

Matthew 27A

- Today, we move to Jesus' second trial conducted by the Romans
 - Jesus has spent a sleepless night, first with His disciples at a Passover meal, then praying in the Garden and finally under arrest and at trial
 - The Jewish trial started with Annas, one of two high priests at that time, and then moved to Caiaphas, his replacement
 - These trials were shams, perversions of justice, that found an innocent man guilty of false charges
 - But Jesus has submitted to this charade in keeping with the Father's will to sacrifice His Son for the sins of the world
 - As the trial with Caiaphas ended, the Jewish authorities pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy, which was punishable by death
 - But the Romans did not allow the Jews to engage in capital punishment
 - So the Jewish authorities had to find a way to convince the Romans to put Jesus to death on their behalf
 - The Jews had charged Jesus with blasphemy, but Romans couldn't care less about a man blaspheming the Jewish God
 - So that necessitated the Jews accusing Jesus of a crime that was punishable by death *under Roman law*
- Therefore, our focus now shifts to the Romans and to the way the Jews manipulated the Roman authorities to bring Jesus to death
 - And like the Jewish trial, the Roman trial took place in two different places under the authority of two different men
 - First, Jesus will stand before the Roman governor of the province of Judea, a man called Pilate
 - Pilate is the true power of the province, and ultimately he condemns Jesus to death and sends Jesus to the cross
 - But along the way, Pilate does his best to wash his hands of the whole affair, both figuratively and literally

- So at one point Pilate sends Jesus to another authority, Herod Antipas, the supposed king of the Jews at that time
- Pilate hoped Herod would deal with Jesus in some way and leave Rome out of it, but in the end Herod just sends Jesus back
- Jesus' time before Herod is not recorded in Matthew's Gospel, so we won't cover it either in our study
- You can study the details of Jesus' movements between Pilate and Herod in Luke's Gospel
- Throughout the back and forth, the Jewish leaders remain determined to see Jesus die
 - And eventually they succeed in prodding a weak and vacillating Pilate into condemning Jesus against his better judgment
 - Matthew gives us only a brief overview of Jesus' time before Pilate, so we'll expand on the details as we go through it
- But before we get to the Roman trial, Matthew first returns to the subject of Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus in the Garden

[Matt. 27:1](#) Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death;

[Matt. 27:2](#) and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.

[Matt. 27:3](#) Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

[Matt. 27:4](#) saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"

[Matt. 27:5](#) And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

- Chapter 27 opens with morning dawning on the daytime of Passover, which was a Thursday morning in the year Jesus died, specifically April 10, 27 AD
 - Remember, Jewish days are counted sundown to sundown, so Passover began the night before at sundown on Wednesday
 - On that evening, each family observed a Passover meal and ate their family lamb, which had been sacrificed earlier in the day

- Then the next morning on the daytime of Passover, a single, national sacrificial lamb would be offered in the temple at 9 AM
- Only this year, there would be two national sacrifices taking place, one inside the temple and one outside the city
 - According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus was placed on the cross on the "third hour," using the Roman system for counting time or 9 AM
 - So as Jesus was nailed to the cross, at the same moment the national lamb died inside the temple
 - We'll study more about that moment later
- Meanwhile, the Jewish trial of Jesus before Annas and Caiaphas took place overnight during the pre-dawn hours of Thursday morning
 - And as that trial was ending and Jesus was being beaten in Caiaphas' home, Peter stood outside denying he knew Jesus
 - But when Peter issued his third denial, Peter heard that rooster begin crowing nearby as Jesus promised
 - Roosters typically start crowing shortly before sunrise
 - So that tells us Jesus' Jewish trial ended shortly before sunrise at about 6 AM or so
- So it's now roughly 6 AM on Thursday morning, the first hour of the Roman day, and in three hours Jesus will be on the cross
 - Jesus has spent the better part of five hours in the custody of the Jewish authorities before dawn, and now He's beaten, bloodied and bound
 - Jesus is marched from Caiaphas' home in the upper district of Jerusalem to Pilate's residence in the city
 - The Jews waited until daylight when Pilate was awake and in his office ready to receive visitors
 - Pilate normally lived in Caesarea, which was the seat of Roman government in Judea, located on the coast about 50 miles northwest
 - But during major feast days, Pilate would travel up to Jerusalem to be on hand in case of unrest in the city
 - Remember, Pilate's primary responsibility was keeping the peace in Judea, and Romans had learned that ruling Jews wasn't easy

