

Mark 14:66-72 - Peter's Denial

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Preacher: Joseph Diaper

[0 : 00] Worship and it's good to know that every one of those prayers have been heard by God. Learn from it. We may be equipped by it and that by your spirit, we may be empowered to live according to it.

And we pray that this time we know that it won't be wasted time because your word is is powerful and it never comes out void.

And so we thank you that your word is is a worthwhile time to spend time with. But we do pray a particular blessing at this time as we dedicate the next period of our of our lives.

Hopefully not too long, but we dedicate this period and we just say, look, Lord, just work in us how you would. And may we be transformed, encouraged and strengthened by this next period of time in our lives so we can live and work according to your good pleasure.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Right. So, yeah, my name is Joseph and regular here. And I'd like to start today stating what might or should be obvious to everyone here and has already been alluded to in our prayers.

[1 : 44] And though it's no less remarkable every time it's heard and said, Jesus loves you. Jesus loves you. Jesus loves you. And whatever you said in the past about or about Jesus or whatever you think of him now.

He loves you and he wants you to be in a right relationship with him. And if you do know him, if he is your savior, then nothing can separate him, separate you from his love.

And I pray in the same vein as Peter, may grace and peace be multiplied to us all today. So we're in we're back in Mark's gospel today and we've been in Mark's gospel on and off for a number of years now.

If you're a regular here, you know that Simon, the main pastor of our church, does the majority of the teaching from the from the front. And when he is unable or just need to break from the preaching, some of us men take take the mantle.

And we've been preaching through the book of Mark for quite some time. But we've had actually three weeks in a trot now. This is the third week on a trot. We've heard from the book of Mark. It was John Malunga two weeks ago and Jeff last week.

[3 : 07] And so just to remind you, the gospel of Mark is is an account of the good news of God's rescue mission to save sinners written for us to encounter the only true and living God.

And it's revealed to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now, it's most likely penned by John Mark as per the name of the gospel. But it was dictated by none other than the antagonist of today's passage, Simon named Peter.

Now, speaking of Peter, I'd like to start today by remembering some of the various events that have got Peter to where he is today. We'll do this as a brief whistle stop tour through some of the gospels events.

So they come up on the board, although a bit blurrier than I'd like. Anyway, you'll notice that the first bunch are in green. I'll talk about that in a second. So Mark 3 verse 16, we encounter Peter for the first time.

He's being called as a member of the 12 disciples and he was named Simon at that time. And then in Mark 5 verse 37, Simon is specifically mentioned as a member of a chosen three, including James and John, to follow Jesus.

[4 : 27] Particularly in that case, as Jesus raised Jairus' daughter. And later in Mark 8, though given more detail in Matthew 16 and 17, Simon correctly confesses Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God.

And then Jesus blesses him or states that he's blessed. Then at that same period of time, he's given the name Peter as a symbol of the foundation, the foundational confession of the truth of who Jesus is.

Then immediately after that, in verse 33 of chapter 8 of Mark, he immediately after the statement that Jesus is the Christ, he then denies Jesus the very thing that he has come to this earth to do. And then Jesus rebukes Peter with the infamous get behind me, Satan statement. And then in the next chapter of Mark, he witnesses the transfiguration of Christ, where Jesus is transfigured into what is similar to his heavenly body.

And then in Mark 10, he's boldened and boldened to speak out his mind and with confidence in his disciple, in his commitment and the disciples' commitment to Jesus.

[5 : 58] As he says, we have left everything and followed you. And then in Mark 13, he's given the opportunity to have close and intimate conversations with Jesus.

You'll notice that these first eight things are in green. And this is because though Peter made many missteps along the way, I believe that up to Mark 8, Mark 13, he was following a logical and positive trajectory of faith in Jesus.

Even when he questioned him, because if you were told that, you know, your savior, you know, if he says I'm going to die, I mean, it's kind of logical for him to then step in and say, no, you're not.

So it's kind of like it's a logical and positive trajectory of faith in Jesus. However, the last couple of weeks, this in this trio of sermons, we've seen a bit of a dip of significant fault on Peter's behalf.

