

INI Hymns:
6th Wednesday of Lent **Luke23:23-25**
Tonight we see how **Before the Mob, Jesus was Sentenced!**

Sermon 25-L6
4/9/25

23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. 25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

So Pilate did it! He gave in to the demands of the mob and sentenced Jesus to be crucified. You might wonder how Pilate could knowingly sentence an innocent man to death? But that’s not for us to judge! We are not in his shoes. Pilate was stuck in a terrible position. He didn’t want to sentence Jesus to death. He tried everything he could think of to release Him, but the Jews were relentless. Even though it was still quite early in the morning, before 6 a.m., people started gathering. There was a lot of commotion with people shouting, shuttling Jesus to Herod and back to Pilate and the crowds were gathering. Remember, this was right during the Passover when over a million additional people were in Jerusalem. There was no way to keep this secret anymore.

It seems Pilate tried to appeal to the sympathy of the crowd. He brought Jesus out to them, covered in blood from head to toe from the brutal beating, hoping that they would be satisfied that He had already suffered enough. It may have worked except Mark tells us “The chief priests stirred up the crowd.” They worked the crowd up into a frenzy of shouting and it became a blood thirsty mob who would settle for nothing less than Jesus’ crucifixion.

Pilate could see that a tumult was rising. It had become a mob. Pretty soon Pilate would have an all out riot on his hands and things would probably start getting violent if he didn’t give them what they wanted. So, reluctantly, Pilate finally washed his hands of the whole thing and gave in to the demands of the mob and sentenced Jesus to death. Not that it wasn’t right. It was a terrible injustice, but would we do any differently?

Notice Jesus’ response to all this. He didn’t exactly excuse Pilate, but he seems to be trying to relieve Pilate’s fears. When Pilate seemed insistent on releasing Jesus, the Jews finally told him the real reason they wanted Jesus killed, saying, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God,” Pilate was even more afraid. What if this really is the Son of God? So he asked Jesus, “Where are You from?” Jesus remained silent. He didn’t try to play into Pilate’s fear. He didn’t plead for His life. He seemed to try to put Pilate at ease. Jesus remained silent, so Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?” That’s when Jesus said, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who

delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” The Jews who wrongly accused and condemned Jesus and were demanding His death were much more to blame.

In reality, Jesus did not want Pilate to let Him go. Remember, Jesus had told His disciples that He MUST be Crucified. So the real question is not, “How could Pilate condemn an innocent man to death.” The real question is, “How could God justify the ungodly and condemn an innocent man in their place?”

We have been saying all along that Jesus was fulfilling the Justice of God, but how can that be justice? How can God be just and righteous and yet justify of the ungodly? Paul says in Romans 3:23-24. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” All the sinners of the world are justified. That’s good news for us, but how can that be justice? Then a verse later he said, “In His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.” A just God can’t simply “pass over” sin acting like it didn’t happen?

Paul goes on to explain how God can be “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” He says, “God set forth [Jesus] as a propitiation by His blood, . . . to demonstrate His righteousness.” Rom 3:25-26 It’s all in that word propitiation! It’s a shame that so few people understand the meaning of that word because it is not used any more in any other context. The simple definition is that it is a “payment.” But more specifically it is a sacrifice of atonement to appease the wrath of God over sin. Every sin is an assault on God’s holiness and justice. Every sin requires a just punishment. Yet God still loves the sinners. God did not condemn an innocent man the way Pontius Pilate did. Rather, as a gracious God, He chose to bear that punishment Himself and God the Son came to this world to take our place. God was not unjust in justifying the ungodly. Instead He satisfied true justice by making the payment for sin.

Now let’s think about what this means for the Mob that demanded Jesus’ crucifixion and for us. Jesus told Pilate that the blood thirsty mob that was demanding His death had the greater sin. Is there any greater sin than demanding the execution of God’s own Son with such hatred? What could be a greater sin than that? Yet Jesus willingly died even for them. We see the result of that on Pentecost. Peter spoke to the crowd of people that had gathered on that occasion, likely many of the same people. Peter said, “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, . . . **you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.**” Acts 2:22-23 Yet, in that same sermon, Peter was offering God’s grace and forgiveness to them. God was inviting them to repent and be baptized and have all their “greater” sins forgiven. Peter could offer that because Jesus truly paid for their sin also.

The so called mob mentality is strong. People often join in doing things that they would not ordinarily do. Some of the people in this mob probably didn’t even know what was really going on. They just joined in shouting for Jesus to be crucified. How much

are we influenced by the crowds of popular opinion? We have been seeing in our Bible Class, how many churches set their teachings based on what seems right to them rather than on what God's word actually says. And what seems right is usually determined by the prevailing attitudes and feelings of the society you live in.

It's not just others though. Moses said, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice." Exodus 23:2 Yet how many of us, especially when we were younger, have done things we knew were wrong, but we went along with the group? Do you still look back on those times with regret? We ought regret our foolish and compulsive sins. That is what keeps us determined not to repeat them. But we don't need to carry the burden of guilt for them any longer. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. He has made the payment for them all. Therefore God does forgive us for all the times we went along with the crowd and did things we now regret.

Therefore, let's not be critical of Pilate, or even judgmental of the mob of Jews, for we have all been in the same place. We are all just as guilty. Rather let us look at Jesus, our glorious Saviour. See how He didn't try to save Himself. He silently, willingly, endured the beating, the hatred, the mockery and even the crucifixion in order to make atonement for our sins. Truly as Isaiah said, "He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. 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." Isaiah 53:4-6 What a Saviour! Praise Him!

Amen.