

Have you ever gotten away with something  
when you were guilty of doing it?  
And not only that, but someone else  
got blamed for it instead, maybe even a friend,  
and you still stayed silent?  
Or maybe you were even the one who got blamed,  
and you didn't do anything at all.

Who watched the Winter Olympics?  
We watched them almost every day.  
I watched things like the Olympic speed skating...

### **Canada Curling Scandal**

People get blamed for things they didn't do,  
and for acts they didn't commit.  
And then there are other times when we are guilty,  
but we get off the hook  
because of someone else's hard luck.

I know it is hard to believe,  
but there are times when I might  
go over the posted speed limit,  
and I can remember a time or two when I  
and saw what you never want to see.  
Those dreaded blue lights turned on behind me in my rearview mirror,  
and a police cruiser started coming at a high rate of speed.  
And my blood pressure rises,  
and I start going through all my reasonable excuses,  
I am going tell the officer.  
And then they speed right by you  
and pull over the car, going faster than you.

And I was so excited that it wasn't me they were after.  
But there are other times when you are the one they pull over,  
and there is no way out of it.  
Welcome to Peter's world.

In tense times, humans do strange things.  
It seems to be what was happening in the Gospel of Mark.  
**The situation was tense; Jesus had just been arrested.**  
He was outed by one of his own, Judas, with a kiss on the cheek.  
A mob arrived carrying clubs and swords.

And once Jesus was in the possession of the powers that be,  
someone, maybe Peter, drew a sword  
and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave.

Then all the disciples ran like it was a tense game of tag,  
refusing to be captured by the temple guards.  
Alone and abandoned, Jesus was led to stand trial  
before the Sanhedrin, led by the chief priest.  
Where were his disciples now?  
They could have been there to advocate on Jesus's behalf.  
The disciples had spent several years  
with Jesus of Nazareth and experienced  
their fair share of run-ins with the  
religious and political powers of the day.  
So why run now?  
The times are so tense that they must  
have thought the only choice they had was to run.

Jesus wasn't guilty of the crime  
for which they arrested him,  
and yet all those who knew he was not guilty  
let him take the blame and ...  
Even Peter, who was a quintessential  
"speak first, think later" man of action,  
believed he needed to do something, but what?  
He tried violence, and that didn't work.  
What is he supposed to do now?  
And that is when it happened...  
Peter's recent past caught up with him...

**66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the female servants of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth."**

Uh oh.  
Now Peter has gone from the frying pan  
into the fire, almost literally.  
Someone has confronted him with his own identity  
as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth.

**But who is this servant girl who brings unlikely opposition around the fire?**

We don't know much about her.

She had a function in the temple system  
and was one of the high priest's servants.  
As a woman, she was already on the lower tier of Israelite society,  
and as a female servant,  
she was just about at the bottom,  
maybe just above the lepers.

Slavery was a basic part of first-century life  
in the early Christian community,  
deeply embedded in the culture of the Roman Empire.  
There were all kinds of slaves,  
and the book has some interesting facts about that.  
The point is that the slave girl in Mark's Gospel  
doesn't really have any power, no privilege,  
and really no right to speak with Peter.  
Who does this slave girl think she is?  
Does she not understand her place?  
And even more interesting is that Peter answers her!

**68 But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed.**

Well, he dodged a bullet this time.  
Now he can go back to figuring out what to do next.  
Fight or flee. But the slave girl isn't done.

**69 And the female servant, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." 70 But again he denied it.**

Why won't she let him alone?  
Why was she speaking with this kind of courage  
and unusual boldness to Peter?  
When I have looked at this scripture,  
I have always seen the slave girl as one of those kinds of people  
who want to make sure you get in trouble  
when everyone seems to have missed  
that you should be in trouble.  
Maybe you have too?

You know that well-meaning neighbor  
next to you at a desk at school, who knows you  
didn't complete your homework assignment

and, out of kindness, let your teacher know?

But what if there is a different reason?

What if the servant girl is not about getting Peter in trouble  
but rather pushing him to be the man of action he is supposed to be?