- As millions of Jews flooded the city and surrounding area for the major feasts each year, feelings of nationalism ran high
- And the Jewish tendency to riot at the drop of a hat greatly increased, so it didn't take much to trigger unrest
- To keep the peace, Pilate brought additional soldiers to the city for Passover, and set up his Praetorium, or headquarters, at the Antonian Fortress
 - The Antonian Fortress was a Roman military fort that overlooked the Temple Mount in Jerusalem
 - Herod the Great built it to house Roman military forces in the city as part of his overall expansion of the Jewish temple
 - Rome had installed Herod the Great as the king of the Jews, so Herod needed Roman military forces nearby to protect himself
 - And on important feast days, like Passover, the fortress became the remote headquarters for the governor of the province
 - Therefore, on Passover each year, Pilate rose early and took his post in the fortress ready to deal with any rumor or charge of unrest quickly
 - Pilate was determined to see Passover come and go uneventfully without any disruption to the peace
 - During the previous night, the religious leaders had gone to Pilate with Judas to accuse Jesus of insurrection
 - Based on Judas' testimony, Pilate dispatched a cohort of soldiers to arrest Jesus that night
 - Now that morning has arrived, Pilate expects to see the prisoner presented to him so he can determine if the charges were true
 - That's why the Jewish religious leaders conducted their trial of Jesus overnight, though Jewish law prohibited trials at night
 - They knew Pilate would demand to see Jesus early Thursday morning, so they only had the overnight hours to try Jesus
- Now the Roman trial begins, and once again the Jewish authorities look to Judas expecting him to fulfill the second part of their bargain
 - As I mentioned, the Jewish religious leaders would need more than a charge of blasphemy to persuade Pilate that Jesus should die

- And that's where Judas came in again...Judas was paid to testify against Jesus before Pilate saying He sought to be king of Israel, etc.
- Judas wasn't needed at the Jewish trial, of course, because the religious leaders could find any number of ways to trap Jesus
- But Judas' testimony would be essential for the Roman trial...but at the last moment, their witness gets cold feet
- In v.3 Matthew says that Judas observes the Jewish trials and when he hears the verdict, suddenly Judas realizes that he is being manipulated
 - Judas recognizes that his testimony will be responsible for Jesus' death sentence, and apparently that had not been Judas' expectation
 - At this point, we wonder what did Judas *think* would happen to Jesus after Judas betrayed Him?
 - Perhaps Judas wasn't really thinking at all, especially at the prospect of receiving more than a month's wages
 - But now the weight of Judas' actions are coming to rest on his shoulders, so he feels remorse and decides he can't go through with it
 - Some of our Bible translations use the word "repent" instead of remorse, but that is not the best translation of the Greek here
 - There are two different Greek words in the New Testament that can be translated as repent
 - One of those Greek words, *metanoeo*, is always used when describing godly repentance or a sincere change of heart
 - But a second Greek word, *metamelomai*, describes worldly remorse in response to negative consequences
 - That's the word used here to describe Judas' reaction, so he's feeling worldly remorse, not godly repentance
 - Judas feels guilty for having sold out Jesus and he regrets the consequences that are now coming upon Jesus and himself
 - So Judas goes to the religious leaders to return the money and back out of his agreement to testify against Jesus
- In v.4 Judas recants his testimony before the religious leaders and says Jesus was innocent of the charges he made

- Judas is expecting that by returning the money and recanting his testimony, he could put a halt to Jesus' trial and reverse the damage
 - But Judas is foolishly assuming that these religious authorities were motivated by truth and justice in the first place
 - Obviously, they had been manipulating Judas' greedy heart from the beginning, and they aren't about to let Judas off so quickly
- So much to Judas' surprise, they respond by saying "What is that to us?"
 - In effect they are saying the same thing that Pilate will say to Jesus in John's Gospel: "What is truth?"
 - In other words, they will decide what is true and what is not true, not Judas
- And then at the end of v.4 they say "See to that yourself" but a better translation would be "you shall see," meaning you will see this through
 - In other words, they tell Judas he will testify to Pilate just as he promised to do
 - And they are also implying a threat...because if Judas violated his word to them, they had the power to kill him also
- So the religious leaders refuse to allow Judas to back out of his agreement and they warn him not to change his testimony
 - But Judas will not back down, so in v.5 Judas throws his money into the temple sanctuary as a protest against their conspiracy and he leaves
 - But Judas faces a dilemma...if he testifies, he will assure the success of the religious leaders' conspiracy against Jesus
 - On other hand, if he refuses to testify or recants his testimony on the stand, he knows he will likely be killed by the Jews
 - So Judas takes the only escape he has – suicide – preferring to die by his own hand than to suffer crucifixion or stoning
 - Much has been written about Judas' remorse and his choice to take his own life, and most of that conjecture ignores the context here
 - When we see Judas' situation for what it was...an unbeliever caught in a conspiracy and outfoxed by evil men...

