

Common Reactions to an Uncommon Christ

Denial – Luke 22:54-62

Read Luke 22:54-62 (p. 883)

Almost embarrassing to preach on denying Christ in comfortable Bettendorf, IA, USA
In light of the terrible persecution Christians have endured over the centuries and across the world because they refused to deny their Lord
Almost embarrassing to preach on denying Christ in such comfort
In light of the gruesome deaths of martyrs because they refused to deny Jesus

But it's necessary because . . .
We don't much think about it
And . . .
Our denial of Christ has become so subtle, so insidious, so inconspicuous, that is almost palatable
The line between faithFULness and faithLESSness is so blurry as to be almost non-existent in our lives

That wasn't case when people were being burned at the stake for refusing to deny Christ
In those days, the line between faithfulness and denial was *crystal* clear –
As clear as life and death
Today, we have to look much more closely – *work* to expose our denial of Jesus

This passage helps us immensely by showing us what denying Christ looks like
So we can detect it and even avoid it

That means realizing that . . .
Denying Christ begins when you separate yourself from him (v54)

54 – Note the setting
From Gethsemane on Mt of Olives, to the house of Caiaphas (High Priest) in Jerusalem
During this episode, Jesus was being tried and questioned inside the house
The other gospels record this
High Priest would have had a large house, 2 stories, many rooms, courtyard

Even before they got there . . .
Despite his earlier, emphatic declarations . . .
I will never fall away; Even if I must die, I will never deny you! (Mt 26:31-35)
Peter had already separated himself from Christ
He was *following at a distance*

While our separations from Christ may not be so obvious, they are equally troublesome
Oh how *subtle* they are at first
Starts with a slight internal pulling back or drifting from him
Maybe a diminished desire to spend time with him
Maybe with the thought – it's no big deal; not preaching heresy or burning crosses
Taking a little break from God; Hanging back for a while
How subtle that drift is, but how deadly
Like the drift of a barge in the locks; Barely perceptible, but deadly
If a person falls in, they'll be crushed without precautions

Just like our separation – it's subtle but deadly
Until pretty soon you're following at a distance just like Peter
Denying Christ begins when you separate yourself from him

Problem is, it usually doesn't stop there . . .
Denying Christ progresses when your desire to fit in exceeds your desire to witness (v55)
When your desire to fit in with the crowd is > your desire to tell them about Jesus
That's when denying Jesus in your life takes shape on the outside

55 – Peter made a conscious decision to fit in; he didn't want to stand out or stand up
You've made those kind of decisions –
Whether it's at a party, a board meeting, the country club, or a sidewalk discussion with your neighbor . . .
If you intentionally conceal who you are and what you stand for . . .
Your desire to fit in with the crowd just exceeded your desire to tell them about Jesus – and that's denying him

You might think – If I say something about Jesus . . .
They might not think I'm cool
They might not invite me over again
They might talk about me with their friends
They might think I'm a religious wacko
They might make fun of me
And then I won't fit in; get to hang with them; won't get to be their friend

That's denying Christ because your desire to fit in exceeds your desire to witness

It begins when you separate yourself from him
And progress when your desires are misplaced, and it leads to lying
Denying Christ leads to lying . . .

• **About your relationship with him (v56-57)**

Things are about to get ugly!
V57 – *he denied it . . . “I do not know him”*
Excuse me! Is this the same guy that . . .
That was just with him a few hours earlier, and had said –
Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death (Lk 22:33)?
That 6 months earlier had confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16)?
That saw Christ transfigured in all his glory, talking with Moses and Elijah?

Denying Christ leads to lying about your relationship with him
While Peter's lie was blatant and explicit; Ours are most often silent and implicit

Our lying most often takes the form of silence
We don't say anything about our relationship with him when we should or when given the opportunity
We speak *lies of silence*

- **About your association with other believers (v58)**

58 – *one of them* – followers of Jesus

Can you imagine the discussion around the fire there in the middle of the night?

“It does not look good for Jesus”

“And his followers are going to be in big trouble too”

“Speaking of which, you look familiar to me”

“*You also are one of them*, aren’t you.”

58 – *Man, I am not.*

He denied Christ by lying about his relationship with those who also followed him

Again, ours isn’t nearly so blatant, but it’s denial and lying just the same

Been in situations where high-profile Christian just been exposed for moral failure

Or a group of Christians are protesting something in a God-shaming way

And because of that, some of your co-workers are just ripping on your faith and church in general – hypocrites, money grabbers

Somebody says, “Hey, you go to church don’t you? What do you think?”

“Well you know . . . if my wife wants me to go real bad; we go for the kids

They’re like – Oh. Where’s that?

“Uh, Har . . . Bi . . . Ch . . .” (mumble-mumble)

They’re like – Where?

“You know, it meets on Sundays. Gotta go.”

You just denied Christ by lying about your relationship with other believers

Students – you do the same thing when . . .

