

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **MW Lent 4, The Path of our Lord's Exodus: Jesus is tried before Rome's tribunal – Luke 23:13-25**

“Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 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. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him.’ But they all cried out together, ‘Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas’— a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’ 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.’ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So, Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. 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.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, who came into the world to conquer sin and death and lead us out of bondage to them in life everlasting. Dear fellow redeemed:

+++

Pontius Pilate had remanded Jesus to Herod, whose jurisdiction included Galilee, in hope that Herod would take responsibility for the Galilean carpenter's son. But Herod had declined to do so and sent Jesus back to Pilate wearing a gorgeous robe intended to mock the very idea of His being a king.

So, the Roman governor was not a happy man that troubled Friday, the day before the great Jewish festival of Passover. He was not happy to see Jesus returned to his tribunal by Herod. He was not happy because Jerusalem was filled to overflowing with pilgrims, frayed tempers, and guilty consciences; and he was responsible for keeping order. He was not happy because he knew that of the three men brought to him for judgment one was totally innocent of the charges against Him, the One who was the focus of most pilgrims, many frayed tempers, and more than a few guilty consciences, of which his was one. What is more, as events transpired it was evident from the behavior and demands of chief priests and elders that he was sure not only that Jesus was innocent of any crime deserving of death, but that Jesus was no ordinary resident of this Roman province.

The more Pilate learned about Jesus, the more fearful he became. He tried mightily to talk the crowd out of the injustice they demanded from him. But however great his fear of Jesus was, his fear of the mob gathered before him that day was greater. That is why he chastised Jesus so severely with scourging, beatings, and a mocking crown of thorns - surely an odd way to treat an innocent man – in the hope that the crowd's thirst for vengeance on Jesus could be quenched and crucifixion avoided. But they would have none of it. Their demands grew louder and more threatening.

How would it look if he, the Roman governor, lost control of the situation? How would it look if there was a bloody riot, perhaps even an open rebellion against Roman authority? How would it sound in the imperial capital if Caiaphas and his allies, who had many influential friends in Rome – one even close to the emperor himself - wrote letters saying Pilate had refused to condemn a man who claimed to be king? Pilate had a lot to lose. He was the governor. And Palestine was far, far from the corridors of power in Rome ... where careers were either made or lost.

At the same time Pilate could not bring himself to condemn this Man. He could not look Him in the eye and sentence Him to death. So, he chose what seemed to him to be the only option left to him, one that would appease his distraught wife, allow him to give in to the mob without appearing to do so, and escape the presence of this extraordinary Man who seemed to be with no fear of him as governor, but rather made him so uncomfortable. He would publicly wash his hands of the whole affair, declaring himself to be innocent of what was about to take place. So, Pilate did just that. But whatever relief he might have felt in doing this, Pilate knew in his heart that he was indeed implicated in everything. For by publicly washing his hands in answer to the mob's demands, he became as guilty of sentencing Jesus to death as Caiaphas and the mob he and the elders were inciting.

Pilate struggled mightily to escape the responsibility of his office. But he could not, for you see, it was God's gracious will that Pilate, as governor, the highest governmental authority in Roman Palestine, condemn Jesus, condemn Him for being a King, the very King promised to Israel through His father David. It was God's will that the judgment of Caiaphas, as high priest of Israel, be rendered on Jesus, so that his prophetic words spoken as high priest would be true: that it was expedient that one should die for the people, the One who was the Son of God and Son of Man. It was God's will that the iniquity of us all be laid on this Lamb of God to whom John the Baptist had pointed to more three years before, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who bears the sins of the world." And so the eternal Father, who as Jesus had said, is greater than all, moved the world through the kingdom of His left hand, represented by Pilate, and through the kingdom of His right hand, represented by Caiaphas, to accomplish just that, to condemn His Son for the sins of us all.

Just as God Himself brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt into the promised land of Canaan through His servant Moses, so was He now leading all nations out of the bondage of sin, death, and hell into eternal life, through His Son Jesus the Christ. Luke would go on to tell the truth of these things by recording Jesus' own words from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." In this way, Pilate's own actions, the washing of his hands to proclaim his innocence, would be extended to us all as the Savior of the world proclaimed us innocent. And Caiaphas' prophecy would find its complete fulfillment as this One Man was sacrificed for us all. Join us next week as we take another step with Jesus on the path of His exodus, which He accomplished for our sake, for our salvation. Amen

**Soli Deo Gloria**