

“Denied, Lied, Cried”
Matthew 26:33-35, 69-75
March 7, 2010

Rev. Dave Baldrige

Englewood United Methodist Church, Englewood, Florida

We are people who like to make excuses. Any ‘ol excuse will do. If we get caught doing something we shouldn’t have---we make an excuse. We deny or own faults to place the blame on someone else. We make our own excuses to cover our feelings of guilt or wrong. In fact I love the title of a book that was written several years ago now. I think one our adult Sunday School Classes even used it as their Sunday School guide. The book by James W. Moore is entitled, “Yes, Lord, I have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses.” I like that title. I would say I have never ever said that...but then I would have to make up an excuse as to why I never have said that, because rather I’ve said it or thought it, I know I can be pretty good at making excuses. How about you? Huh-huh-huh? I wish I could say that we in the church never make excuses....but, uh...I know you better than you think.

As a pastor I often get some interesting comments about why people do not come and worship regularly at church. To be honest....it’s nothing more than excuses. I think at the next Worship Committee meeting I’ll propose a “No Excuse Sunday.” It would be set up like this:

Cots will be placed in the entryways for those who say, “Sunday is my only to sleep.” Murine and eye drops will be available for those with tired eyes from staying out too late on Saturday evening. There will be steel helmets for those who say, “The roof would cave in if I ever came to church.” Blankets will be furnished for those who think the church is too cold, and portable fans will be provided for those who say it is too hot. We will have special hearing assistance for those who say, “The preacher didn’t speak loud enough” and cotton for those who say, “The music’s too loud.” Score cards will be available for those to list the hypocrites present. Microwave dinners will be available for those who can’t go to church because they have to slave over a hot stove. One section of the church will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature. While one section will have ka sandbox and a cd playing of ocean waves for those who prefer the beach. And finally, the church will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the church without them.

Oops....did I really say that last one out loud. Friends we can certainly give some good excuses. It’s one thing to make excuses about the church, but when it comes to your relationship with Jesus Christ it advances to a higher level. We find Peter in our scripture making excuses. He knows the facts...but wow he makes some good excuses.

First of all notice that this disciple, this one whom Jesus says, “Upon this rock I’ll build my church,” denied Christ. We know Peter was a man of quick action. This is the man who jumped out of the boat and began walking on water. At the Last Supper Jesus begins to wash the disciple’s feet and Peter says, “O Lord, not just my feet, but also my hands and my head.”

In this passage Peter in essence says, “Everybody else will fall away, but Jesus you are talking to faithful, no excuse church member, Peter here. I will never ever ever fall away.” Jesus replies by saying, “Before the rooster crows you will disown me 3 times.” Peter is bold enough to say, “Nuh uh. Even If I have to die with you, I will never disown you. That’s what it says in **VERSE 35** But also notice the last sentence of the verse. “And all the other disciples said the same.”

Denied. Denied is what Peter did. He denied Christ by at first pleading ignorance. He was there with Jesus. Jesus is betrayed by Judas. And we know from other scripture that is Peter that draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the slave of the high priest. Meaning that Peter was a very good swordsman---meaning to cut off this man’s ear....therefore the famous phrase---“lend me your ears.” Or he was a terrible swordsman meaning to decapitate the slave, but getting only his ear instead. Oh well, to ‘ear’ is human. Anyway, Peter was there with Jesus when Jesus was taken captive----we then see Peter sitting outside in the courtyard. A maid comes up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” And then we have the tragic words in **VERSE 70: But he denied it before them all.** He denied it by saying “**I don’t know what you’re talking about.**” Peter denied His Savior. He denied Him by refusing to answer the question fully. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” It’s kind of like asking one of your children or grandchildren, “Did you take the cookie----I dunno.” I love that phrase, “I dunno.” “Who spilled the milk?” “I dunno.” “Were you the one who slammed the door?” “I dunno.” Peter denied Christ by pleading ignorance. Peter is noncommittal to some degree. He doesn’t really say he wasn’t with Jesus he just says---“I dunno.” “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

You have heard the story of Jesus. Are you a follower of Jesus? I hope you don’t say, “I dunno.” Either you are following....or you’re not. Now as we see with Peter you can be a follower and still struggle with doing the right thing.