And that's why I've colored those last two differently. In Mark 14, he shows that he's become overconfident when he says, even though they will all fall away, I will not.

[7 : 17] And then in Mark 14, which we had last week in 37, he says, well, as he as he falls asleep, doesn't he, in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is weeping and praying.

So he also witnessed many other miracles and sayings by being so close to Jesus during his three year ministry.

But obviously, I've just given a snapshot there of some of the things that the journey he's been up to this day. But considering these things in the light of today's text is clear that seeing is not believing because he is this.

Peter saw everything you could ever hope to convince him and to have unwavering faith in Jesus, including obviously seeing Jesus, though not documented in Mark, seeing Jesus walk on water and all these other things.

Yet in his darkest hour, he still did the unthinkable. And we're going to be looking into that unthinkable today and dwelling on that. But before we do, before we get into today's text, I just let's I'm going to make it a bit personal.

[8 : 40] All right. I'm going to make it a bit more contextual. So are there any Southampton football club fans here today? Come on. Come on. Any, any, any?

I mean, I can't believe in around 40 adults in Southampton, in the UK, there is no football fans. Come on. Hands up. Hands up. Hi. Come on. Loud and proud.

That's it. Right. OK. But I don't blame you if you don't want to admit it. I mean, come on. I'd be ashamed to. Now. Great. Well, here. Are there any Portsmouth football club fans here today?

There's there's there is one. There's there's there's one times two. Yeah. So what if I said to you, Southampton football club fans, that by the end of this sermon.

You will be Portsmouth football club fans. OK. And OK. Vice versa. What if I said to you that by the end of this sermon, you Portsmouth football club fan will be a Southampton football club fan?

[9 : 57] Well, you know, that would be unthinkable, right? Absolutely unthinkable that we would swap sides. You know, there's there's nothing that would make you deny your football team to support the rival.

Right. Well, maybe there is for some. I mean, but there's definitely there's probably one person in here. I mean, maybe Sam. I don't know who's thinking. Even if all these fake fans turn to the scummers, I won't.

And rightly or wrongly, I mean, it's probably true. And people can tell who we support not only by putting our hands up, but also by the clothes we wear, the players we idolize, the conversations we have and even the moral standards we follow.

As I've heard many Southampton or whatever football club fans speak to their rivals and say negative things about them and how they wouldn't be sad if there were car accidents, etc.

That be fooled some of the rival team fans. But what if I said to you by the end of this day, you will deny Jesus Christ?

[11:12] If people can see which football team we support by the way we dress, talk and act. Surely this is also true for the God that we follow.

Or as it says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. How often a day do we deny Christ to others by either actively seeking the world rather than Jesus or by simply preferring other things than Christ?

Like I said, I say all this today to before. So before we read it, it's a bit more personal. It makes sense to us. It's easy to be very negative about Peter and even proud that we haven't fallen in such an epic way.

But what if I proposed to you today that those evil thoughts that you engaged in this morning or that driver that you spoke negatively of when he didn't give you the space you needed as you navigated a small road on your journey?

Or that since you've got here this morning, you've been counting down the minutes till you get home rather than coming here to seek an encounter with God? What if I propose that all those things and more that we might have done deny God of who he is and possibly deny that you even know him at all?

[12:38] Well, John Malunga preached on the events in the Garden of Gethsemane a couple of weeks ago, emphasizing the illustration and truth that God with us, Emmanuel, doesn't just refer to Jesus becoming human, but it also references his ability to truly be with us.

It's in him sharing our reasons to sin. He knows the reasons we have. He knows the reasons why we have to fear.

He knows the reasons to have shame. He knows the reasons to desire to prioritize ourselves. He knows the reasons to doubt God. And Jesus knows the reasons to attempt to save ourselves.

Yet he did not give into any of those reasons or temptations. Jesus never sinned. Therefore, following from the events in the Garden, in today's passage, we question, if God is with us, are we with God?

