

Sermon: Denying Life**Text: John 18:12-27****Discussion Questions:**

Have you ever seen the 1993 film “*Rudy*”? It’s the true story of a below-average college football player, wanting desperately to make the team at Notre Dame his senior year. He was so desperate that, in one scene, he is alone in the front pew of a church on a weekday begging God to help him. The priest sees Rudy there, and slides in beside him. The following dialogue takes place:

Father Cavanaugh: Taking your appeal to a higher authority?

Rudy: I’m desperate. If I don’t get in next semester, it’s over. Notre Dame doesn’t accept senior transfers.

Father Cavanaugh: Well, you’ve done an amazing job kid, chasing down your dream.

Rudy: Who cares what kind of a job I did if it doesn’t produce results? It doesn’t mean anything.

Father Cavanaugh: I think you’ll find that it will.

Rudy: Maybe I haven’t prayed enough.

Father Cavanaugh: I don’t think that’s the problem. Praying is something we do in our time, the answers come in God’s time.

Rudy: If I’ve done everything I possibly can, can you help me?

Father Cavanaugh: Son, in thirty-five years of religious study, I’ve come up with only two hard, incontrovertible facts: There is a God, and, I’m not Him.

I don’t think two “truer truths” have ever been uttered in a movie line. **“There is a God. And I am not Him.”** Discuss how these two simple statements contain such a depth of wisdom. How does this fly in the face of what we hear in our culture? How does this expose the lie that Satan whispers in every person’s ear (beginning with Adam & Eve)? What is it (if anything) about these two statements that is good news?

Examination:

Before we dig into this account of Jesus’ unlawful interrogation—and Peter’s devastating denial—it is helpful to be reminded WHY John wrote these things: *“So that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:31) John’s purpose is vividly clear when we look at his account of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. Jesus goes to the garden where He knows Judas will find Him before He is betrayed and arrested. It is Jesus who first approaches the detachment of soldiers (up to 600 of them) and asks who they are looking for. It is Jesus who declares that He is “I AM!”, causing highly trained and armed soldiers to fall to the ground. It is Jesus who gives a command to let His disciples go free, and it is Jesus who tells Peter to put his sword away. In every way, we clearly see that Jesus is the one in charge. This isn’t just historical information. This is written to build YOUR faith—today. In that light...

- Read **John 18:12-14**
 - What do you think the Roman soldiers were thinking as they put Jesus in handcuffs (v. 12)? Do you think it crossed their minds that Jesus, by the sheer power of His voice

and the glory of His Name, had just caused them to faint to the ground? Do you think it crossed their minds that a week prior, Jesus had raised a man from the dead after four days in the grave? Do you think it crossed their minds that four days earlier the entire city of Jerusalem had hailed Jesus as the coming King? Do you think it occurred to them that their “bindings” (handcuffs?; rope? chains?) were absolutely meaningless?

- It can be a bit confusing with respect to what, exactly, happened to Jesus after He was arrested in the Garden. John makes it very clear that the FIRST STOP was in the presence of an older priest named Annas. Think of him as the “Godfather” of the priests. He had been the actual “High Priest” for ten years (6AD-15AD). Now, fifteen or so years later, he was without question the “power” behind everything (even though he didn’t hold the official title). Caiaphas—the sitting High Priest that night—was Annas’ son-in-law. My best guess is that Annas had an office in the “court of priests” where the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) would meet.
 - Knowing this, why do you think Jesus was taken to Annas first?
 - Was Jesus’ “trial” before Annas in any way “official”?
- Read **John 18:15-18**
 - The identity of the “other disciple” is ultimately a mystery. But this passage is actually one of seven references in John to “another disciple” or “the other disciple.” Look up all seven, and discuss who you believe this to be—and why the name is kept hidden: 13:21-26; 18:15-18; 19:26-27; 19:35; 20:2-8; 21:15-24.
 - Peter was relegated at first to “beyond the door”—and then to the courtyard area (vv. 15-16). Does it seem that John (likely) had access to the actual proceedings between Annas and Jesus? Does this add even greater credibility to this account?
 - Who first confronted Peter about his identity? Do you think the fact that this was both a girl (young?)—as well as a servant—kept Peter from thinking this was actually a “denial” in the moment—almost as if this girl didn’t even “count”?
 - Contrast what Jesus answered in v. 5 with what Peter said in v. 17.
- Read **John 18:19-24**
 - Why do you think Annas asked first about the disciples (v. 19)?
 - Do you think Jesus’ refusal to answer the question (vv. 20-21) has anything to do with the fact that this wasn’t even an official trial (Annas had no official position)?
 - How did Jesus respond to being unjustly struck in the face (v. 23)? Anything we can learn from this?
- Read **John 18:25-27**
 - Unlike the other three Gospel accounts, John juxtaposes (“*meanwhile...*”) Jesus’ faithfulness with Peter’s denials. Why do you think John told the story this way?
 - Why do you think John included the detail that the 3rd accuser was related to Malchus (v. 26)?

Application:

We have to resist any urge to be too critical of Peter in this account. Think about all of the ways you and I can “deny” Jesus each and every day. Resolve in your heart to be more aware of even the slightest of denials—and make the choice to be faithful to Christ.