

Jesus Final Journey Discussion Questions

Kangaroo Court Luke 23:13-25

Drawn from the March 17, 2024 sermon by Pastor Rick Dietzman

Opener: Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? How did you respond? If so, did you simply accept blame, or did you try to clear your name?

Luke 23:13-25 NIV

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him".

¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹ But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

²² For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him." ²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

There were many things Jesus had predicated about himself: He would be "rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law" (Luke 9:22), was "betrayed into the hands of men" (9:44) and "handed over to the Gentiles" (18:32). Soon He would be mocked and ridiculed (cf. 23:11; 18:32).

The charges brought by the Sanhedrin against Jesus were transferred from the religious grounds, for which Jesus was condemned, to political ones, for which Pilate might condemn Him. The general charge found in Mark 15:3 is spelled out in Luke 23:2. Jesus was accused of (1) subverting the nation, (2) opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and (3) claiming to be the Messiah, i.e., a king.

1. Considering the three charges mentioned above, how were they distorted or misinterpreted by the priests and rulers? What might have been their motives for doing so?

2. Verse 24 tells us Pilate released Barabbas, a murderer and political insurrectionist, in place of Jesus. What ironies do you see in the fact that Barabbas was released, while Jesus was condemned?

This leads us to some observations:

A. It's normal for Christ followers to be misunderstood or even persecuted. It often makes no sense.

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12

3. How easy is it for you to rejoice when you are undergoing these kinds of situations. What aspect of God's character do you tend to focus on?

Do not let those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; do not let those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land. Psalm 35:19-20

4. This psalm makes it clear that we are to pray for good and right judgements, even as we face misunderstanding. How does this assure you?

B. Partaking in Christ's sufferings is part of our growth.

²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, Philippians 1:29

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ. Philippians 3:8

5. What is the benefit of suffering for Jesus?

C. Be sure you are suffering for the right reasons.

¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:19-21

¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 1 Peter 4:14-16

6. How do you respond to a person who claims victimhood for Jesus' sake, but you can tell that they bringing it on themselves by poor choices or their attitude? How would you help them?

D. Live graciously and keep the long view

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:18-19

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17

7. How do these verses speak to you about staying hopeful and gracious?

Group Prayer Time: Pray for Christians who have been facing misunderstanding and even persecution, that they would first of all be sustained by Jesus and mature from what they are going through. Pray also that they would have gracious responses that reveal the truth of the gospel to those around them. Pray also for any needs among group members.

For Further Reflection (either in the group or on your own)

Today's passage reads as though Jesus was completely at the mercy of Pilate, and Pilate was completely at the mercy of the crowd. Why is this not true?

What does it teach you about God that He allowed Jesus to be unjustly sentenced to death when there were no grounds for such punishment?

What are some ways a Christian might, in effect, influence others to determine that Jesus is not worth following (i.e. silence, openly criticizing other believers and churches, living without any evidence of hope or change, etc.)? How does this point challenge you personally?

Next week, March 24, pastor Jeff will cover "The Cross" Luke 23:33-41 and there will be discussion questions available in "Downloads" on the SCC website.