Now, it might not surprise you that the three key points of today's passage follow, or today's sermon follow a general motif that you'll find throughout the whole Bible.

[14:01] The fool, the savior, the call. And I'll be fleshing out those three key points as we go. So, without any further ado, let's get into today's text.

Mark 14, verse 66 to 72. And I'm going to, you know, it's not the most complicated of texts. It's definitely a well-known text.

And so, I won't necessarily be going through word by word, breaking down things like that, like we sometimes do here, when it's necessary to do so.

I'll read the whole thing, and I'll make a couple of comments as we go, and then we'll crack on and learn from it. So, it says, And as Peter was below in the courtyard, now stop.

So, Jesus has just been arrested by the Roman guard and taken to high priest Caiaphas' house to be tried as a blasphemer.

[15:11] And Peter was the only one to then, it's documented, Peter was the only one who followed Jesus to Caiaphas' house.

And so, he wasn't in the building of Caiaphas' house. We can imagine that Caiaphas' house as the high priest, it was a large ground, like, you know, he had grounds.

And then Jesus was found, sorry, Peter was found in this courtyard, which in Greek doesn't really explain anything, but it means an enclosed open space.

So, a courtyard. And so, that's where he is. So, he's there, the only one who has followed Jesus to where he was being tried. And it says, One of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, You also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

But he denied it. I'll start the Greek word, Ernest Sato. I mean, that might be how it's pronounced.

[16:28] You know, who knows? We don't even know what the ancient Greek accents were like. They might have been just like Southampton, UK accents. So, who knows? But it just means to deny, refuse, or renounce.

And I mention it just because there's only a couple of words that is used for deny throughout all the texts that I'm going to reference. And they all kind of mean the same thing, deny.

So, it's not, like I said, we don't spend too long on that. So, but he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway, and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, This man is one of them. But again, he denied it.

And after a little while, while the bystanders were, again, were said to Peter, Certainly, you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear.

[17:31] Now, that just, swear just means to bind with an oath. I mean, we, he might have said some more words than what we have written here. But either way, he says, I do not know this man of whom you speak.

And immediately, the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

And the word deny, there is a different Greek word. And it still means deny. And he broke down and wept or mourned. So, Simon Peter, his journey to this time, He was called, chosen, blessed, renamed, rebuked, witnessed, emboldened, Given opportunity, became overconfident, showed complacency, And then he denied knowing Jesus.

So, our first key point, the fool. We deny the truth and are faithless. Now, Jesus said in Matthew 10, verse 33, Whoever denies me before men, I will also will deny before my father who is in heaven.

And that's the same Greek word as our first Greek word in today's text. And then, in Mark 14, verse 21, It says, Woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

[19:13] It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. Now, we know that the betrayer was Judas Iscariot. So, I'm not trying to necessarily conflate that.

However, my question is, That Peter heard both those texts, Both those sets of words, Directly from the mouth of Jesus.

No wonder why, at the end of this, He mourned and wept over what he had said. You know, perhaps both those texts, Or both those sayings were ringing in his ears During that time.

But, what made Peter deny Jesus? Why did he do it then? If he knew it was wrong, If he knew it would disappoint his Lord, Then why did he do it?

Well, let's go back to that context of football team. So, why might you deny something? So, they'll come up on the screen. Why might you deny something?

[20:17] Firstly, you might deny something because of fear. So, particularly fear of maybe physical or verbal violence. Secondly, you might deny something because of shame.

Because you think that the thing might not, The thing that you're denying might not actually be worth as much as you claim. Okay, so you realise that it's not actually as worthy as you claim it is, So you're ashamed of it.

Thirdly, you might deny something because of personal preservation. So, you might think that by disassociating yourself with that thing, You are saving yourself from consequences.

You might deny something through lack of faith. So, you might deny it because you actually don't believe in the thing which you've asserted. So, you realise that your words don't match up with your heart.

And fifthly, though these might not be exhaustive, Fifthly, you might deny something for a greater cause. So, by denying that thing, You might save someone else from a consequence.

