Condemned and Denied

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Date: 16 August 2026

Preacher: Edward Kang

[0:00] Heavenly Father, we do praise you for this beautiful weather. We praise you for your good creation. When we look at all that you have made, we're reminded as Psalm 8 says, what is man that you are mindful of him?

The son of man that you think of him. We thank you that you have invited us, gathered your people in a new place, but in beautiful weather to be able to do what we're made to do, just as all of creation is made to do, to cry out your worship.
We thank you, oh God, we don't take it for granted to be able to gather in a public place like this without fear of persecution. And we do pray for our brothers and sisters who are gathering on this Sunday to do the same, boldly, but underground, hidden.
We thank you for their faithfulness. God, as we dive into your word this morning, may we remember that these are the words of life.
To whom else shall we go? There's so much noise in this life. There's so much world. The world talks so much, but your word is what we need.
[1:22] It is a lamp onto our feet. So may we give it the proper respect, the reverence that it is due as we listen, as we hear what you have to say to us.

Fill us with your spirit. Illuminate your words to us. We do it for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
If you're able, I invite you to please rise to honor the reading of God's word. Starting in verse 57.
Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest.
And going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death.
[2:26] But they found none. Though many false witnesses came forward. At last, two came forward and said, this man said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.

And the high priest stood up and said, have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent.
And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God. Jesus said to him, you have said so.
But I tell you, from now on, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.
And the high priest tore his robes and said, he has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.
[3:29] What is your judgment? They answered, he deserves death. Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him saying, prophesy to us, you Christ.

Who is it that struck you? Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a servant girl came up to him and said, you also were with Jesus, the Galilean.
But he denied it before them all saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him and she said to the bystanders, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.
And 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 too are one of them for your accent betrays you.
Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man. And immediately, the rooster crowed.

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[4:39] And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

Please be seated. In the late 1830s, the leader of the USSR, Joseph Stalin, staged a series of trials against some of his most ardent political opponents.
He had more than 50 of these men arrested under fabricated charges and dragged into courtrooms. On paper, these trials had all the elements of a fair trial.
Opening statements, cross-examinations, final verdicts. But in reality, this was anything but fair. Behind the scenes, Stalin brutally tortured these men. Sleep deprived them, threatened to kill all of their families. So under all of that pressure, they would go on to court and confess guilty to all of these made-up charges, which only led to their speedy execution just a few days later.
[6:07] This kind of injustice in the court. Injustice enrages us, doesn't it? Right? We are people who intuitively, naturally understand how wrong it is.

We hate injustice, especially when it's done towards us. How dare he cut us in line? It's not fair for her to speak to us that way. And in particular, injustice in the courtroom feels especially wrong.
In the one place where justice should be upheld, any sense of injustice riles us up. It just feels so wrong. Yet, this injustice is precisely what Jesus undergoes in his unjust trial this morning.
But that's not the only injustice that Jesus endures. In fact, one could argue that the second injustice is even worse than the first.
The first injustice could be expected because it's at the hands of those who have long hated Jesus. But the second is at the hands of one of his closest friends.
[7:24] He who ate, laughed, cried with Jesus for years, for years, is now not denying him just once, not twice, but three whole times just to save his own skin and to leave him to die alone.

Like a cheating spouse like a backstabbing best friend, Peter tosses Jesus aside as if he never mattered to him. Jesus experiences terrible injustice in this passage this morning.
But he endures it all not because he is helpless, not because he deserves it, but simply because, we'll see, he does it so he could be the justifier of the unjust.
That's the main point of my sermon this morning. Jesus endures injustice to justify the unjust. My outline's really simple this morning as we just compare and contrast how both Jesus and Peter endure their quote-unquote trials.
First, how Jesus faithfully endures his unjust trial, and then how Peter fails his informal trial when he's interrogated by bystanders. After Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Jewish authorities bring him to Kiveh's house to sentence him to death.
[8:51] If you're reading this and you've been along, following along with us in the book of Matthew, you might realize that we've been here before. It's the same place where the Jewish authorities gathered to, where they schemed and planned to abduct and kill Jesus.

