

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 23:13-25

Reading: Mark 15:1-15

Parallel Passages: Matthew 27:20-26 and Mark 15:1-15

Sermon #101

November 15, 2020

Condemned, Jesus Stood In The Sinners Place

Three Factors Of Influence

In today's passage we observe Pilate finds himself up against a rock and a hard place. Part of him wants to do the right thing and serve as a just judge over Jesus, yet he knows that he also must keep the peace; his job was simply to keep the peace and it was proving to not be easy. Peace was illusive because Pilate had made some bad choices so far in his rule over the Jews. When he entered Jerusalem the first time, he came with an attitude that he would show them who was boss. He came with the full pomp and splendor of a Roman Ruler with banners with Roman symbols and mottos. One such motto was Hail Caesar another was Hail Caesar God. He specifically rubbed the Jew's noses in Caesar as God and from the beginning and they hated Pilate for his strong-handed rule. He even had the arrogance to place Roman banners in the Temple. This act caused the Jewish leadership to go to the Emperor and complain. Emperor Tiberius, after hearing the Jew's complaints made Pilate remove the banners from the Temple, embarrassing Pilate and increasing his hatred for the Jews. On another occasion it is reported that Pilate even spent money that belonged to the Temple treasury for one of his building projects. Then there was the event reported in Luke 13 when Pilate massacred Jews right inside the Temple compound. These acts also caused the Jewish leadership to go to Tiberius and demand that something be done about Pilate. These acts and the intervention of Tiberius humiliated Pilate and gave the

Jews the idea that if they screamed loud enough and threaten Pilate with going to Caesar, they could get their way.

It should have been an easy assignment; all Pilate had to do is keep the peace. Yet, it seemed to Tiberius that Pilate was actually adding to the problem by his arrogance and lack of leadership. It appeared that one more uprising and Pilate may be looking for another job. So, there was 3 factors influencing what was happening in the trials and judgment of Jesus.

First, you have the **Roman Factor**; seeking control over the Jewish people and a weak politician being manipulated and trying to jockey to strengthen his position. Then, you also have the **Jewish Factor**; the stubborn works-oriented religious leaders working hard to retain power and position. These religious leaders know if they press Pilate, they will get their way, especially if Pilate thinks they might go directly to Tiberius. The people were easily manipulated by the Jewish religious leaders who used their hatred of the Romans. But none of these “Factors” can change the **Divine Factor**.

Primary Theme: *The crucifixion of Christ, is the great exchange for our sins and was planned by the Triune God from before creation to be carried out by sinful men.*

It is difficult, at times, when evil events in life seem to be getting the upper hand, to understand that the truth is; everything accomplishes God’s will and moves the world toward the completion of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind and Christ’s eternal rule. Paul tells us, “we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**” (Romans 8:28) The prophet Ezra wrote, “**The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.**” (Ezra

8:22) One purpose for evil is that it shows us our desperate need for a Savior because it becomes apparent, we cannot save ourselves. When we endure hardships, we are to be encouraged because God is working His plan and His plan will ultimately bless us as His children.

We also have another great need to understand; we stand condemned before God as guilty sinners. Our sins must be accounted and paid for. Our only hope is for someone to pay for our sins. Jesus Christ died the death that we should have died. We should have been on the cross. We are the guilty ones, not Him. Oh, my beloved, think of the mercy God shows humans at the cross.

Pray

My beloved, let us study and hear with our souls God's Word and may it affect us eternally.

The Roman Factor (v. 13-16)

Reading the gospel accounts, it is clear that Pilate's will was to release Jesus. Here is our passage from Luke, this is the first time the people are mentioned in this trial. The people would, in fact, play a very big role in the crucifixion of Jesus. We are not sure why at this point the people were also summoned. Perhaps Pilate thought they might listen to reason, if so, he was wrong. Maybe the Jewish leaders thought a growing crowd would give weight to their demand the Jesus be executed.

Let me begin by reading Luke, chapter 23, beginning at verse 13, "Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your

charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore punish and release him.”

From reading all 4 gospel accounts it does not appear that Pilate and Herod agreed on much before Jesus’ trial. Both men, as wicked and crooked as they were, declared Jesus to be innocent. And yet, here stands Pilate just about to condemn an innocent Man to please the people. Perhaps he sought to please the mob in order to avoid another conflict that might bring Roman authorities to judge his ability to rule.

Pilate tried declaring Jesus innocent but that did not work. He tried sending Jesus to King Herod and that did not work. He tried to declare Him innocent again and again even telling the people that Herod agreed that Jesus was innocent, that did not work. Finally, he said that he would punish Jesus and release Him and that did not work. Do you realize how corrupt Pilate is? He says, he will punish Jesus, an innocent Man, just to get the people to get off his back and leave him alone.

Pilate came to realize that Jesus’ enemies were not interested in justice. So, the only way out of this mess, he thought, was to punish an innocent man. He would soon find out that even this was not enough, they wanted Jesus dead. Through this shifting of responsibility over judging Jesus it becomes clear that the crucifixion of Jesus was planned by God and carried out by sinful men.

The Jewish Factor (v.18-25)

Pilate desired to release Jesus, but the people influenced by the Jewish leaders desired that Jesus be crucified. To be honest if you and I were there, we would most likely would have been in the crowd and also desire Jesus to be

crucified. Without the Holy Spirit to guide us, in our natural fallen state we gravitate towards sin. How many people do we interact with who are not believers and we observe them being swayed by other people; by politicians, by media, TV and the internet? They are swayed and influenced by these sources that often are not founded in facts and truth.

