

Luke 23A

- Jesus' long night (or nightmare) continues, as we return to Luke's account of the midnight trial of Jesus
 - Last week we examined the religious trial
 - A two-part affair, some might say a three part affair,
 - With Jesus tried once at the home of the first high priest, Annas
 - The a second time at the home of the other high priest, Caiaphas, and members of the Sanhedrin
 - Finally, Caiaphas moves the Sanhedren trial into the Temple at dawn to make the verdict official give some credibility to an otherwise joke of a trial
 - In the end, the religious leaders reach the pre-determined verdict of guilt and pronounce the death sentence upon Jesus
 - But as we discussed last week, the Jews were powerless in their own land to actually carry out this verdict
 - They must appeal to the Romans to gain their agreement with the verdict and to carry out the sentence of death
 - Thus the stage has been set for the trial before Pilate
- We studied the first five verses of Chapter 23 last week, and I will re-read them now simply to give us context and we move forward in the text

[Luke 23:1](#) ¶ Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

[Luke 23:2](#) And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

[Luke 23:3](#) So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*"

[Luke 23:4](#) Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

[Luke 23:5](#) But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

- By way of review, we need to cover two things from last week
 - First, we noted that the Jews did not bring to Pilate the same charge they used against Jesus in their religious trial
 - At the religious trial, they convicted Jesus of blasphemy, and wrongly so of course
 - But here, they do not mention the charge of blasphemy
 - Instead, they toss out an assortment of civil charges hoping something will stick and prompt Pilate to act against Jesus
 - In fact, John in his gospel tells us that their first tactic with Pilate was to not even name a charge against Jesus in the expectation that Pilate would just go along with whatever they wanted
 - But Pilate isn't playing their game
 - He sees the pathetic person of Jesus before him, bloodied, beaten, obviously not a warrior or revolutionary
 - And he quickly determines that whatever Jesus did to upset the Jewish leaders, he certainly isn't a threat to Rome
 - He says I find no guilt in this man
 - The second thing to remember from last week is the important detail in verse 5.
 - In the tirade of charges against Jesus, the Jewish leaders blurt out that the man has been teaching all the way from Galilee to Judea
 - This comment got Pilate's attention

[Luke 23:6](#) ¶ When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

[Luke 23:7](#) And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

- The Jews' reference to the Galilee gave Pilate a convenient opportunity to pass the buck
 - And it introduces a new character into the drama - Herod
 - At the time of Jesus' death, Rome ruled most of Judea through governors or procurators who held the power of life and death over the province
 - These leaders were agents appointed by Rome to police the people and collect taxes
 - They usually had a small contingent of Roman soldiers at their disposal (about 3000)
 - And these men often took a variety of titles
 - Usually governor or prefect
 - Occasionally tetrarch or ethnarch
 - And in a couple of occasions, these men might gain the title of King of the Jews, either by self-decree or as a result of a decree of the Roman senate
 - One of these men, Herod the Great, was appointed to rule Judea from 37 - 4BC
 - He began as governor of Galilee in 43 BC and eventually rose to power through artful politics with Mark Antony and Octavian
 - And the Roman senate elected him King of the Jews in 37 BC
 - Though he claimed to be a Jew, he was actually descended from the Edomites, Esau
 - So he was never accepted by Jews as a true king, but his power and legacy are still well known today
 - When Herod the great died in 4BC, the kingdom of Judea was divided into fourths
 - Three of Herod's sons were appointed as tetrarchs by Rome to rule over these fourths,

- Archelaus gained two fourths of the kingdom including Judea and Samaria
 - Herod Antipas became ruler of the northern part of Judea, known as Galilee
 - Herod Philip received modern day Syria & Lebanon
- Herod Philip was the one accused of immorality by John the Baptist
- By the time of the events of Luke 23, Herod Archelaus had been disposed by Rome for excessive cruelty to the Jews and for offenses against the Mosaic Law
 - In Archelaus' place, the Romans continued to rule Judea directly through Roman governors like Pilate
- Leaving only Herod Antipas remaining to share power in Judea
 - So the Herod mentioned here in Luke 23 is Herod Antipas, ruler of the Galilee
- Like Pilate, Herod didn't live in Jerusalem but had traveled down to be in town for the Passover
 - Pilate was there to keep the peace and Herod was there presumably to honor the Passover since his family claimed to be Jewish royalty
 - So the mention of the Galilee gives Pilate an easy way to offload this problem
 - He sends Jesus to Herod, since technically Jesus is subject to Herod's authority
 - Now remember, the right to imposed capital punishment on Jesus inside Judea still belonged to Pilate
 - So even were Herod to declare that Jesus should be put to death, it would require Pilate to issue the order
 - Nevertheless, Pilate is giving Herod the chance to make the first decision about Jesus' disposition