You’re all buddy-buddy with your Christian friends on Sundays, and then ignore them on Mondays

Lying about or minimizing your association with other believers is a form of denying Christ

As is lying . . .

- **About your own identity (v59-60)**

60 – *I do not know what you are talking about*

Like saying, I swear on the Bible

Formal, legal denial – common in Jewish law

Response to the accusation that he was a Galilean

By this time, they were on to him – his accent removed all doubt

Galilean’s were unable to distinguish between some of the raspy or throaty sounds common in Aramaic – sounds like you’re going to spit or something (like French)

Very noticeable; set them apart

Just like a southerner’s twang

Or a Canadian’s “eh”

Or a mid-westerner’s – “pop”

Becky’s family used to laugh at me on this

Whatever the case, Peter’s accent set him apart as a likely follower of Christ, and he denied it

We deny our identity in Christ when our actions don’t measure up to his values, the same values we supposedly hold

When our actions don’t agree with our values, we conveniently set aside our identity in Christ

Every time we spend time and effort on the possessions and activities of this world, without regard for their eternal, kingdom impact, – we set aside part of our identity as a child of God

Every time we opt for despair, turmoil, and bitterness instead of hope, contentment, and peace – we set aside part of our identity in Christ

In essence, we’re denying Christ by lying about our own identity as one of his own

And that doesn’t go unnoticed

Denying Christ does not go unnoticed (v60-61)

The most likely scenario was that Peter’s last denial coincided with Jesus being escorted out of the house, to Pilate’s residence across town

And meeting his eye at that very moment

60 – *the rooster crowed*

Jesus had predicted this very explicitly in v 34

Roosters would crow at regular intervals 3 times between midnight and 3 a.m. for about 3-5 minutes each time

So this time of the night became known as the “cock-crow”

Whether Jesus was saying that Peter would deny him before the first rooster crowing, or before the cock-crow watch was finished

Either way, a rooster crowed as he denied Christ for the third time

Combined with the look of the Lord (61) – a look of love, hurt, disappointment

It hit Peter like a ton of bricks; and he remembered Christ’s prediction

Peter’s denial of Christ did not go unnoticed – not by the bystanders, and especially not by Christ himself

You can’t hide forever

Whether your denial is blatant in word or subtle action, it will be noticed

It will be noticed by God, by his people, and even by others

And you will be held accountable

That’s because God is jealous for his own glory

He won’t let his Son be shunned or his name be shamed, without holding you accountable and bringing to bear the consequences he deems necessary

Denying Christ does not go unnoticed, and often results in godly sorrow

Denying Christ results in godly sorrow (v62)

62 – *he went out and wept bitterly*

Peter knew he had done wrong, and it grieved him; he ached

If you’ve been denying Christ, the *best* possible outcome is that you too would realize it, feel the penetrating gaze of Jesus in your soul, and come to a point of godly sorrow
Because *Godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation* (2 Cor 7:10)

Therein lies the hope of this passage

Godly sorrow/brokenness will lead you to repentance

Where God's grace/mercy will heal and restore you

Peter experienced that grace/mercy of God, and so can you

But it often comes with a cost

James Abbeys, England, 1555 (Jesus Freaks)

Two people denied Jesus the night before his death – Judas and Peter

Both regretted it; The difference was –

Judas turned *away* from God and judged himself

Peter turned *to* God in godly sorrow and repentance, and met mercy, forgiveness
and restoration

I don't think too many of us fear being physically persecuted or burned at the stake

But we should fear making shipwreck of our faith

And the thought of grieving the Lord Jesus should pain us

Summary

If you've been denying Christ by . . .

Gradually pulling away from him

More concerned about fitting in with the crowd than telling them about Jesus

Lying about your relationship with him or his people – blatantly or subtly

Setting aside your identity as a child of God . . .

Get right with him, this morning

Jesus said – *Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be
ashamed when he comes in his glory* (Lk 9:26)

Come and pray up front during the song

(Lies of silence; Actions don't fit my values; Put a stake in the ground publicly)

If you're okay in this respect, be ever vigilant . . .

Nobody is immune to denying Christ

If an apostle who spent 3 years with Jesus face to face can deny him, then it's certainly
possible for you to do so as well

Maturity has nothing to do with it; Biblical knowledge has nothing to do with it

Peter's denial is a solemn warning that a bold affirmation of fidelity doesn't guarantee
faithfulness

Membership Explanation

Bible doesn't say much about how to *formally* express our commitment to one another in
the body of Christ . . .

But the idea of commitment is certainly there, both in principle and example

So at Harvest, we have chosen to express that commitment in a formal, public way
through membership

Because we live in a society where few make commitments and even fewer keep them,
membership helps to increase our unity among each other and strengthen our bond

It also moves us as individuals out of the vague realm of good intentions and into the
clear light of participation and partnership

And that's the intention of each and every person on this list as they are making the
commitments you see on the back of this sheet