Verse 18 explains that there is solidarity between the Jewish leadership and the people of Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin, Scribes, Elders, Pharisees, and all the people together cry out for Jesus' blood. The Greek word in verse 18 translated as "They all cried out together" is *pamplēthēi* (pam·play·thi) meaning in complete agreement with each other. This situation with Jesus is getting dangerous for Pilate because of the unity between the Jewish leaders and the people. The last thing Pilate needs is for a riot to break out or a rebellion to be birthed.

Reading Luke 23 at verse 18, "But they all cried out together, 'Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas'—¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they kept shouting, 'Crucify, crucify him!' ²² A third time he said to them, 'Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.' ²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will."

Things are getting dicey but Pilate thinks quickly of the tradition observed at every Passover. As Governor, Pilate would release one prisoner at Passover each year, whomever the Jews selected. This was Pilate's way of keeping with the spirit

of Passover, where sinners were set free. We read of this tradition in Mark's gospel account, ⁶“Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’ ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.” Pilate most likely thought, *surlly this will get me out of this tight spot*. Certainly, the people will not want to see an innocent person put to death. However, he was wrong, again. We take up our reading at verse 11 “But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, ‘Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’ ¹³ And they cried out again, ‘Crucify him.’ ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, ‘Why? What evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him.’ ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.” (Mark 15:6-15) I would like you to notice the hypocrisy.

The Jews handed Jesus over to Pilate and the false charges, one of the main charges that they thought would be interest to the Romans, was the charge of insurrection. Pilate and Herod declared Jesus innocent of insurrection. All the Gospel writers make the point that the man being released, Barabbas, was actually guilty of insurrection - the very crime Jesus was accused. The innocent will die and the guilty goes free.

Do you find it intriguing, as I do, that Jesus was put to death in the place of a sinner? The innocent for the guilty. So much so, that Barabbas was to be crucified between what appears to be two of his friends. The thieves may have been part of the band of thieves and murderers who Barabbas led and the 3 were scheduled to

be crucified together. Mark tells us in verse 7, “among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.” Jesus took his place and Barabbas went free. You and I were guilty of insurrection against God and Jesus took our place on the cross and we are made free and have been given eternal life. Another interesting fact is what the name Barabbas means; **Bar** mean “son of” and **abbas** means “father”. So, Jesus, son of God the Father went to die in the place of another who was named “son of the father”. Sadly, we read in verse 24, “So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.” This brings us back to the theme I wanted you to lock onto at the beginning of this message; *The crucifixion of Christ, is the great exchange for our sins and was planned by the Triune God from before creation to be carried out by sinful men.*

The Devine Factor

All that Pilate tried and all that the Jewish leadership tried and all that the people were doing fell perfectly into the divine will of God. Jesus would not have been crucified if it were not for the plan of God. There were way too many factors in this abuse of Jesus and the timing of some many elements comprising this event to just happen or even for men to have had control. We must see, this is God’s divine plan being orchestrated and evil men seeking their sinful desires carrying it out. For example, what did the prophet of God, Isaiah write as God instructed him concerning Jesus’ trial and crucifixion; ³“He, *Jesus* was despised and rejected by men ... ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... ⁵ upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace ... ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and 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; ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; ... stricken for the transgression of my people? ... ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt ... the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:3-10) When Pilate turns Jesus over to be crucified Luke says it is the will of the people. Peter states clearly this is both the acts of men, the Roman and Jewish Factor and the God Factor; all, every act fulfills the will of God. In the book of Acts we read, ²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:22-23) Evil men crucified Christ but it was God’s glorious plan they were carrying out.

Because of the cross, we have experienced a wonderful exchange; our sin for Christ’s righteousness. In the trial of our Lord we see this illustrated. Barabbas was in prison for murder and insurrection, he was in prison for sins he had already committed, he was guilty. Barabbas is not just an individual man; he represents the entire human race, fallen, sinful and separated from God. The human race is in and will remain in rebellion against God until the day of judgment. When you think of Barabbas; a murderer and a sinner against both man and God, please understand Barabbas is us. Luke makes clear Barabbas is guilty of every crime and that Jesus, is innocent, but was accused of evil. Jesus took Barabbas’ place on the cross and he took our place. It is doubtful if Barabbas, once released, changed his life and worshipped God, mostly likely, he continued in sin. Jesus died for the sins of the entire human race. What does that mean for you and me? Jesus has taken your place on the cross so you might be reconciled back to God. However, you will not

be changed or saved unless you surrender your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Understand the most wicked sin ever committed, the crucifying of the pure, sinless and holy Son of God, that horrible act of sin, produced the greatest good the world has been made aware of and the chosen have experienced. Jesus died that people might be reconciled back to God; Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.

Now that you have come to understand the dynamics of Jesus' trials, put yourself into Barabbas's place. What would be going through your mind as you sat in your prison cell waiting to die of crucifixion. You have been there waiting, day after day. You cannot sleep because your nightmares only intensify your fear. You know that time is passing and the hour of your death is drawing near. Then, without warning, the prison guard enters with the key. Rather than leading you away for the scourging and crucifixion, he unlocks your shackles and tells you that you are free to go. As Paul wrote, **"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."** (Galatians 5:1) Did Barabbas remain a slave to sin – we will not know until heaven. Our Lord was also clear, **"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** (John 8:36) But our freedom comes with a price; Jesus died for our sins and we must submit our lives to Christ. We must become slaves serving Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As Paul taught, ²² **"For he who was called in the Lord as a *slave* is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a *slave* of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become *slaves* of men. ²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God."** (1 Corinthians 7:22-24) Jesus said clearly He is the only way to be reconciled to God, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** (John 14:6)

Brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ today, you have been set free by Christ and you are also a slave serving God for His glory. May we love, honor, and

obey our Savior Jesus Christ until we join Him in heaven. Take time now to examine your hearts, pray to the Lord and prepare to partake in the Lord's Supper.