[Luke 23:8](#) ¶ Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

[Luke 23:9](#) And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

[Luke 23:10](#) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

[Luke 23:11](#) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

[Luke 23:12](#) Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

- We saw mentioned way back in Chapter 9 of Herod's interest in meeting Jesus
 - Ever since the storied of Jesus' miracles had reached Herod after the execution of John the Baptist, Herod has wanted to meet Jesus
 - And it was in Chapter 13 that the Pharisees had tried to keep Jesus from traveling to Jerusalem by claiming that Herod was seeking to kill Jesus
 - And now Jesus stands before Herod
 - Obviously, Herod's only interest in Jesus was as a magician or miracle worker
 - Herod certainly had no spiritual interest in Jesus
 - So when he received Jesus, he took some time to question Jesus , about what we can't be sure
 - Interestingly, the chief priests and scribes were there as well continually to accuse Jesus
 - These guys are following Jesus everywhere He is sent and continue to do their best to obtain some kind of conviction or charge against Him
 - Do you see the work of the enemy at work here?
 - These men were being used by the enemy to accomplish Satan's purpose in his battle against God
 - They are puppets, and Jesus refuses to participate in this scheme of the Devil

- He merely submits patiently to the abuse
 - Can you imagine how spiritually dark that room must have been?
- Inevitably, the interrogation turns into sport, as Herod encourages his soldiers to mock and abuse Jesus
 - Then as an inside joke to Pilate, Herod returns Jesus dressed in an elegant robe
 - As Luke mentions, Herod had long been enemies with Pilate
 - The reason probably stemmed from Herod's connection to his father Herod the Great
 - As a descendent of the great king Herod, Antipas desired to be elevated to the position his father held – King of the Jews, ruler of Judea
 - But if he were to ever obtain that title from the Roman Senate, it would be displacing the Roman governor Pilate
 - So naturally, each man was suspicious of the other
 - But by sending Jesus to Herod, Pilate had sent the equivalent of an olive branch to Herod
 - It was a tacit recognition of Herod's authority over the Galilee that Pilate would send Jesus to him for judgment
 - And Pilate probably also knew that Herod had a personal interest in Jesus
 - Herod had absolutely no appreciation of the importance of who Jesus was
 - Jesus was just an insignificant figure of passing interest to Herod
 - But the fact that Pilate had been willing to submit to Herod's authority was a hugely significant event to Herod
 - So after entertaining himself at Jesus' expense for a short time, Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate dressed as if Jesus were King of the Jews
 - The message here was unmistakable for Pilate

- Just as Pilate had shown Herod respect by recognizing Herod's authority
- Now Herod returned the favor in a playful way by sending the "King of the Jews" back to Pilate to submit to his authority
- It was a way suggesting that Herod's desire for kingship was not to be a threat to Pilate's rule
- And so they became friends
- The end of Herod's life offers an interesting contrast to the events of Luke 23
 - Herod never gave up hope to become king of the Jews
 - You may remember Herod's wife, Herodius
 - She was the one who had used seduction to get her husband to put John the Baptist to death
 - And likewise, she eventually convinced her husband to travel to Rome to appeal to Caesar to be made king of the Jews
 - When Herod appears before Caligula, instead of receiving the title king, Herod and Herodius are disposed from power and banished to Gaul (western Europe)
 - They both die there living in poverty
 - So though Herod stands over Jesus in power and wealth as Jesus stands pitifully weak and humble
 - At the end of his life, Herod lived as a pauper, destitute
 - And upon his judgment day, Herod will stand before the very same Jesus who once stood before him
 - And Jesus will pronounce Herod's sentence to his shame
 - Ultimate justice isn't found in this life, but it is found

[Luke 23:13](#) ¶ Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, [Luke 23:14](#) and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

[Luke 23:15](#) “No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.

[Luke 23:16](#) “Therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”

[Luke 23:17](#) [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]

[Luke 23:18](#) ¶ But they cried out all together, saying, “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!”