[21:22] Ultimately, you might deny something to either save yourself or save someone else. Which is more noble? Well, this would depend on the content and context of the denial.

It depends on who you're saving and the size of the consequence. So, why did Peter deny Jesus? Which one of those are the reason why Peter, Well, let's look through each of them.

So, and this is partly opinion, And I don't shy away from that. But I'll reason it. So, perhaps fear. But then, fear of what?

Of physical threat? Of receiving punishment? I mean, well, Well, the gospel writer emphasises that the questioner is a servant girl.

Least of all in the house of Caiaphas. Not a threat that would inspire fear of violence or other repercussions. So, I wouldn't lean towards that he was denying because of fear.

[22:35] Perhaps due to shame. Well, then the question then asks, Why did Peter follow Jesus on his own all the way up to Caiaphas' house?

If he was ashamed of being associated with him? I mean, you could say he had a sudden change of heart, But there's no real reason to come to that conclusion. So, I'd probably say he's probably not

because he's ashamed of Jesus.

Because of personal preservation. Well, Peter was aware that Jesus was on trial. Yeah? But he knew that Jesus was on trial for what Jesus had said about himself.

And he also knew that they would probably struggle to find fault in Jesus. So, they're not going to find fault in Peter. You know, he's not the one who's on trial.

And I don't think he's probably thinking that I'm going to be suddenly put on trial if I start associating myself with Jesus. So, probably not that one. Well, lack of faith. Well, and when you read any denial, you always assume that that person has lack of faith.

[23 : 40] I'm not saying that Peter had the most unwavering faith. We have evidence that it did waver at times. However, Peter does break down at the end of it, and weeps and mourns immediately after his third denial, right?

And I think that illustrates that he regretted doing the denials. And for me, I don't think that necessarily shows that he had lack of faith or a sudden change of heart towards Jesus.

Though, perhaps, maybe there were some thoughts in his head that helped him in his denial, that thought, you know, when he said to Jesus, oh, you know, you're not going to die, you know.

And maybe he was thinking, well, Jesus is actually going ahead with this. He's actually going to be, you know, punished, maybe even killed for what he said. So perhaps everything he said is wrong. Maybe he isn't what I thought he was. Maybe that is in there. But I'd still say, you know, from the events up to this stage, I don't think he's showing that he's completely gone away, you know, done away with Jesus.

[24 : 52] So I'm leaning towards option number five, that Peter denied Jesus because he thought there was a greater cause.

Possibly, this is my proposal. Possibly he was doing just as he had done before. For example, after Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, he immediately, as I've said already, says that Jesus must not die.

He also, as Jesus is approached by the Roman mob, he cuts off Malchus's ear. Both of those things are an attempt to save Jesus from consequences.

He's trying to defend his Lord and Savior. And as Jeff spoke of last week, they couldn't find any credible witnesses, could they, in Carthus's house?

They couldn't find incredible witnesses because all the claims of Jesus' blasphemy didn't line up. They didn't agree with each other. So I think the most likely reason, based on Peter's previous actions for his denial, is to ensure that he couldn't be asked to be a witness of who Jesus claimed to be.

[26 : 13] As an attempt to get Jesus out of the trial and no one testifying to his so-called blasphemy. In other words, he was trying to save Jesus.

But, newsflash, Jesus doesn't need saving. We do. Yeah? Now, like I said, I'm not saying that the fifth reason is the only reason why someone might deny Jesus.

And I might be wrong about Peter. But I think it is the most likely for Peter at this time. I can imagine if Jesus was there with Peter somehow.

Now, obviously the situation would be completely different. But if he was there with Peter, he would say loudly and proudly, Jesus, I'll do anything to stop you from being punished, even deny knowing you.

You know, it's that he had that unwavering dedication for him to allow or enable Jesus to be the Messiah he'd wanted.

[27 : 15] But whatever reason why Peter denied knowing Jesus, he knew he had done wrong. And like I said, it's evidenced by him weeping and mourning shortly afterwards.

