have we in our own lives tried to manage God? God, I'll do this for you if you do this.

I remember when I was discerning my call to seminary, I was worried about finances and how I was going to make it out. And I was worried about whether this really was a call or were other people encouraging me to do this. And one of the friends of the congregation that sent me, I thought this was God's decision, not yours.

We have to get out of God's way to allow God to do God's work through us. And that's hard. It requires change. It requires surrendering ourselves.

Now that certainly isn't a message of the 21st century by the world. Give up who you are? No, we're told to be bigger and more confident of who we are. But no, to follow Jesus, we have to step back from self and surrender.

You know, I'm wondering sometimes if even churches, and not only KLC, but churches all over the world, I wonder if churches try to manage God as well.

The Holy Spirit invites us to live into this transformative power of God, but it requires change. It requires letting go of something that is familiar. And even if it's helpful, we're still invited perhaps to let it go.

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I don't know about you, but individually, and I think as churches we get right at the edge and we're ready to do it and then we stop. We get afraid. We let fear tell us what to do. We think about the reasons. Well, it's too much work to change. We're already tired and, you know, we've tried it before and it didn't work and the list goes on and on, so we stay stuck.

The good news for Peter, for you, for me, for the church of God, is that God doesn't give up on us. Jesus didn't tell Peter that he was no longer a disciple. All he said was, move over. I got work to do. Come on, follow me. Get behind me. Be a follower, not a leader.

God is patient. I can tell you that with personal testimony, and I'm sure all of you can tell me the same, with personal testimony of a patient God. And he keeps teaching us. With each experience, he invites us into new growth, into new depth of faith.

And he's steadfast. No matter how many times we say no, he comes back again. He says, I love you. I need you. Come. Follow me. Come. I will lead and you will follow and you will bring my love to the world.

God invites us over and over again to follow him. to pick up our cross and be about his work. May the Holy Spirit give us the power to be a follower and to follow Jesus. Amen.