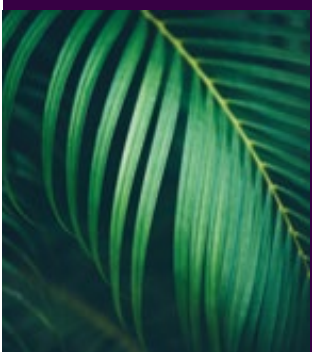




AMAZING  
*grace*

HOLY WEEK SERMONS



PALM/PASSION  
SUNDAY  
Peter



MAUNDY  
THURSDAY  
John



GOOD  
FRIDAY  
The Penitent Thief



EASTER  
SUNDAY  
Mary Magdalene

# AMAZING *grace* HOLY WEEK SERMONS

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# AMAZING *grace* HOLY WEEK SERMONS

## PALM SUNDAY: PETER

### SERMON

- The **Sermon**, “Grace for the Fearful,” is delivered by the pastor **P** as narrator and another reader **R** as Peter, who is perhaps carrying a fishing net:

**P** As we reflect on our Lord’s path for us in this Holy Week, we see it as a path of grace. Christ took this path—from his entrance into Jerusalem to the cross and through the open tomb—for our sake and for our salvation.

Among those who followed Christ on this path was his disciple, Peter. Peter was often regarded as the lead disciple of our Lord. He was the first disciples whom Jesus chose. And he was often representative of all the disciples. But we should not place Peter on a pedestal. He needed saving just as much as we all do; he was one of the first to say so.

**R** *Lord, save me!*

**P** This was the cry that Peter made when he was sinking in the waters on a stormy sea in Galilee. At first, he dared to trust that he could walk on the waters, even as his Lord did. But his daring

faith would become diverted from his Lord and be fixated on the strong winds and roaring waves. Then he began to sink.

Peter was not only sinking under water but sinking in fear. His faith had given way to fear. And this would not be the first or even the last time that his faith would give way to fear. In that regard, he is truly representative of all the other disciples—including us. For we also succumb to fear when crises arise, and we are sorely tested beyond our own ability to see or grasp hope in such times. However truly bold and confident Peter may have seemed, his nagging fear would continue to haunt him, and that fear would lead him to sink on more than this one occasion.

But Christ's amazing grace comes for the fearful! Even in times of crises, our Lord Jesus reaches out and catches us, just as he caught Peter sinking beneath the water. This image of our Lord catching Peter is helpful for us as we continue our journey of faith in the passionate depths that our Lord is willing to go for us.

Peter's journey began when his Lord Jesus called him. In Luke's telling of the story of Peter's calling, Jesus encountered him on the shores while he was washing his nets after a disappointing day of fishing. Peter would receive a grace he certainly did not expect that day. Jesus said to him, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." While Peter may have accepted and recognized Jesus' authority as a teacher and leader, he probably doubted whether Jesus knew more about fishing than he did. Nonetheless, he let down their nets as Jesus said, and ... surprise! They would catch so many fish that their nets would begin to break! Indeed, even their boats were beginning to sink under this huge haul of fish! Then we hear a more contrite confession from Peter, on his knees in the holy presence of Jesus.

**R** *Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!*

**P** I'm sure that Peter, like all the others, was truly amazed at the catch of fish. But the grace of Jesus also opened up this deeper issue in Peter's life—how to deal with his fear. He was deeply afraid to be in the presence of Jesus because he now recognized Jesus as representative of the holiness of God; indeed, he was right to be afraid. But he did not yet understand the path that Jesus was taking for him, and for us, to lead us beyond our fears. When Christ calls us, he calls us not to be afraid of his love and grace that will always be there to catch us. "Do not be afraid," Jesus says to Peter. Grace had surely taught Peter's heart to fear; yet grace would also relieve his fears. With fears relieved, Jesus calls him and his fishing companions to the new mission path that they will take with Jesus: "from now on you will be catching people."

When we think of all the sinking in fear that was true for Peter, we might also consider that his name actually means "rock." Yes, rocks sink. But rocks are also foundation stones for buildings. Peter would come to represent the "rock" on which the Church stands, the rock that

upholds the very foundation of the Church—the rock that Peter makes in a much bolder and more faithful confession of who Jesus is for us all.

Ⓜ *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*

Ⓟ Jesus would say that this faithful confession that Peter makes is itself a grace given by our Father in heaven. The Church joins Peter in this confession of faith. It is a foundational stone of the church in its faithful witness to who Jesus is for us, and a strength upon which the Church is built, such that not even the gates of hell can prevail against it. But this confession also empowers us to grasp the power and freedom of the gospel to go about loosening the chains that bind all of humanity and to set people free from their bondage to sin and death.

All of that sounds good to Peter. But Jesus also makes clear that the path of grace he follows as our Messiah, our Christ, is one that necessarily leads to the cross and death. And that Peter cannot accept at this time. He rebukes Jesus. But as he does, his rock begins to sink. Jesus calls him a scandalous stumbling block, even refers to him as Satan! Indeed, there is no path into Jerusalem by Jesus as a glorious Messiah without the cross. Christ's grace comes only by way of the Passion.

This would also be a lesson for Peter to learn when he was with Jesus on the holy mountain where Jesus was transfigured in all his glory. Peter did not fully grasp what it was all about. He did not as yet understand that there is no glory apart from the cross.

Ⓜ *Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*

Ⓟ But just then a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud came a voice saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” Peter and the other disciples “fell to the ground” and were totally “overcome by fear.” Once again, Jesus came to them. He touched them, and raised them up, saying again, “Do not be afraid.” From their knees looking up, they saw only Jesus. The glory they witnessed was not there in all its brilliance. Nor were they even to speak of it until after Jesus was raised from the dead. Only Jesus takes the path of the cross so that we may forever rise beyond our fears.

Peter certainly had more to learn about this grace that comes through the cross of Christ. That time would come soon enough. In the week of his trial and Passion, Jesus would tell his disciples of the dangers that now lay ahead and of how they will all be scandalized by this path that Jesus must now take. They will all flee. But Peter would denounce that danger, boasting that he would never be scandalized to follow Jesus all the way and that he would never flee from his side.