



The Gospel According to Luke
Wk. 111 "Stories of Denial and a Story of Faithfulness"
By Pastor Jody May

Luke 22:54-71 ESV

Peter Denies Jesus

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." ⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." ⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus Is Mocked

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

Jesus Before the Council

⁶⁶ When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷ "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰ So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹ Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

Review:

Jesus has just come through *'The Darkest Hour'* He has withstood the final temptation, empowered by prayer and steadied by God, and has now allowed



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Himself to be taken prisoner by hundreds of armed Romans and Temple Guards. He has been betrayed by one of the 12, by a traitorous kiss, he put down a riot, healed one of the enemies, and He chose not to claim His right for justice as the true King of the world. No, that will come at a later time, He has fully embraced the will of the Father as He allows Himself to be led away like a common criminal.

The picture here is a rather weird one though. Last week we saw what may have been 1,000 men bow down ([John 18:6](#)) when Jesus claimed to be the one, they were looking for. That means, they were recognizing this is the same guy that had been allowed to preach all week in the temple. This was the same guy that the Sanhedrin were afraid to touch. This was the same guy that spoke with an authority that people could not believe. This was the man known to do miracles, healings, exorcisms, and had triumphantly ridden into Jerusalem with a King's welcome on Palm Sunday. **This man controlled more people in the immediate area, as a folk hero, than the Sanhedrin or the Roman Legion did by threat of violence and intimidation put together.** The whole situation seems to speak to at least the general revelation that **Jesus was not someone you messed with.** **What makes this picture weird is that they are ok leading Him away, and then later mocking Him, when in that moment it seems they understood He had power to do them all harm...**

Instead of coming to their sense it seems that they DENY that the event ever happened. That they, on purpose, choose not to care what it meant that Jesus may actually be who He was claiming to be.

Intro:

Denial¹ is a coping mechanism that all people have, and they don't have to be taught how to use it. It is a psychological ploy by which human beings refuse to accept what is in front of them in order to forgo the pain associated with accepting the hurt of a given situation. Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross² was the person that discovered the different stages of grief³ of which the first stage that all

¹ Mayo Clinic description of Denial, <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/denial/SR00043>, Web, 03/06/2021.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_K%C3%BCbler-Ross, web 03/06/2021.

³ <https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief>, web, 03/06/2021.



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people go through is Denial. What we have also discovered is that unless one deals with that which one denies, one can never deal with the fact/pain of loss.

Sometimes when I counsel people I can trace back to a place in their lives where they don't like to talk about something that happened, something that was painful, and many times it is a point in their soul that they Deny ever occurred. **The reason they reject an event is because it would mean that they would have to open the door to a flood of painful revelation.** Just to show the danger of denial listen to the facts of what may be a silent killer:⁴

Mark Ketterer, Ph.D., of Henry Ford Health Systems in Michigan, asked 144 men who had undergone heart surgery to report how often they experienced negative emotions; the impressions of each man's wife or close friend were also collected. The results, published in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, suggested that 40 percent of the men were underreporting the distress they felt. Such denial, the researchers found, was the most powerful predictor of heart attacks, surgery, and death—stronger even than familiar risk factors like smoking, alcohol use, and obesity.

Here's where I am going with all of this today: in the text we see the physical manifestation of Peter's Denial to the fact that Jesus was to die; it caused Peter to manifest this denial in actual acts of denying he even knew Jesus. We also see the denial of ignorant and hateful people. People that were ignorant chose to mock Him and people that hated Him understood His claim and feared what that might mean for them and reacted with murderous intent. **Denial in all these cases was damaging but even in their denial, God still saves His own and uses the denial of the world to glorify Himself.**

We will also see what the opposite of Denial looks like today in a person, Jesus, when He fully embraces what is about to happen to Himself. This is what we call in theology **Faithfulness; the act of trusting God with your life.** In order to see what faithfulness looks like, a behavior that is not only right but is rewarded by God, we must first witness what it looks like when we are unfaithful, when we are in denial of who Christ is.

⁴ Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/199801/the-danger-denial>, Web 03/06/2021.



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1. Peter's Fearful Denial (representing the Disciples) vs. 54-62.

I want to pick back up in this story the last instance when Peter denies he knows Jesus.

⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹And the Lord turned and **looked** at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

It is hard to sympathize with Peter because most likely none of us have been in a situation like this. Peter is scared for his life, but he's not alone, according to John the disciple John is with him, but remember Peter has now attempted murder on a city official, it is only natural for him to be scared.

The Rooster crows, and every synoptic gospel records this because God wants us to know this is something to take in, **for none of us have been faithful to the Lord like Jesus has, all have gone astray (1 Pet 2:25)**. Then Luke catches something in his interviews that the other gospels don't record, **And the Lord turned and looked at Peter 'emblepo'** – in the Greek it means to stare at with interest and concern. That stare, Luke points out, is to remind Peter of Jesus' prophecy about his denial. Peter sees the lord not glancing at him, but purposely staring at him to point out that yes Peter, I told you I must do this, you denied it, and I said you would fail me, and you denied it, and now by your actions you have suppressed the truth, **take this in....** rooster crows and Peter flees and weeps bitterly.