Then the question comes, how far away from denial are we? Which of the reasons for denial have we given into in denying our Lord and Savior?

Have we denied Jesus for fear of physical or verbal violence? Have we denied Jesus for shame of how others will perceive us? Have we denied Jesus for concern of the way people will consider Jesus if we tell them who he truly is?

Almost that same sort of saving Jesus. I'm sure we've all said, oh, I don't want to speak about, you know, six day creation. Because people will think, you know, Jesus is incredible.

I don't want to speak about, you know, these issues because people won't write him off, write him off, you know, out of our hand. Or have we denied Jesus simply because we don't actually believe

in him?

[28 : 31] Well, why is this so serious? Why does this matter? In 2 Timothy chapter 2, it says, And this, If we have died with him, we will also live with him.

If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. And this, if you don't know, is obviously was written significantly a number of years after the events of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

This reiterates Jesus' words in Matthew 10, 33, which we read earlier. If we deny him, he will also deny us. Now, not because he is a vengeful teenager who says, if you do it to me, I'll also do it to you.

But as it states in the 2 Timothy text, it's because he is faithful and cannot deny his nature. So what hope do we have then? Surely we've all denied him by this point.

[29 : 46] Thankfully, the fact that God cannot deny himself should give hope and not fear. Because the quality of the saving isn't based on the faithfulness of the one in trouble, but on the faithfulness of the one doing the saving.

He cannot deny himself, meaning the only person who has never and can never deny Jesus is Jesus.

Therefore, we not only have hope in a God who is trustworthy, but we also can learn much from him in what it means to be faithful.

Leads us on to our second key point. The Savior. He cannot deny himself. And he is faithful.

His promise to save us. All who come, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Is true and trustworthy.

[31 : 01] Equally, when we are put in a similar position to Peter today, we are tempted to deny knowing Jesus in thought, word or deed.

We can learn to not deny Jesus by holding on to his promises, studying his faithfulness and imitating his godliness.

How do we do that? Not new. We read the scriptures daily and regularly, particularly the gospels, if we're going to learn faithfulness from Jesus, the way he lived.

We spend time in prayer, experiencing his faithfulness personally by the response that Jesus gives to us. And we tell of his faithfulness to others, encouraging our faith by declaring him as worthy.

Thankfully, we also have the opportunity to hear directly from the other person of interest today. Peter.

[32 : 05] Following on from the events that occurred in today's passage, he gains deep wisdom by count by coming out to the other side of his mistakes and failings demonstrated in his letters.

First and second Peter. Peter clearly learned to be faithful through personally understanding the faithfulness of Jesus. Therefore, two case studies in being steadfast in faith and not denying the one who called us is found in Peter the wise and Jesus the faithful.

Now, it's astonishing to read Peter's epistles following reading the events in the Gospel of Mark, right? Contrasting his attitudes and behaviors before Jesus' death and resurrection and after is very eye-opening.

Peter was so immature and naive before Jesus' death, at least that he comes across like. But his epistles are full of dense, rich and eloquent faith-encouraged truths.

And it's no wonder why this is the case when Jesus so graciously and patiently restores and encourages Peter before he went to dwell with his father in heaven.

[33 : 27] In John 21, Jesus has been resurrected at this point. And he approaches Peter, which he's now been relegated back to Simon.

And Jesus says, 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. 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. He said to him a 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.

[34 : 34] Jesus gives Peter three times to reiterate his love for Jesus, as if blotting out systematically his three denials found in today's passage.

And further, in verse 19 of that same chapter, after saying this, he said to him, follow me. I'd encourage everyone to read Peter's epistles.

This week maybe. From the last few weeks of sermons, Peter falling asleep in the garden, Peter cutting off Malchus' ear, and now his denial.

You could easily come to conclusion that Peter threw away the value of all of his experiences that he had had with Jesus and entered into heaven by the skin of his teeth.

However, the confidence and faith that exudes from Peter's epistles in the life and work of Jesus Christ is tangible and remarkable, especially considering these events in the Gospels of Mark.

