

Belonging to Jesus: Matt 26:69-75

Covenant Church
Sunday, March 31, 2019
Zack Phillips, Pastor

Matt 26:69 (NRSV)

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

I. Sin

A. Befriending Jesus: Standing “with” him

Gethsemane:

- “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake *with* me” (26:38)
- “...“So, could you not stay awake *with* me one hour?” (26:40)

Peter’s betrayal

- “You also were *with* Jesus the Galilean” (26:69)
- “This man was *with* Jesus of Nazareth” (26:71)
- “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you” (26:73)

Jesus at the beginning and end of the gospel of Matthew

- “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is *with* us” (1:23).
- “...And remember, I am *with* you always, to the end of the age” (28:20)

“[W]e do not worship an idea of God; we do not pray to an idea of God. As adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus, we pray to his Father who is now our Father.”¹

¹ Richard John Neuhaus, *Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditations on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross*. New York: Basic Books, 2000: 231.

“So we worship Christ because he is the Son of God, but the martyrs we simply love as followers and imitators of the Lord—which is entirely fitting in light of their utmost devotion to their precious king and master.” —*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*²

B. Relationship leads to identity: *belonging to Jesus*

Heidelberg Catechism

1. Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.³

“I have wild beasts,” said the governor, “and I’m going to throw you to them unless you change your mind.” “Bring them on! ***We Christians can’t change from something better to something worse.***” —*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*⁴

Sanctus was another martyr who encountered all the cruelties men could dish out, yet he endured them nobly with immeasurable, indeed superhuman, strength. Though the wicked men hoped that by intense and unrelenting tortures they could make him say something unworthy, he withstood them with such firmness that ***he refused even to divulge his name, race, hometown, or status as slave or free. To all their questions he answered in Latin, “I am a Christian!”*** He kept repeating this over and over instead of giving his name, birthplace, nationality, or anything else. The pagans heard no other word from him but this confession. —Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.1-63⁵

But the deniers couldn’t even lift their heads. They were dejected . . . ugly . . . full of disgrace. Moreover, they were ridiculed by the pagans as despicable cowards. By taking on the label of “murderer,” ***they had forfeited the family name*** that is truly honorable, glorious, and life-giving. —Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.1-63⁶

II. Sinning

(Denial) “I do not know what you are talking about.”

(Denial ***with an oath***) I do not know the man.”

“Peter underscores his denial with an oath.” “He even avoids saying the name Jesus and chooses instead the disrespectful ‘the man.’”⁷

(Denial with an oath ***and a curse***): “I do not know the man!”

² *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, as translated in Bryan M. Litfin, *Early Christian Martyr Stories: An Evangelical Introduction with New Translations*. Baker Publishing Group, 2014. Kindle edition. p. 63.

³ Available at <https://students.wts.edu/resources/creeds/heidelberg.html>

⁴ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, in Litfin, *Early Christian Martyr Stories*, p. 60 (my emphasis).

⁵ Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.1-63, in Litfin, *Early Christian Martyr Stories*, p. 76 (my emphasis).

⁶ Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.1-63 in Litfin, *Early Christian Martyr Stories*, p. 79 (my emphasis).

⁷ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*. Hermeneia. Edited by Helmut Koester. Translated by James E. Crouch. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005: p. 455

III. Redemption

Matt 10:32-33 “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.”