And now that kind of prejudiced prejudgment shows up in the total sham of Jesus' trial for his life. The so-called high court of the land is a total kangaroo court. They jump, hop, skip over the proper legal proceedings just to confirm their predetermined verdicts.
There is no humility, no intellectual honesty, no actual pursuit of truth. Unfortunately, today we're all too familiar with that kind of attitude, are we not?
Especially if you just have been on the internet for even just ten minutes. We have all been infected by this little bug called pride. And pride makes us think that we are always right and everyone else around us is just stupidly wrong.
[10:09] Generally, I think this applies to every single one of us and we should grow in humility to admit that maybe we don't have all the answers. But maybe this actually applies to you a little bit more specifically.

Maybe in your mind you have already put Jesus on trial and you've already determined that Jesus isn't God. Jesus isn't the Messiah.
All of the miracles that he's performed are just made up fairy tales. Instead of open-mindedly considering the evidence, you've just written it all off as total bogus.
So I'd argue if that's you, you're not too far off from these Jews in this passage. For they display their own pride by unbendingly digging their heels in and concluding who Jesus is without sincerely, seriously considering the evidence.
But though this trial is an utter false farce, the Sanhedrin, the high court, they still need to hold up the illusion that this is a legitimate trial.

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[11:26] In John, we learn that the Jews, they lacked the proper jurisdiction from their Roman rulers to execute or carry out capital punishment themselves. So if they wanted to kill Jesus, they then now needed to convince their Roman rulers that Jesus was this nefarious criminal that was deserving of death.

In their courtroom, a place where witnesses ought to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, they rather sought false testimony.
That's what Matthew even puts it as. They seek false testimony. They set up an open mic night just for anybody to just mosey on up in there and level life-threatening accusations against an innocent man.
though many try, no one brings a credible charge against Jesus. And it sort of makes sense, right, that against the one who has not even committed one sin against God, not even in his mind or in his heart, can they find even just one prosecutable crime against the state.
That is until two come forward and they threaten Jesus of attacking, breaking down the temple of God, saying that he said, I am able to destroy the temple of God.
[12:53] To the Jewish ear, this is an incendiary charge and one that really touches a nerve. For the temple symbolized the nation itself.

So to threaten the temple is to threaten the nation, everything that it believed, everything that it stood for. So this accusation is really pure rage bait for the Jews.
But much like really rage bait on the internet today, it's just full of lies, right? Number one, they even get the quote wrong. John 2.19 records the right quote.
It says, Jesus said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. Jesus never said, I will destroy this temple, but that simply the temple would be destroyed. Number two, as John confirms, Jesus is not speaking literally about the temple itself, but figuratively about the temple of his body.
And then three, if that's not clear enough, Mark actually adds that these two witnesses, their stories do not corroborate, they don't match up. Deuteronomy 19.15 stipulates the wise Jewish principle that no charge can stand unless you have two harmonious accounts, unless you just have one bad actor just leveling off false accusation left and right.
[14:14] So this accusation is Swiss cheese. There's so many holes in it that Jesus could have just poked his fingers right through. But when Caiaphas asks Jesus to defend himself, what's his response?

He is remarkably silent. not a single word. And that silence speaks volumes.
First, it indicts the Jewish authorities. Perhaps this proverb is running through Jesus' mind. Don't answer fool according to his folly lest you become a fool yourself.
It's not even worth it for Jesus to respond to such a foolish accusation. So he saves his breath. And sometimes it's not worth it for us either lest we stoop down to the level of fools.
But it also displays Jesus' total control of the situation. On first glance, the ruling Sanhedrin, they seem to be the ones who are calling the shots.
[15:24] They're the ones who are in power. But they betray their insecurity when they're the ones who are putting stock to such flimsy, baseless accusations.

