

In Nomine Iesu

MW Lent 2, The Path of our Lord's Exodus: Jesus is accused in Pilate's court – Luke 22:66 – 23:5

“When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ‘If you are the Christ, tell us.’ But he said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ So they all said, ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’ And he said to them, ‘You say that I am.’ Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.’

“Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.’ And Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ And he answered him, ‘You have said so.’ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no guilt in this man.’ But they were urgent, saying, ‘He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even this place.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

“When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council.” That is to say, they officially convened the council, the Sanhedrin, now that it was day, so they could – in a superficially lawful way – render judgement on Jesus. There would be no actual trial. The trial had already happened in the darkness of the night before at Caiaphas's house. The verdict had been decided then and there.

They asked Jesus the question He had been answering again and again with all His words and deeds for the last three and a half years: “If you are the Christ, tell us.” To this He answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe.” So, He leaves them with these fearful words, “From now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” In other words, He will answer their question once and for all, in a way they will fully understand. He will answer them on Judgment Day.

It is difficult if not impossible for us to understand the depth and immovability of unbelief. You may know someone, even someone very close to you, who will not believe. He or she may even become angry and abusive to any of your pleading. And you may find ourselves thinking, “It would take a miracle - a major miracle - for this one to believe.” And, do you know, that is right. It would take a miracle. In fact, it does take a miracle. It takes a miracle for any of us to believe. That is the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures. It is why the Apostle Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17) The creation of faith in the human heart takes a miracle, which

only the power of God can accomplish. It takes a miracle as great as that of God creating the heavens and earth out of nothing, as Martin Luther once said.

But Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, came into the world for this purpose: to lead people to faith, to save sinners from themselves. So, He would give the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people one last miracle. He would speak to them no more. That was pointless. They will not listen. So, He will die before their very eyes, praying for them and for all as He is nailed to the cross they so wanted Him to be nailed to. He will suffer the very torments of hell in their sight. – “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And that will be His answer to them, His final statement to them and to all who do not believe.

But now, in the early morning light, the council is decided. Jesus is condemned. But they have no power to carry out the sentence. Only the Roman governor can. They must go to the governor and accuse Jesus. But there is a problem. The Romans care nothing about the religion of the Jewish people. The council’s hatred of Jesus is of no more interest to Rome than the rivalry between Pharisees and Sadducees. Rome is interested in only two things: civil order and tribute, that is, control and money. And so, to accomplish their purpose, the council has to accuse Jesus in a way that will catch the attention of Pilate and compel him to act as they want. They want Jesus crucified. They want the ruler of the world, the Roman emperor, through his imperial governor, to pronounce sentence of death and carry it out for all the world to see - so great is the guilt of Jesus in the minds and hearts of the council.

In a very real way, they are right about the accused and the seriousness of the sins He carries. But they are right for all the wrong reasons. Consider the accusation. Luke relates their words, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” The irony is that it was the chief priests, scribes, and elders who were misleading the nation. In reality, they were heaping the guilt of their own sins on Jesus, which He, the Lamb of God, accepted in order to be their substitute and suffer their penalty.

It is further ironic that the leaders of God’s own chosen nation, expressed their desire to pay tribute to Caesar, a man whom Romans called divine, rather than to Jesus, whom their very own scriptures showed to be divine, to be the Messiah, the Son of God and Son of Man. So in truth, they were turning the testimony of God’s word on its head, calling up down and down up, and themselves committing the very blasphemy against God of which they accused Jesus.

Finally, it is the supreme irony that they accuse Him of calling Himself the Christ, the promised Son of David, when in fact it was all Jerusalem that called Him their King only four days ago. The chief priests, elders, and scribes had all raged against the words coming from their people. “Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Pilate knew all this. And he wanted nothing to do with sitting in judgment of Jesus. But he could not escape the responsibilities of his office. His was the final authority in this matter. Jesus had been placed under Pilate’s - Caesar’s - authority, and willingly stepped forward to accept the blame

for everyone's guilt. Thanks be to God that Jesus did just that, and continued to walk the path of His exodus ... **for us**. Amen

Soli Deo Gloria