[35 : 43] Now, I'm just going to take a few of those encouraging and tangible statements of faith found in 1 Peter.

1 Peter 1. It says, This is the same guy, right? According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who, by God's power, are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Unsurprisingly, he also stresses living correctly according to the new life that we have in Christ Jesus, particularly through trials and suffering. In verse 8 of that same chapter, it says, Though you have not seen him, you love him.

Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Speaking to us there, people who have not seen him, Peter saw him, experienced Jesus firsthand, and yet he saw the value of faith and steadfastness through his faults and failings.

[37 : 19] And then, as a warning, in 1 Peter 5, he says, Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Resist him, firm in your faith. In this warning, you can hear Peter's own shame in his failings mentioned today. This roaring and prowling lion, he knows very well as he gave into pride, complacency, and denial of his Lord.

The warning is valid for us. The devil does prowl around like a roaring lion, but the Lion of Judah has overcome this domesticated cat.

Just like C.S. Lewis spoke of our Lion of Judah in the allegory of the Lion or Witch in the Wardrobe. Aslan is a lion, the lion, the great lion. Oh, says Susan, I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about being a lion.

[38 : 33] Safe, said Mr. Beaver, who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you. What keeps us from denial?

The Lion of Judah, conquering the power of sin and death. And just as Peter began to show complacency in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus' faithfulness in battling the most overwhelming temptation that has ever come to mankind to forego his separation from the Father and bypass the reason for his coming.

He sweat drops of blood because of the immense stress he was under as John took us through. Yet, he did it. What a image of faithfulness for us. Unfortunately, I don't have the time to read Scripture after Scripture displaying the wisdom of Peter and the faithfulness of Jesus, but these have been but a snapshot to encourage us to dig deep in our own time so that we can stand firm and we're in the faith when temptations arise.

So, to move on to our last point, there is a denial that all believers must take part in. The call. Deny yourself and follow him.

[40 : 09] Peter confessed way back in Mark 8, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Therefore, my question is, who do you say he is?

So, there might be some people here today that have not experienced God with them. They don't know Emmanuel personally. They don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Although, I assume that by being here today, you don't proudly and openly hate Jesus. You might have many good thoughts about him, but from that place, you might still deny who he truly is.

Good thoughts about Jesus are not what we're called to. Again, I'll quote C.S. Lewis in his very, I'm going on the famous ones, the famous quotes today. Nothing new to many of you, I'm sure.

But, he says, I'm trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him. I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.

[41 : 21] That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level of, with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fool at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let's not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He's not left that open to us. He did not intend to. So I just say for those of you here today who maybe came with good thoughts of Jesus, who think, yeah, he's a good guy, I like coming to church, I like learning from him, if he's not your Lord and Savior, that's the same as denying him. And as it says, if you deny him, he will deny you. So I just ask those individuals to consider where they are with him. And perhaps today is the day of salvation for you where you bow the knee and you trust in the work of his death, burial, death, burial and resurrection for your life and he forgives you of all your sins, past, present and future.

[42 : 58] So what does save you? Jesus' work on the cross and his faithfulness to forgive you. But what doesn't lose your salvation is your doubts and denials, temptations or trials.

to those of you who came here today knowing Jesus as their Lord and Savior, I will ask that question again that I asked at the beginning.

If God is with you, are you with God? Or in the context of today's study on denial, if God has accepted you, do you demonstrate that you have accepted him?

Matthew 16, it says, then Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

[44 : 08] Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? Jesus says a parable, teaches a parable. This parable is usually referenced as the parable of the prodigal son.

The story of the prodigal son says that the son goes to his father and says, can I have my inheritance now? Because I want to live my own life away from you.

And against the father's better judgment, he says, okay, here you go. Take my money. The son then goes off and lives as a prodigal, which means reckless.

He lives frivolously. And after it's all gone, after the money runs out and he's living with the pigs, eating their slop, he realizes the error in his ways.

And then he leaves it behind with the desire to serve his father instead. But Timothy Keller so wonderfully puts it in his book, the prodigal God, that it's not the son who was reckless truly.