**What if she is trying to get Peter to go to Jesus' aid?**

Maybe this servant girl has heard Jesus words  
or been around on his trips to Jerusalem,  
standing on the steps and listening to every word.  
What if she were already a secret believer?

We assume she is just part of the crowd  
who wants to get rid of the problem of Jesus  
and his disciples, like Peter.

Pick them off one by one.

But what if she is secretly hoping Peter can save Jesus  
so he can save her from her slavery and oppression?

What if she is pushing Peter to stand up  
and be the rock that Jesus said he would be?

To go in there and advocate for Jesus and secure his release.

But the author asks us to consider something that gives me pause.

Why do I, and probably you,  
struggle to read the story in that kind of way?

Why do I always think that opposition  
is only a force for evil, never for good?

It is probably because if we are honest,  
opposition makes us nervous and uncomfortable.

Our human tendency is to want our lives to be smooth as silk.

And honestly, sometimes life alone is too much to take,  
and all we want to do is keep our head down,  
do our work, and not make any waves.

And remember what has just happened to Peter,  
he has been in the garden praying with Jesus  
in his last moments of anguish and trying  
to stay awake in his grief, and now Jesus has been arrested.

Peter does not have the mental, emotional,  
or physical capacity to deal with all of this.

He is horrible with words when he is at his best, let alone at his worst.

But they just won't let him go.

**Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean, and you talk like one." 71 But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about."**

**72 At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.**

And there it is. Peter's northern accent gives him away, and finally, everything Jesus said about him comes true.

**First, Peter denies Jesus privately.**

Then Peter denies him publicly.

Then, just for good measure, Peter denies Jesus explicitly.

We want Peter to wake up

after the first denial, but he doesn't get it.

And interestingly enough,

Mark was the only Gospel writer who wrote that the rooster crowed twice.

In every other gospel, the rooster only crows once.

It is almost as if Peter gets a second chance to stand up and do the right thing.

To not let Jesus words come true about his denying three times.

This is the same Peter who said,

**"Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.**

We are told Peter was the ride-or-die disciple, the one who stepped out of boats, swung swords, and promised he would never abandon his cherished friend.

And yet, here he was, standing by the fire, warming himself in the courtyard while Jesus faced death:

And the **sound of the rooster's crow cuts** through all his self-assurance and startled him into the painful truth that he had failed to stand against the opposition just yards away.

Peter was all about self-preservation at this point.

But we have all known moments like that.

Rachel talks about our own

what she calls "inconvenient roosters".

The voices, the moments, the reminders that  
shake us awake to what is right in front of us.  
Something a friend says, a Facebook post,  
or a situation we face that challenges us outside our comfort zone.  
People are hurting.  
What will you do to help?  
Do something, stand up.

These **inconvenient roosters** don't let us off the hook.  
They do not let us pretend we do not hear.  
They crow loud and clear, not to shame us,  
but to call us back to who we are meant to be, followers of Jesus.  
Maybe the servant girl was trying to do just that.  
An unlikely opposition meant for the good of Peter.

But what about our unlikely opposition and inconvenient roosters?  
Opposition often comes from the least expected places,  
and sometimes the people who frustrate us the most  
are the ones teaching us something valuable.  
Can I be honest with you?  
Being a pastor for 30 years has taught me that  
there is always and will always be someone  
who is not pleased with you or something you do.  
But I have always tried to learn  
from those moments and those people.

### **What about you?**

What if God is using these moments of tension to refine us,  
to make us more patient, more self-aware,  
and more open to growth?  
Rather than resisting, what if we begin to ask  
what they reveal about ourselves-  
our triggers, our pride, and perhaps our own  
blind spots as our inconvenient rooster crows.

The story of the servant girl challenges me  
to confront my inconvenient roosters.  
That person who never seems to understand me.  
Someone who challenges my beliefs or causes me to question myself.  
The situation that makes me feel uncertain or insecure.  
What about you?

I encourage you to do something with your unlikely opposition.  
Write down who in your life is  
pushing your buttons or challenging you?  
Approach that opposition with an attitude of humility and grace.  
See their opposition not as an obstacle  
but as an opportunity for transformation.  
And may God give us the courage to face our own denials  
and look for our inconvenient roosters to guide us. Amen.