

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 7, 2018
4th Midweek Lent

Passion Lesson: Jesus Taken before Pilate; Psalm 2
Hymns: 155; 342; 143; 552:1-4

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 27:11-26

Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*" ¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"

²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" *They* all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"

²³ Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?"

But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.”

²⁵ And all the people answered and said, “His blood *be* on us and on our children.”

²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Justice is served!

That is what our Lord’s passion was all about, justice being served. But wait a minute, wasn’t it exactly the opposite that took place in Pilate’s judgment hall? We read of many false accusations, and so much abuse, and even Pilate knew it was a miscarriage of justice taking place because it was really all about the jealousy. The priests and Pharisees, the members of the high council of the Sanhedrin wanted to save their positions of power and influence. Indeed that is what is apparent on the surface. That was what Pilate was accurately able to discern, but we have been led by the Spirit to perceive a deeper and far greater truth regarding Jesus. He was not standing in that court as an individual concerned for Himself and His own standing before the law. Jesus was there in Pilate’s court as our Redeemer. As Jesus was there before Pilate there was also a far greater hearing going on; a hearing of divine justice transpiring, for Jesus was not the Redeemer of one or a few, but the Redeemer of the world. In this evening’s devotion we learn of --

THEME: The Redeemer of the World Sentenced.

I. Jesus’ Silence as He Stands Accused of Many Crimes.

Our text opens with Jesus standing before Pontius Pilate:

Matthew 27:11-13 “Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus said to him, “*It is as you say.*” ¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” ¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

It is important for us to note that Jesus was not silent about who He was as He stood there before Pilate. He confessed that He was indeed the King of the Jews. Of course Jesus also confessed that His kingdom was not of this world. Pilate didn't see Jesus as a threat to Rome, but Pilate did concede, “You are a King a then!” (John 18:37) That fact is important to us because of the proper function of a king in protecting his people. Jesus stood before Pilate as our Champion, with the proper understanding of that word. He stood before Pilate in our place to fight our battle, a spiritual battle with our eternal lives at stake. If Jesus wins we have life. If Jesus loses we are doomed to eternal death in hell.

The battle was engaged with the chief priests leveling accusation after accusation against Jesus, so many that Pilate found it incredible. It was incredible for one man to be accused of so many crimes. It was incredible that the Man who stood before him could be such a criminal. It was even more incredible that this Jesus now stood silent in the face of all these preposterous accusations. But that was an important ingredient in the battle plan for Jesus to win our salvation. No, Jesus was not guilty of any of the crimes of which He was accused. However it was important for us that Jesus received these accusations, and many more. It harkens back to the annual Day of Atonement when the High Priest would lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confess the sins of the people, laying on the scapegoat the iniquity of the people. So as the priests called out their accusations it is reminiscent of the priest laying the sins of the people on the Lamb of God who would bear our sins and carry them away, out to Calvary. Jesus is our Scapegoat. Jesus did not protest for what really happened was that:

Isaiah 53:6b -7 “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.”

Jesus’ silence as He was being accused signified His willing acceptance of the Father’s will that He bear our sins. Jesus’ silence was key to our deliverance for when Jesus was sentenced it was --

II. The Just for the Unjust.

Our text reports that Pilate tried to use the Passover custom of pardoning one of the prisoners Rome held as a way to set Jesus free. There was a really bad man in prison. Our text refers to Barabbas as a notorious prisoner. He had been involved in an insurrection, a real revolt. He had committed murder in the insurrection. Barabbas was a real danger to society. He was evil. Jesus was harmless, innocent. Our text reports that even Pilate’s wife sent a word of warning concerning Jesus that Pilate should have nothing to do with this just man for she had suffered many things in a dream because of Him. (v.19) She knew Jesus was innocent and reminded Pilate of Jesus’ innocence. Pilate didn’t anticipate that the crowd could be turned against Jesus in favor of Barabbas.

Again we must see this part of the passion on two levels. Yes, in accentuates the degree of the injustice that took place in Pilate’s court. Jesus was innocent, He couldn’t have been more innocent and Barabbas was guilty, guilty beyond any shadow of a doubt, as guilty as sin! And yet it was Barabbas that was set free, and Jesus that was held over for punishment.

And that is God’s plan for our salvation: the Just for the unjust. Jesus the innocent was held over for punishment while we, the unjust, those whom the law has clearly shown to be guilty, as guilty as sin, have been pardoned and released.

The people cried out, “Let Him be crucified, Let Him be crucified.” Pilate couldn’t comprehend the depth of their hatred or the fervor with which they demanded Jesus’ death. But lest an uproar break out among the people, Pilate caved to their demands and we see --

III. Jesus Condemned.

Matthew 27: 24-26 “When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.”

²⁵ And all the people answered and said, “His blood *be* on us and on our children.”

²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

Pilate claimed innocence. Innocence doesn't come so easily as washing one's hands. The people, ALL the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on or children.” (v.25) What folly! What a horror! Didn't they realize the magnitude of their sin? Didn't they realize the fruit of their sin? Obviously not. What a tragic mistake people make when they reject Jesus as Lord and Savior, and reject the Redeemer of the world.

Sentence was given. Jesus was handed over to be crucified. The full weight of the law was brought down upon Jesus. He was scourged, a brutal punishment, painful beyond imaging, and then Jesus was sentenced to die by crucifixion. This was in violation of Roman law. No one, not even the worst offender, was to be subjected to both scourge and cross. Even the heartless Romans thought that to be too extreme.

Extreme describes the sentence pronounced upon Jesus, the Redeemer of the world. Not only was Jesus to be crucified and the Scriptures thereby were fulfilled, and Jesus own words concerning the manner of death He would endure were fulfilled, but the wrath of divine justice, the full unbridled curse of God Almighty was brought down upon Jesus as the Redeemer of the world was sentenced to death.

“Alas! And did my Savior bleed, And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head For such a worm as I?”

“Was it for crimes that I had done He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown, And love beyond degree!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 154:1,2)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.