[45 : 39] It's the father who is truly reckless. as the father sees the son coming over the hill and recklessly in his garments that he shouldn't run in, his age, he shouldn't be so whatever in.

he runs to his son and embraces him and accepts him not as a servant but as a child.

God's reckless love for us demonstrates that he is with us. So do you demonstrate that you are with him?

By abiding in the call to deny ourselves counting the treasures of this world as rubbish, he shall never deny us, leave us or forsake us.

But he will truly be Emmanuel, God with us. By denying ourselves and following him, we are declaring not only that he is with us but we are also with him, eradicating the temptation of denial, of him and also showing the world that our hope is worth more than anything else present, past or future.

[47 : 11] It's not about simply not denying Jesus by admitting that we are Christians. We must not only focus on what we aren't denying but focus on what we are denying ourselves.

What a powerful witness might we be if people saw that we not only admit to knowing Jesus but also walk with Jesus in all that we do.

Or in Daniel, in the book of Daniel, again, very famously well-known passage, so I don't need to add too much to it, but Nebuchadnezzar says as the three are chucked into the fiery furnace, did we not

cast three men bound into the fire?

But I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire and they're not hurt and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.

Or put as a guy who's on my Spotify playlist a lot at the moment, Josiah Queen. He says, they can't have my soul, no, I won't bow the knee.

[48 : 29] When the world is crashing down, another stands with me. In the fire, I wonder what they'll do when they see with their eyes there's another man there too. Maybe your third people, as I wrap up, maybe Zach wants to start setting himself up.

the third group people that maybe some people here today are feeling like they're just like Peter before he was restored.

He's your Lord and Saviour but you've denied him through thought, word and deed so many times that your usefulness to him is minimal at best and detrimental at worst.

You say to yourself, let's just live this life out and get to heaven because I'm too broken and useless to be used by God.

Well, if that's you, I ask you to cast your mind back to the encounter that Peter had with Jesus. As he said, do you love me?

[49 : 43] Do you love me? Do you love me? If so, deny yourself and follow him and he will do the rest, preparing good works for you to walk in for his good pleasure and your everlasting joy.

So, perhaps we do something which isn't often done here. Perhaps we consider which people group we're in and we seek prayer.

Perhaps you, we even do the thing which isn't done here. We close our eyes now. Perhaps we are the person, someone here today, you are someone who came here willing to hear some good words but Jesus is not, you came and Jesus wasn't your Lord and Saviour.

And today is the day when you first, for the first time, truly commit your life to Jesus Christ. Perhaps if you, if that is you, that you either put your hand up now or you seek someone in prayer afterwards.

it's only, it's between you and the Lord, isn't it? We want everyone here today to leave knowing that Jesus is on their side.

[51 : 13] Perhaps you're part of the third people group where your usefulness to him has waned, do you think? Maybe you're young or old but you still feel that Jesus is, he's just disappointed with you because day after day which is not good enough.

Jesus doesn't ask you to be good enough. He says, do you love him? Follow me. Perhaps if you want prayer for that, you make yourself known.

Say, I just need that encouragement. God and maybe you're the second group of people that, you know, Jesus is your Lord and Savior. You do love him.

You do long to demonstrate that every day, but you just need the Spirit filling of you just to encourage you today. Perhaps you seek prayer for that. So, Zach's going to and Matthew's going to lead us with a song or two.

Perhaps during this time you find someone to pray with because you know you're one of those people. I'll just lead us into a prayer now as we go.

[52 : 36] Yes, thank you Father that though Peter denies you and though we have denied you, you cannot deny yourself and the call to deny ourselves though difficult at times is not we're not expected to do it perfectly in order for you to forgive us or love us, but you love us now.

We love you because you loved us first. And we pray that each one of us will be built up in the living faith of Jesus Christ by leaving today more able, more willing to deny ourselves and to follow you.

thank you for your word, thank you that you brought us here today and please bless the remaining time we have together. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

Thank you.