- Then we can understand Judas' response: he was trapped by his own bad choices and forced to choose the lesser of two evils
- Judas was a devil, as Jesus says, who sought to make a quick buck but gave no thought to the consequences until it was too late
 - In that regard his story isn't much different than any unbeliever's life story...
 - Unbelievers live ignorant of the truth, manipulated by an unseen enemy, and unaware of the consequences until it's too late
 - And then the only path remaining is death...eternal death
- So what can we learn from Judas' experience? Although he was an unbeliever, I think he offers a clear lesson for believers: you can't compete with evil
 - If we allow ourselves to be drawn into the evil of the world, we will always come out the loser
 - Because there is always someone willing to be more evil than us
 - If we involve ourselves with the wrong people or allow ourselves to get tangled in sinful or illegal schemes, we will get burned
 - Eventually, we will be the one taken advantage of, we will be the one abused or manipulated, we will get hurt
 - You simply can't compete with evil, because there is always someone willing to be more evil than you and they will do so to your detriment
 - Judas thought he could swim with the sharks and make the system pay off
 - But he was a fool and a stooge and in the end he lost the money and his life
 - Judas was certainly evil but he aligned himself with men who were far more evil and ruthless than he was prepared to be
 - And what of those religious leaders? They were certainly evil, but they too couldn't compete with an even greater evil
 - The Jewish leaders aligned themselves with the Romans expecting to manipulate the Caesar and become rich
 - But in the end, the Romans were far more ruthless and evil than the religious leaders imagined

- And in a few decades after Jesus died, the Romans burned Jerusalem to the ground and killed nearly 1 million Jews
- And as a result, the Pharisees and Sadducees were wiped off the pages of history
- You cannot compete with evil, because there is always someone more evil than you, so the only way to avoid getting burned is to stay out of the competition
 - As Paul told us

[2Tim. 3:12](#) Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[2Tim. 3:13](#) But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

- Desire to live a godly life, but that doesn't guarantee you will live a trouble-free life
- On the contrary, we will all know persecution at some level because we seek to live for Jesus
- But even those persecutions will have godly purpose in your life and the Lord will bring you through them
- But if we choose to play with evil and to live according to their standards and rule, we will find our lives moving from bad to worse
 - As we seek to deceive others for our purposes, then sooner or later we will be deceived as well
 - Just as Judas sought to deceive Rome but soon found himself deceived by his fellow Jews
 - Guard yourself from sinful desires, seek to live a godly life, and don't try to compete with evil
- Before we leave Judas' story behind, Matthew gives us an interesting footnote concerning the 30 pieces of silver

[Matt. 27:6](#) The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."

[Matt. 27:7](#) And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers.

[Matt. 27:8](#) For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

[Matt. 27:9](#) Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel;

[Matt. 27:10](#) AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."

- The money Judas threw into the temple could not, by law, be kept by the priest since it was gained through a conspiracy
 - As Matthew says in v.6, it was illegal for the Temple treasury to benefit from funds obtained through dishonest means
 - But since Judas was dead, the money couldn't be returned to its owner either
- So the priests decide to use the money to purchase a field near the city to be used to bury strangers, meaning travelers who died in the area
 - That field became known as Akeldama, a field of blood
 - And Matthew tells us that this outcome fulfilled Scripture, quoting prophecies from both Jeremiah and Zechariah
 - Once again, the evil of Judas' heart was harnessed by God to fulfill Scripture and prove that the Lord is in control of this story
- So now Jesus stands before Pilate in the Praetorium, and Pilate begins his interrogation of Jesus

[Matt. 27:11](#) Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say."

[Matt. 27:12](#) And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer.

