

Text: [Mark 14:53, 66-72 \(CEB\)](#)
Date: March 1, 2026 – Second Sunday in Lent
Title: “Unlikely Opposition” – An Unlikely Lent Series, week 2
Theme: God can use the opposition we face in our lives to help shape us for good.

1

Mark’s gospel tells the story of how, on the night Jesus was on trial for his life in the house of Caiphas
Peter was outside, cracking under the questioning of a young woman probably half his age

It’s a strange story for the gospel writers to include
The story of Peter’s threefold denial
But it was obviously so important to the early church
How Peter had gone from fear and denial to courageous leadership
That they told and re-told it every time they shared the story of Jesus’ Crucifixion

We all love a good redemption story
It is what we live for in the Church
Because we know what God can do,
we are not ashamed to share our lowest moments

The most embarrassing
The biggest failures
Why not?
Because we can say, with confidence, “But God!”
That’s our faith

Peter denied Jesus 3 times – “But God!”
Peter ran away from the cross – “But God!”
Peter hid while they sealed Jesus in the tomb – “But God!”

2

We are very very hard on Peter
We ask ourselves: “How could he? He said he didn’t even know Jesus?”

Commentators are quick to point out that Peter’s denial is total
It’s not only: “No, I don’t know him”
It’s: “I don’t even know what you’re *talking* about”
How could he have done that?

In reality – and I think of this often
Where would the church have been if Peter had stood on principle
and died with Jesus like he said he would? (Mark 14:31)

There’s nothing wrong with a strategic retreat so you can live to
fight another day
Or, in Peter’s case – to *preach* another day
Jesus himself had to do this more than once (Luke 4, Matthew 12,
John 6, 8 & 11)
Except, I don’t think that’s what Peter was actually thinking, if he
was thinking at all
I just get the sense he was *afraid*

It kind of makes me wonder if Peter had daughters
Because trust me, every girl Dad knows exactly what it’s like to be
called out by a teenager for saying something your kid thinks
is dumb
And sometimes it can feel like a real blow to the ego
I don’t blame Peter for wanting to dodge that

Because she just kept hammering away at him
“You sound like a Galilean. Are you a Galilean?”
(Apparently Galilee had a very particular accent that marked
people from there as real *country*, real *hillbilly-like*)

She also refers to Jesus as “the Nazarene” – which would have been an insult

In John’s gospel, we read how Nathanael responded to Philip’s news that he’d found the Messiah

Nathanel is excited – until he hears this Messiah is from Nazareth

Nathanel’s response is: “Can anything from there be good?”

(John 1:46)

“Sounds like a Temu Messiah to me”

3

If we’re tempted to judge Peter, here’s the reality:

every single one of us has had a moment where, when confronted, we’ve backed away from our principles

When we’ve been afraid to admit our genuine thoughts on a subject

There are a host of reasons for that:

Maybe we didn’t feel prepared to defend our position – like we didn’t have all the facts

Maybe we were afraid to lose face – because what we believed was different than the crowd we were with

Maybe we had something else to lose – because our job, or our business depended on us going along and getting along

Or maybe, we just don’t like conflict, and so when we sense it coming, we’ll do everything we can to avoid it

I don’t think any of us should be too quick to condemn Peter

It all turned out to be for good

Why? But God!

4

Peter’s opposition came from a very unlikely source

The slave of the high priest

Maybe the girl became suspicious when another of Caiphas's servants came back saying that a guy from Galilee had cut off his ear during the arrest! (Mark 14:43-50)
So she started listening carefully to the accents of those gathered at the house

Sometimes people are like that
Have you ever walked into a meeting where you just know someone is just waiting for you to make a mistake?
Maybe it's not even a mistake – sometimes you'll get someone who just bides their time until the topic of conversation gets close *enough* to the thing they want to argue with you about
Then it's game on – they'll jump in and run with it

Rachel Billups – in her book *An Unlikely Lent*
Says that the one thing this Bible story does is remind her to respect those who disagree with her
I know that isn't the easiest message for any of us to hear right now
Because we are certainly not in an age of respectful disagreement – far from it

But what if our opponents *can* teach us something?
It's so easy for us to see opposition as a thorn in our side
That's shortsighted, and potentially dangerous
It can lead us to demonize people and start seeing them as less than
As threats to be eliminated rather than those created in God's image, just as we are

Our opponents have something to teach us
About how to handle ourselves
About how to stay in relationship despite disagreement
About how to make better arguments
And about the limits of our own knowledge and experience

Knowing how the story turns out
We can't help but see that this confrontation was a turning point
for Peter

I wonder how many times he replayed that night in his mind
How the remembrance of the way he felt when he heard the
rooster crow became a thing that spurred him to greater
courage

It was his "never again" moment
Have you ever had one of those?
Where you know, you can never do "that" again
Addicts will call that a "rock bottom"
Sometimes the most difficult things – even our lowest points – can
become motivational for us
Even if the only thing they do is remind us of who we don't want to
be

That scene in the courtyard of the high priest functioned that way
It was a call to action for Peter
He was forgiven for it, but he never, ever forgot it

5

This week, I want you to consider "the opposition" in your life
Now, I'm not going to be prescriptive in how I encourage you to
engage it – we are living in difficult times
Though I will say that what I'm asking you to do is going to be
difficult unless you can remember that your opposition are
God's children too

What I want you to do is this:
consider what God may be saying to you through that opposition
What might God be trying to teach you

Because God used some very unlikely opposition in Peter's life to shape him for years to come

What is it that God wants you to learn?

Is it patience?

Courage?

Self-control?

Forgiveness?

Compassion for those who think differently?

God can use the opposition we face in our lives to shape us – and really the whole world – for good

That's what happened in Peter's life

I pray that God might do the same for us

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