[Luke 23:19](#) (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)

[Luke 23:20](#) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,

[Luke 23:21](#) but they kept on calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify Him!”

[Luke 23:22](#) And he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt *demanding* death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”

[Luke 23:23](#) But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices *began* to prevail.

[Luke 23:24](#) And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

[Luke 23:25](#) And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

- After receiving Jesus back from Herod, the civil trial concludes where it started – with Pilate
 - Pilate brings the religious leaders together and the people, we’re told
 - And Pilate works incredibly hard to avoid crucifying Jesus
 - As with the earlier religious trial, we need to look at the other Gospels to understand all that happens at this point, because Luke records only an abbreviated portion of it
 - Pilate’s first attempt to release Jesus is recorded in verse 13 through 16
 - The reason is simple: Pilate sees no basis to condemn this man – he’s been found innocent of sedition or treason
 - The Luke make s a passing reference to Pilate’s second attempt to release Jesus
 - In Mark we see a more complete picture of this second attempt, which involved a murderer name Barrabas

[Mark 15:7](#) The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.

[Mark 15:8](#) The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them.

[Mark 15:9](#) Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”

[Mark 15:10](#) For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

[Mark 15:11](#) But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead.

- Pilate attempts to force the crowd into selecting Jesus by offering as their only alternative a man named Barabbas
 - Barabbas was a murderer and insurrectionist
 - Not a man loved by anyone, and certainly not someone who the crowd would have naturally preferred to see released
 - Pilate is banking on the crowd choosing Jesus over Barrabas for release
 - The name Barabbas means son of the father
 - Interestingly, some sources claim that Barabbas’s full name was Jesus Barabbas
 - So Jesus Son of the Father stands next to Jesus son of the father
 - Both accused of sedition or rebellion against Rome
 - The crowd chose life for the imposter and death for the truth Son
 - We’re also told that Pilate had become aware that the real motive of the religious leaders was envy against Jesus
 - Pilate had come to understand that Jesus wasn’t a true threat to anyone except to the power of the religious leaders
 - And so Pilate had no interest in allowing these leaders to manipulate him
 - But Mark records their manipulation in verse 11
 - These leaders were the ones working the crowd to persuade them to ask for Barabbas over Jesus

- And when the crowd again called out for Barabbas to be released, Pilate's second attempt to release Jesus was foiled
- But Pilate isn't done yet...he still sees no reason to give in to the demands of the leaders nor of the crowd they have incited
 - Luke's narrative simply notes that Pilate addressed them a third time asking what had Jesus done?
 - Pilate still doesn't understand the origin of the crowd's hatred of Jesus?
 - We have to go to John's gospel to see the details surrounding Pilate's third attempt to release Jesus

[John 19:1](#) ¶ Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.

[John 19:2](#) And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him;

[John 19:3](#) and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*.

[John 19:4](#) Pilate came out again and *said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

[John 19:5](#) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* *said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

[John 19:6](#) So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate *said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

- We can see Pilate's frustration growing here
 - After his second attempt to release Jesus, he takes Jesus out and has him scourged
 - This is a devastating form of punishment
 - A man is whipped forty times all over his body, not just his back
 - The whip has pieces of glass and metal tied to the end of the leather so that they cut deeply into the flesh ripping out pieces

- Creating deep lacerations
- It would cut away so much flesh that it often exposed bones or internal organs
- Scourging often result in death all by itself
 - And in fact in Isaiah tells us that Jesus was so disfigured, that he no longer had human likeness

[Is. 52:13](#) See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

[Is. 52:14](#) Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness —

[Is. 52:15](#) so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

- Then some inventive soldier thought it would be funny to give Jesus a crown
 - Only they made one of thorns
 - So that when they placed it on his head, the thorns stuck into his head, covering his face with blood
 - And then they struck him more and placed that same robe back on him
- With this having been done, Pilate now brings Jesus before the crowd again
 - We can now see Pilate's purpose in this plan
 - It's one of sympathy
 - How could a crowd not look upon this man in such a hideous state and not take pity on him
 - Pilate expects the crowd to see Jesus and be moved to compassion
 - And perhaps the tactic might have worked

- Because we're told it was the leaders who began the chanting again to have Jesus crucified
- Don't you get the impression that the crowd itself may have actually been silenced at first by the brutality evident in Jesus' wounds
- And sensing that the tide might be turning, the leaders step up their cries
- To this Pilate, says crucify him yourself
 - You can almost hear the disgust in Pilate's voice
 - He's disgusted at the relentless envy and conspiracy of these leaders
 - Despite all that Pilate has done to avoid an injustice, these men are determined to have Jesus' blood
- And so Pilate's attempt to free Jesus a third time is thwarted
- Then John tells us of a fourth attempt by Pilate to free Jesus

[John 19:7](#) The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God."