[Matt. 27:13](#) Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?"

[Matt. 27:14](#) And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

- Right away we can tell that Pilate isn't very impressed with Jesus nor does he believe the charges of insurrection
 - Notice Pilate asks Jesus if indeed Jesus is king of the Jews?

- Obviously, the religious leaders told Pilate of this charge, but without Judas to testify against Jesus, Pilate needs proof
- So Pilate has no choice but to ask Jesus to confirm or deny the charges against Him
- Now if Jesus had simply denied the charge, He would have been set free by Pilate, because there was no one to testify against Him
 - So just one denial from Jesus and this entire episode is over, which is why Scripture says Jesus remains silent

Is. 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
 Each of us has turned to his own way;
 But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
 To fall on Him.

Is. 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
 Yet He did not open His mouth;
 Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
 And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
 So He did not open His mouth.

- Isaiah says that Jesus did not open His mouth, but not in the literal sense of speaking no words at all
- The Scripture means Jesus did nothing to defend Himself or to stop the process of going to the cross
- And why not? Because as Isaiah said the Lord caused our iniquity to fall upon Jesus...Jesus was willingly going to His death for our sake
 - So when Pilate asks Jesus if He is the king of the Jews, Jesus says only "as you say"
 - Jesus remained silent in the sense of refusing to exonerate Himself though He was innocent
 - Of course, Jesus IS the king of the Jews, and I might add, He is also the King of all people including Pilate and the Romans
 - But His kingdom won't appear on earth until much later, so for now His claim looks ridiculous to men like Pilate

- Meanwhile, the religious leaders who are standing nearby are concerned that Jesus could squirm out of the charges at any moment, so they double down
 - Imagine the scene...Jesus is standing bound and bloodied before Pilate, looking pitiful and altogether unimpressive
 - Standing outside the doorway are the religious leaders of Israel, decked out in their robes and adorned with precious things
 - They won't enter the room, according to John's Gospel, because they won't be defiled by Gentiles on the Passover
 - Yet they act like a crazed mob, shouting out false charges against Jesus as Pilate looks on
 - Probably no moment recorded in the Gospels reveals the wicked hearts of these men better than this one
 - On the one hand, these men appear pious and scrupulous, not even willing to enter the building for fear of being defiled
 - On the other hand, they stand outside lying and conspiring to pervert justice, two of the worst crimes under the Law
 - So while they are externally religious and clean, they are internally filled with deceit and violence, as Jesus said

Matt. 23:25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

- So Pilate turns back to Jesus in v.13 in wonder at the fact that Jesus is not responding or denying the charges
 - Pilate must have suspected that the religious leaders were giving false testimony and he fully expected Jesus to say so
 - Yet Jesus says nothing, so Pilate asks Jesus "Do you not hear the many things they testify against you?"
 - Once more, Jesus remains silent against His accusers, not even refuting a single charge
- Matthew's account skips over a lot at this point, but John explains the scene in detail, and the whole thing would be comical if it wasn't so deadly serious

- Pilate vacillates back and forth between worrying about condemning an innocent man and worrying that the Jews will riot if he frees Jesus
 - Most of all, Pilate worries about losing control and losing his job which leaves him open to manipulation by everyone
 - So according to John, Pilate shuttles back and forth between talking to Jesus and talking to the Jewish leaders outside
 - He's the governor of a Roman province, and yet he bounces around like a ping pong ball trying to find a way out of this mess
- John tells us that as Jesus and Pilate talked, Jesus gets Pilate to acknowledge that he cares nothing of Jesus' claims to be king
 - Pilate doesn't believe in Jesus' claims and would prefer to release Him since Pilate takes no pleasure in condemning innocent men
 - But Jesus won't give Pilate the easy escape that Pilate seeks, and at one point Jesus tells Pilate he has no control over Jesus
- Moreover, Jesus tells Pilate that though Jesus is a king, His kingdom was not in that world in that day
 - And in fact if Jesus was claiming a kingdom in that day, his followers would have been fighting to free Jesus
 - But they weren't fighting against the Romans because their King's kingdom hadn't arrived yet
- Meanwhile, they had a different mission...a mission to recruit citizens out of this world for a kingdom to come
 - Jesus' mission was to die for our sins so that He could reconcile people to God without fear of condemnation
 - And our mission is to witness that truth to others in the hope they will sign up for the Kingdom to come too