Peter's understanding of his failure:

Perhaps Peter remembers in that stare what he has already been taught by his master.

Luke 9:26 ESV



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For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 12:8-9 ESV

“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who **denies** me before men will be **denied** before the angels of God.

Perhaps in these moments Peter remembers his state when he had first met Jesus, as an unbeliever that doubted Jesus, that didn't think much of Jesus' fishing advice, a person with no future until Jesus had performed a miracle for him. It was after that miracle of hauling in those fish we hear Peter's understanding of his standing with God.

Luke 5:8 ESV

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

I have missed the mark (sinner), I am unworthy to be in your presence. Jesus had let this sinful man travel with Him over three years to teach him, love him, and train him how to be a fisher of men. **This was the story of all of His disciples.** None of them had a future as a theologian, a rabbi, a pharisee, a synagogue ruler, all they had was their miserable earthly existence and Jesus had rescued them from all of that! For what, so they can turn tail on Him when He needed them the most!? They all had denied the thing that was **the most important thing to realize about Jesus, His deity!** God Himself, had been walking around with these guys and they missed it all because they didn't want His friendship but wanted from what His friendship brought to them, fame.

But thank God that for those He calls unto Himself, for those that He chooses to save He is a God of second chances!



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John 21:15-19 ESV

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Peter is grieved, Jesus now sitting next to him, looking at him directly in front of everyone, a stare he can't run from. If Peter had to represent the boys in his betrayal, he was going to represent the boys in his forgiveness and repentance as well. Jesus three times ask Peter if He loves Him, and every time Peter answers differently than the night before His arrest. Instead of acting brave and telling Jesus, *'to the end of the earth Jesus or to death'*, no he puts it back in Jesus' lap, *'you know Jesus, you are God, you know everything, you would know if I didn't'*, Peter relies on Jesus' omniscience not his boastful proclamations. Peter witnessed the cross and resurrection, he knows his master is God now.

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Peter, I know you love me, and that's why I am going to tell you this beautiful thing. **One day at the end of a long and fruitful life you will get to die for me. Now, let's go fishing....** And now instead of words, Peter shows the world his love for Jesus, in 30 years of ministry, spreading the gospel before his **own crucifixion.**

Main Point:

Our Salvation is **not based** on the **depth/intensity** of our **Faith**,
but it is based in the **Faithfulness** of **Christ**.



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The true Peter, the one we will meet in heaven one day, is not the guy we see in denial he's the one we see in repentance. **He's the one that was saved not by the amount of faith he had in Christ, but he is the guy that was saved by the huge amount of faithfulness shown to Him by Jesus.** And that's exactly what you get too, if you call yourself a disciple of Jesus. Peter represents for us the road that we all must travel, at the end of our denial, we must look at Jesus, accept the truth that we have betrayed Him, we must accept His forgiveness, and we must then follow Him.

Perhaps today you are having a hard time forgiving yourself, moving on in your life, because you were in denial about yourself, you thought your life story would be different (**sin of righteousness**):

- You got divorced and excused your behavior when you said it would never happen to you.
- You were promiscuous, looking for those deep down love feelings now, when you said you would wait until marriage.
- You discipline too harsh or not enough with your kids when you said you would be different than your parents.
- You watched porn again telling yourself it's better than actual adultery.
- You acted selfish instead of being generous to the church and those in need.

In all of these things the first step in your repentance is not condoning, justifying, minimizing, or DENYING your sin but to understand that **sin is a denial of who Jesus is and it condemns you.**

The second thing you need to realize is that for those that stop denying the implications of their actions, look Jesus in the eye, and let Him love you, **you get to follow Him.** And along that path in your life, you will discover **Jesus removes the desire for denial and will replace it with the desire to resolve** those things in your life. Because His faithfulness to you makes you want to lay down your life for Him!

[Illustration: Pastor James Coates still in Jail]



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Gospel Implication: There has never been a sinner saved, that has not felt the sting of the savior's stare, and no saint has received that stare from the savior and suffered a sin that would keep them out of heaven. The strength of Jesus' faithfulness to you is stronger than your faith in Him.

Are you ready to put your soul in the hand of He who is faithful to save you, or do you want to keep denying that you need Him, and you'll work this out one day on your own? **Now let's look at the other two examples of denial quickly before some thoughts of application at the end.**

2. The Brute's Blissful Denial (representing the ignorant) vs. 63-64.

Jesus Is Mocked

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

So, it seems that at least some of the same guys that had bowed down earlier were now acting macho, being bullies, towards Jesus. I wonder if the guy with the healed ear is among them? This is straight up denial of what seems obvious. That at least, here is a true prophet, not like John the Baptist, but someone that could do miracles, and here they mock Him, asking Him to prophesy, tells us about the one that hit you? At this moment in their simple lives, these brutish and violent men, chose the world and what it offered over offering their lives to the one that owned it.