They reach desperately for straws because they're desperate. But Jesus, he calmly, coolly, refuses to answer, revealing who is feeling in control.
No, actually who is rather in control. He is so in control, in fact, that he actually fulfills century-old prophecies. Written about him in Isaiah 53.
We've been quoting this chapter a lot in the last couple of sermons because this whole story in Matthew 26, it harkens back to that chapter a lot. He says, he was oppressed and he was afflicted. Yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter like a sheep that before its shears is silent. So he opened not his mouth. Jesus knows this rigged trial will lead to his death.
[16:36] But instead of defending, claiming his individual rights, demanding justice, as I'm sure all of us would, he rather is silent.

That silence only exacerbates Caiaphas. He's had enough and finally wants to put an end to this trial. So by the strongest possible sanction, by an appeal to God, he demands that Jesus answer, whether he is the Christ, the Son of God.
Finally, Jesus speaks. He responds with the curious, you have said so. An affirmative answer, but you also hear these elements of distancing, of qualification.

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I think commentators convincingly argue that Jesus is basically saying, yes, I am the Messiah. yes, I am the Son of God, but that doesn't mean what you think it means.
I'm not the political revolutionary that you expect the Son of Man or Son of God to be, but let me explain what it really means to be the Messiah.
[18:00] And then he proceeds to say, I am the Daniel 7 Son of Man, to whom will be given everlasting dominion, indomitable glory, and an eternal kingdom, to whom every person on earth, all peoples, tribes, and tongues will worship one day.

To no other but me, but only to me, is given the power, the authority, the honor, to be seated at the right hand of the all powerful God.
You think that you're in the judge's seat, but from now on, from now on, you will see who is really in power. That from now on that Jesus says, it hints at really the immediacy of this prophecy, I think. Meaning that I don't think Jesus has in terms, or in his mind, the long awaited second coming of Jesus, the one that we're still waiting for, but rather the power.
He's thinking about the power and the authority that is bestowed to Jesus in his soon coming resurrection and ascension just a few days later. So all in all, though he is a lone, uneducated Galilean carpenter, before some of the most powerful men in all the nation, they will see with their own two eyes who is actually in power.
[19:32] There is far more than meets the eye, brothers and sisters, far more than meets the eye with Jesus and with us.

Do you know that you will resurrect in unspeakable glory and power just as Jesus was? Do you know that you will reign in the new heavens and the new earth as co-heirs with Christ's brothers and sisters?
Remember, last week, Steve spoke convincingly just how powerful one angel is. Just one angel. But do you know that you have angels that are sent to you to serve you and that you will actually judge them?
it's easy to feel weak, to feel small, to let just what you see dictate what is true.
But especially when we are put on trial for our faith, when we're ostracized at work for being a Christian, when we're made small by our friends for believing in the Bible, remember the truth.
[20:44] Remember who you are. Jesus knows the reality of who he is and you ought to too. Don't let them take that away from you.

Take confidence in this spiritual reality of who you really are, lest the fear of man control you. It's easier said than done, I know, and it won't be easy, for they will treat us like they treated Jesus.
for instead of recognizing Jesus' response as truth and appropriately repenting, hard-hearted Caiaphas, he labels Jesus' claims as total blasphemy.
Then he, along with the rest of the council, pronounce their judgment, he deserves death. And then they descend upon Jesus with unruly treatment.
Not even mass serial killers are treated like this today. They spit in his face, they slap him up, they mock him, they cover his eyes, demand him to prophesy.
[21:55] Who struck you, oh Christ? Verbal abuse is one thing, but physical salt is a totally other thing.

And yet, again, Matthew doesn't record a single response from Jesus. The God of the universe, he just takes it.
Oh, the amazing patience of Jesus to endure this kind of injustice. Oh, the amazing patience of the Father to just let this happen to his own son.
is to God Christ endures this injustice to justify the unjust. As we've seen, really, this whole scene is soaked in irony, I think.
Really, even down to its last line. While they mock Jesus' ability to prophesy, ironically, the whole second half of this passage, shows Jesus' ability to do just that.
[23:04] There's a second character that's interwoven throughout this passage. We first read of him in verse 58, where Peter, he follows Jesus at a distance, it says.

this picture is worth a thousand words. Peter follows Jesus, but only within a distance that he deems safe for him.
Peter follows Jesus, but as long as it doesn't cost him anything. Peter follows Jesus, but it's on his terms. And I wonder, how closely do you follow Jesus?