[John 19:8](#) ¶ Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was *even* more afraid;

[John 19:9](#) and he entered into the Praetorium again and *said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

[John 19:10](#) So Pilate *said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

[John 19:11](#) Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin."

[John 19:12](#) As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out *to be* a king opposes Caesar."

- Pilate had just told the Jews to crucify Jesus themselves
 - Which was really a flippant comment, because Pilate and everyone else knew they couldn't crucify Jesus – only Pilate could make that happen
 - And now the Jewish leadership drops all pretense and give Pilate the true reason they hate Jesus

- They refer to their own law, and say that Jesus has claimed to be the Son of God
- Having heard the true reason for their hatred of Jesus, Pilate grows afraid
 - He brings Jesus back into the Praetorium to question Him
 - Jesus refuses to answer his questions, and in his exasperation, Pilate says don't you know I can decide your fate
 - Jesus says you have no authority except as the Father has granted it
 - Therefore, the one who delivered me to you has the greater sin
- What a clear and compelling statement of God' sovereignty over the affairs of men
 - Pilate was doing only what God permitted
 - Was Pilate sinning? Yes, despite his awareness that Jesus was innocent, nevertheless he goes along with the Jews
 - Pilate shares in the guilt of the Messiah's death
 - But like all men, Pilate is an instrument of God
 - As creator, God has unrival authority over that creation, to include using the sin of men to accomplish His purpose
 - No good God vs bad God
 - All these events were foretold by God, directed by God and according to God's will
 - And even though Pilate didn't know that he was operating according to God's plan, he was
 - God doesn't require that we know what He's doing through us in order to be able to use us
 - It His grace that He allows us to be aware of His work through us

[Gen. 18:17](#) The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

- Then Jesus says that the sin of he who delivered Him was greater
 - Jesus could be speaking of Judas, but He could also be speaking of Caiaphas, since it was the High Priest’s verdict that directly led to Jesus coming before Pilate
 - His sin was greater on the basis that it was the High Priest and the other leaders who had determined to seek Jesus death
 - Pilate was simply to become the instrument of that death
 - God would use Pilate’s sin to bring Jesus to death
 - But God will ultimately hold the Jewish leader and the leadership overall responsible for the death of His Son
 - And the city of Jerusalem will be judged in AD 70 as a result of that sin
- Finally, in verse 12 the leaders pull out the last card they hold
 - They basically threaten Pilate
 - If he doesn’t side with them against Jesus, they will claim that he is not a friend of Caesar
 - Since anyone he doesn’t oppose a person claiming to be a king can’t be a friend of Caesar
 - Pilate came to power as a result of an influential Roman senator, Sejanus
 - Sejanus had been executed for treason, so now Rome was investigating any of Sejanus’ friends
 - Pilate would have been especially nervous about any accusation that he wasn’t Caesar’s friend
 - At this point, Pilate relents and sits in the judgment seat and declares that Jesus would be crucified
 - Matt and Mark include the detail that Pilate washed his hands before the crowd

- Could Pilate truly divorce himself from the sin of crucifying Jesus?
 - Jesus himself said Pilate's sin was less but not zero
- Just because a person can find others who prompt their behavior, it doesn't change the fact that they agreed to participate
- Pilate was guilty of putting Jesus to death
 - As was the Jewish crowd who took the advice of the leaders egging them on
 - And of course, the leaders themselves were the chief sinners
 - And so were you and I
 - For Jesus death was conceived and carried out by the Father as a response to your sin and mine
 - In a very real sense, it was you and I who called for His death from within that crowd
- Now consider that it was the Father who stood by all the time this took place and orchestrated the events to ensure the desired outcome of Jesus' death at the hands of these evil men
- What kind of God does this for His creation?
 - A God that demonstrates His love for us by this: that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.
- It's probably a little after 8:00 am on Thursday morning
 - Jesus is on his way to the cross...
 -