Denied, and now Peter Lied. He went to the gateway where another girl saw him, (**VERSE 71**) “**This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.**” And Peter not only denied, he lied. **VERSE 72:** He said with an oath, “**I don’t know the man.**” He is saying, don’t associate me with Him. Isn’t it interesting that you are known by the friends you keep.

There was man named Mr. Moore that was playing in a softball league. He was up at the plate batting. Every time he went to bat he heard someone say, “Way to go, Mr. Moore! You can do it, Mr. Moore!” Since Mr. Moore had just moved to that town and not many knew him he wondered who was calling him by name. After the game he located his wife and son and asked if they knew who was yelling encouragement. The son replied, “Dad, it was me.” “But why were you calling me Mr. Moore.” The son said, “I didn’t want anyone to know we were related.”

Are you afraid to be associated with your Father? Are you with me? Jesus....I don't know the man. I don't know the man....what an excuse for not dealing with the facts and realities. If we do not claim to be associated with Christ what kind of impact can we make on the world.

A paper in the Midwest, years ago reported a story that said this, "We are pleased to announce that the cyclone which blew away the Methodist church last Friday did no real damage to the town." Now think about that just a minute. Kind of scary isn't it? Is the church's failure a failure to be relevant to today's society and world. To make an impact for Jesus we must not deny, we must not lie when it comes to our relationship with Him. We can not lie about our association with Him. We can not be ashamed of Christ and all that He has done for us.

Denied, lied, and now Peter cried. It was a little while when one of those standing there went up to Peter and **VERSE 73** said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." And then notice how he responds, **VERSE 74: Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"** He denied, lied, and now cried. He cried out....I don't know the man! If you are accused of knowing Jesus and being one of His followers do you cry out that you do not know the man.

An interesting sidelight is the fact that his speech betrayed him. Peter spoke with a Gallilean accent, I said Galilean not Kentuckian. Because of the accent people knew he was different. Now let me ask, "Is our talk different from the worlds because of our relationship with Jesus. It's not only what we say, but how we say what we say. Is our accent Christian....positive, optimistic, or do we deny Christ by our talk, what we say and even how we say it. Or the words we say words Christ would be pleased with? DO we deny Him by the language we use? Do we deny Him by what we say?"

Oh, Peter denied, lied, and cried that he didn't want to be associated with this Jesus who was called Christ. But wait a minute....before we are so hard on Peter, where are the other disciples? Peter was perhaps sitting huddled by the fire keeping warm when someone poked the embers and recognized him by the glare. Why didn't Peter leave the courtyard? Could have....but he didn't. He was confronted again and still he could have left...but didn't. And he was confronted a third time, and he cried out...but he still never left the courtyard.

On the third time scripture says that immediately a rooster crowed. **VERSE 75: Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went out side and wept bitterly."**

Even though he denied, even though he lied, and even though he cried out against Jesus we know that he was loved by Jesus.

After the resurrection Jesus met Simon Peter and said to him (John 21) “Do you truly love me more than these? And Peter said, “Yes, Lord you know that I love you.” A second time Jesus said to Peter, DO you truly love me.” And for a second time Peter said, “Ye3s, Lord, you know that I love you.” And even a third time Jesus said, Do you love me?” And again Peter said, “Lord you know all things; you know that I love you.”

3 times Peter refused to associate himself with Jesus. Denied, lied, and cried. And 3 times Peter is asked by Jesus, “Do you love me? Do you really love? Do you love me enough not to deny me, to lie about me, to cry out against me?

Peter may have cried out against Jesus...”I don’t know the man!” but by the end of the passage Peter cries out from the heart. Scripture says “he went outside and wept bitterly.” Yes, Peter cried out again....this time not against Jesus, but he has cried out for himself realizing what he has done.

Often with our words, our actions, and our lives we have denied Him, lied about Him, and even cried out against Him. However, hear the Good News, just as Peter did...hear the Good News of Jesus saying....I still love you. What amazing love.

Let’s make this Sunday a “No Excuse Sunday.” There is really no valid excuse why you can’t make a decision for Christ today. There is no better day than today. Can you say...without excuse....I want to be a follower of Jesus. Oh we can certainly come up with some excuses.

We deny Him; we lie to Him and about Him. Now as we prepare to receive Holy Communion may we cry to Him....as we realize that in spite of all...He gave His life....He shed His blood for us. Do you love Him?