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You might be convinced that Jesus is someone worthy to be followed, but you only do so when it's convenient for you. You might be following Jesus, but it's only the commands that you deem agreeable.
You might be following Jesus, but it's only on your terms. Take heed that really at the end of this verse, who is Peter sitting among?
[24:21] Peter is not closely next to Jesus, but he's among the Jewish guards. Peter is blended in with Jesus' enemies.

You might think that you might be part of Jesus' posse, but in the end, if you indefinitely follow Jesus from a distance, the result might be that you too might be numbered among Jesus' enemies. You either deny yourself or you deny Christ. And that distance between Jesus and Peter, I think it hints at what's to come.
Verse 69 sets the scene of our second quote-unquote trial this morning. While sitting in the courtyard, a servant girl, perhaps only 10 to 12 years of age, she comes up to him and accuses him of being with Jesus.
Only a little girl, probably pearl's age. Yet she makes Peter, a grown man, quake in his boots. Afraid to be revealed, he feigns ignorance.
[25:36] Oh, you're talking to me? Oh, I have no idea what you're talking about, little girl. As he says, while he wipes off beads of sweat from his brow.

That verbal dodging then only turns to physical dodging. He goes out to the entrance of the courtyard trying to avoid this little girl, only to further move away from Jesus.
In fact, really throughout this three-fold trial, Peter seemed to progressively move away from Jesus physically. That mirrors, it really mirrors his distance away from Jesus relationally.
And while he tries to avoid that first girl, I think really almost comically, he yet runs into another little girl. It's little Ingy this time. Finds him and accuses him.
And you can tell that these accusations, they're ratcheting up. While the first one accuses Peter of just one-on-one for the bystanders to then listen in, this second girl explicitly brings in the crowd in the accusation.
[26:52] To match that mounting pressure, then Peter ramps up his own denial. Surely he remembers his Lord's teaching on the Sermon on the Mount.

He says, do not swear by oaths. And yet here he is adding an oath explicitly denying all relations with Christ. I swear, I swear to God, I do not know him.
Compare really Peter and Jesus on how they're handling their trials so far. one pastor said, and it's right, when the Jewish leaders lie to Jesus, Jesus responds with truth.
When the bystanders tell the truth to Peter, he responds with lies. After some period of time, maybe he finally thinks he's in the clear.
But then the final and greatest accusation comes. This time, multiple people come to convict Peter simply because he talks like him.
[28:08] Apparently, the southern Judeans made fun of the northern Galilean accent. They hated their accent so much that Galileans were actually not allowed to speak in some parts of the Jewish worship service.

Maybe this accusation was a good educated guess. Perhaps not a lot of people around them had this accent, so just simply by power of deduction, they reasonably guessed that Peter too must have come with Jesus.
Or maybe their accusation is just a wild, even racist guess. I had this conversation with someone once.
They asked me if I knew his Asian friend. And when I asked where his friend was from, he said, oh, he's from Mississippi. Mississippi. Oh, I'm sorry, did I ever say that I was from Mississippi?
Oh, no, no, didn't, but, you know, he's Asian, you're Asian. Maybe this accusation against Peter is completely stupid, unfounded, xenophobic, but correct guess.
[29:34] With that weird accent of his, he might be saying, you've got to be kidding me. So to this final accusation, he holds nothing back.

Adding on to this forbidden oath, he now invokes a curse. In the ESV, it says on himself, which would mean something akin to, may God bring just terrible things upon me if I'm lying.
But that actually might be a bit of an over-translation because, really, the verb in the Greek doesn't actually have a direct object. It's actually possible that Peter could be cursing not himself, but

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Jesus.
In the early church in the second and third centuries, the Romans hunted down Christians. How? By requiring people to curse the name of Jesus, to see if they could curse the name of Jesus. Something that they assumed a Christian could never do. And yet here is the apostle Peter. And he might have done just that.
[30:44] That's how far Peter is willing to go to save his own skin. Immediately, immediately, the rooster crowed.