The world in which we live in still acts the same way towards God. The world demands more proof and says, '*stop me if you can, or give me a sign.*' The Gospel gave one sign, and it was enough. Hebrews 1:2 says God spoke loud and clear through His last prophet by lifting Him high up so everyone can see Him.

Consequences of Blissful Ignorance and Denial:

Romans 1:18-19; 24 & 28 ESV



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¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them...²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,..²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

The consequences of ignorant bliss, the **consequence for living in blissful denial is that God is going to leave you there**, no more signs, no more direct revelation.

Perhaps there are some of you that have been blasphemous of God, hateful towards His people and the church. You may have even gone to church for a while only to drop out because it had nothing to offer to you. My friend I can't say anything other than what has already been said today. You are in sin, you are destined for hell, and there is only one person that can help you for He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9) if you are ready to stop living in denial.

[I heard an encouraging story this week from a person that I like to go to get some perspective outside the Christian World; Jordan Peterson...]⁵

There is still hope for you today because all of us that know Jesus listening to this now, were once lost as well. We were all in the same boat and our only shot at keeping out of hell was the grace of God through Christ alone. Here's the truth we all came to learn:

**Our Salvation is not based on the depth/intensity of our Faith,
but it is based in the Faithfulness of Christ.**

The world says ignorant bliss is the best medicine for a sinful heart, but the gospel says ignorant bliss is the decay that needs to be cut out.

⁵ Jordan Peterson, Podcast, <https://youtu.be/2rAqVmZwqZM>, Web 03/06/2021.



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That was more than what these last group of deniers were going to receive. These that would turning their back on the revelation of who Jesus was, those that should have knew better.

3. Sanhedrin's Hateful Denial (representing the convicted) vs. 66-71.

⁶⁶When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷"If you are the Christ, tell us."

Ok I just want to show you that Denial breeds the serious sin of hypocrisy, those that think they are in the right when they are actually doing wrong. The elders, scribes, priests, pharisees have now heard and testified to the workings of the Christ and they have all denied what He was. They so badly wanted to keep their privileged position. If He had been a military leader and left the religion up to them, they might have been ok, but Jesus came as the answer to a false religion as well. They hated them and had fooled themselves into thinking they were doing the right thing.

Here we have the *Supreme Court of Israel* being held before working hours on a holiday when no one should be there at the courts. It was Passover, the celebration that judgement had been overlooked and here they work through the night, an illegal court setting, trying to produce false witnesses, trying to judge a man with no guilt! **Hypocrisy fueled by hate brought to life by living in denial of who Jesus was and the sin He had showed them that was in their hearts.** They had changed the rules to they can persecute Him, to give Him what they thought he deserved.

Whenever you see a government surrender their integrity to attack a supposed enemy you are witnessing the death of that government and what it stood for, because government is created to protect its' people not to persecute the innocent. It is no longer the good of the people that this court is seeking to save but it is feeding off its' group identity telling itself it knows what is better for the people than what God does. It is creating a trial to save their culture and preserve their way of life as defined by them not by God. They ask Him if He was the Christ, not to stop the trial but to bring Him to sentencing, so they could turn Him over to



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Pilate to seek His death for claiming to be an invading monarch, guilty of rising up insurrection among the Jews.

But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰ So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹ Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

Jesus turns the supreme court of His people upside down, and tells them by their own actions, their own denial of him, they have condemned themselves – *"You say that I am"*. Then caught up in their glee over getting Him to admit His stance, they seek to fulfill His will, to offer Him up as the sacrificial lamb for this, the last Passover in Israel.

We see now that Denial in the face of the convicted looks like hypocrisy for they have seen the truth and want nothing to do with it. The **underneath principle** to this is the world says let's **protect our way of life at all costs to preserve ourselves** and the **Gospel says** the way **you protect yourself** is be **open that your way is full of holes!**

Today how do we respond to denial and its' dangers and to Jesus and His faithfulness in reaching out to us:

1st let's work actively at bringing forth those things we don't want to talk about in the light.

2nd let's work actively in sharing with the blissfully ignorant what Jesus has meant to us.

3rd let's work not at trying to change the minds of the convicted but admit our biasness towards God and His ways.



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Friends and family my prayer for all of us is that we no longer run from the painful truths in our lives for I know that if we turn and own where we have failed God, we will all discover it's ok, for He is strong for us:

Main Point:

Our Salvation is **not based** on the **depth/intensity** of our **Faith**,
but it is based in the **Faithfulness** of **Christ**.

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father, that raised a Son that could withstand the temptation to seek justice and endure blasphemous mockery.

Go in the name of the Son, that even when our faith is weak, He is mighty to save.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that opens our eyes to the truth, so we can stop denying our need to be saved, all the while increasing our desires to share Jesus with others.