Jesus' prediction is spot on. Once Peter hears that rooster, it all comes back to him.
Jesus said that I would deny him three times, but I said I would never do that. Jesus said that those who deny him before men, he will deny before his father.
What have I done? What have I done? How could I do that to Jesus? Am I doomed to hell forever? In that moment, Peter felt the unbearable, absolute crushing weight of his sin. And his body can't possibly contain all that emotion, so it comes just pouring out of him in this raw, bitter weeping.
[31:58] It's the kind of guttural wailing that's only interrupted by those hyperventilating gasps for air. air. Here's a man on the worst night of his life, but no matter how many tears he cries, he can't take back what he has done.

Because of the chief priests and Peter, Jesus has now been condemned to death by his enemies and denied by his closest friends.
this ought to enrage us. We who hate injustice should cry out for justice for Jesus.
They should be held responsible for their actions. But wait, doesn't that put us in a precarious situation?
doesn't that make us a wee bit uncomfortable? We love justice, but we're hesitant to cry out for justice for Jesus.
[33:17] Because let's be real. We're not Jesus in this passage. We are Peter. here. Don't believe me?

How would you have fared? Knowing that it could cost you your life, how closely would you have stood next to Jesus that day? Maybe you feel like you can die for Jesus in some kind of cavalier, dramatic, once-in-a-lifetime moment.
But day by day, can you live for him? Sometimes it's not dying for Christ, but living for him that is harder.
For every time you lash out at your spouse, you watch that video that you really shouldn't have, you hide the fact that you go to church, in your own way you are still choosing yourself before Jesus.
In your own way, while you're not explicitly denying Christ, you have betrayed him. if Peter is judged for his actions, what hope is there for us who have failed even lesser trials than this?
[34:39] One of the next times that Peter and Jesus talk is just a few days later. They both know what Peter has done.

But when Jesus speaks to Peter, there's no guilt tripping. There's no shaming.
There's no anger. There's no disappointment. There's not even a hint of coldness. Instead, starting from a clean slate, he asks not once, not twice, but three times, giving him the same three opportunities to get it right.
Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you. Lord, you know I love you. Lord, you know I love you. With these three simple questions he or gives, he reinstates Peter.
[35:48] Why? Why is Peter not met with the terrible justice that he is due, that he deserves? Because Jesus, though he be condemned by his own people and denied by his own closest friends, he walked straight into that trial, straight into the cross, so that he could die the death that we deserve, that Peter deserves.

Christ was our human shield from the fiery wrath of God. That bullet was coming for us, but Christ dove in the way, protecting us, sacrificing his own life for us.
Innocent Jesus was called guilty before corrupt judges so that guilty sinners like you and me can be called innocent before the almighty judge.
that's what it means to be justified. So even backstabbing sinners like you, like me, those who have disappointed abandon him, that he will wipe away all of our tears, will wipe away all our reproach from us.

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He is mocked, spit upon, slapped up, crucified. justified. Jesus endures all of this injustice to justify the unjust like Peter, like you, and like me.
[37:21] And there is no better news in all the world than this gospel truth. There is no better news to tell the whole world than this gospel truth.

God, that's when we understand this really rightly then, as Peter was commissioned to go and love the world, to die for him, to walk closely with Jesus, can we then walk step in step closely after our Lord?
Lord, I pray that we do that. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are amazed that you have sent your one and only son who does not deserve any of this mistreatment.
We are the ones who deserve it and that you are the one who pay the price. Amaze us open our eyes again that the gospel might not be dull to us, that it would be fresh to us, that we would be overjoyed to just tell the whole world.
And we pray specifically again for even this own neighborhood as this worship service rings aloud, as our worship sings aloud, that many would come to know this gospel truth.
[38:48] We pray for a revival and a stirring up of your people here. We do it for your glory, oh God. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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