

The Trial Of Jesus

Part 6

“Behold the Man!”... “Behold your King!”

Text: John 19:5-14

1) Jesus is tortured

Suggested Hymns:

2) Behold the Man

603, 35, 59, 733, 112

3) Behold your King

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 19:5-14, ⁵ *Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the Man!”* ⁶ *Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.”*

⁷ *The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”* ⁸ *Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,* ⁹ *and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.* ¹⁰ *Then 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?”* ¹¹ *Jesus answered, “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.”*

¹² *From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”* ¹³ *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.* ¹⁴ *Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”¹

Accompanied by an outburst of joyful hosannas, Israel’s true King made His triumphal entry into the city of David on that memorable Palm Sunday, but it is as the Man of Sorrows and thorn-crowned King that He is presented to our attention today.

The pertinent words for today are the words Pilate said to the Jews, *“Behold the Man!”*... *“Behold your King!”* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Is Tortured

Pilate’s various attempts to save Jesus had come to naught. There was now no course open to him but to hand Him over to the executioners.

In presenting the intense suffering of our Saviour, it is not necessary to linger over every detail until each sentence reeks with blood.

However, it is important that we remember that it was a real suffering, a vicarious suffering, (suffering in our stead) and in true penitence that we are reminded of the cause, as the hymnist writes.²

Show me not alone Thy pain,
Torment, and affliction;
Let me see the cause and gain
Of Thy crucifixion.
Ah, my sin caused all the woe
That Thou, Lord, hast suffered;

The people had spoken. As we have pointed out, the voice of the people is not always the voice of God. And now Pilate yielded to the popular storm. He released Barabbas and delivered Jesus to be scourged. This terrible punishment, illegal for Roman citizens, was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion and other forms of capital punishment.

Woe to him upon whom it was inflicted! It meant that he was doomed to die. It was a punishment so truly terrible that the mind revolts at its description. The victim was stripped and tied in a bent position to a pillar, and then blows were inflicted on the naked back with leather thongs weighted with jagged pieces of

bone or lead. The punishment was so hideous that the victim generally fainted and often died.

Pilate's purpose in tolerating this torture before the last and deciding word had been spoken, apparently was to save Jesus from death by inflicting a punishment so cruel as to arouse the pity of the mob and then to let Him go. But if these were his hopes, they were as futile as his measures were heartless and unjust.

Assuming that Jesus was condemned and that He was their victim, to be treated as they pleased, the soldiers now took Him in hand. In civilised countries all is done to spare suffering to a murderer condemned to death. But among the Roman soldiers, hardened to bloodshed and delighted by the bloody sports of the arena, the opposite was the case. If there was no pain and bloodshed, they would consider themselves deprived of their chief amusement.

Somehow the fact had penetrated their barrack-schooled brains that the drift of the trial of Jesus was that He pretended to be a king, and so their horse-play took the form of a mock coronation.

In staging their heartless ceremony, the hardened ruffians treated Jesus as if they were creating a successor to the aged Tiberias who at the time was residing on the island of Capri.

A king must wear the purple. And so they tore Herod's gift, a white robe, from His bleeding shoulders and threw over Him a cast-off officer's coat. He must have a crown. And so one of them pulled a few sharp-spined twigs off a near-by bush and plaited them into a crown of thorns. He must have a sceptre. Thus a reed was thrust into His rope-tied hands. The royal outfit is quite complete. And now their newly made king must be duly saluted.

As to the proper royal address, the only time when they had seen that done was in Rome at a show, when they had seen gladiators approach the imperial presence with the greeting: "*Hail, Caesar, those who are about to die salute you.*"

And so they advanced, one after the other, and bending low, saying, "***Hail, King of the Jews!***" And then, passing from unashamed mockery to savage cruelty, midst outbursts of coarse laughter they struck Him over the head with the

reed which was in His hands. And they covered His face with spit. What a spectacle!

2. Behold The Man

Putting an end to this misery for the present, Pilate led Jesus forth and burst out with that famous involuntary exclamation which has thrilled untold millions of hearts: ***“Behold the man!”***

Painters have chosen this moment of extreme humiliation when Jesus came forth bleeding from cruel stripes, wearing the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns, as the one to picture the Man of Sorrows. And many a canvas bears the title ***“Behold the man!”***

Two words have fallen from Pilate’s lips which the world will never forget: ***“What is truth?”*** and ***“Behold the man!”*** One may be taken as the answer to the other. ***“What is truth?”*** Heavenly truth, the will of the Father and the way of life, may be beheld only in the Man Christ Jesus.

Scripture says in John 3:13-16, ¹³ ***“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

Let the whole world turn to Him and with a truly penitent and believing heart ***“Behold the Man!”***

It was an outcry to move the hard hearts to mercy, but it only awakened a fierce uproar of blood-thirsty screams, ***“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”*** The sight of the suffering Jesus in these unspeakable depths seemed only to add fuel to the infernal flames. Pilate pleaded with them. But again he had missed his guess.

There was no voice of compassion, but only the howling refrain of their wild liturgy of death. At his wit’s end, Pilate cried out in utter disgust, ***“You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.”*** What an admission from a Roman judge, and what a wretched subterfuge to attempt to escape his responsibility by shifting the blame on others!

Now the enemies felt safe. They saw that they had the governor completely in their power. Now they could even come out boldly with their real charge against Jesus, which beforehand they had kept carefully concealed. ***“We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”***

What was that? ***“Son of God?”*** When Pilate heard these words, terror filled his superstitious soul. Immediately he left the howling multitude and took Jesus with him to the inside of the judgment-hall. There he asked Him with awe-struck accent, ***“Where are You from?”***

For the fourth time since the trial began Jesus retired into majestic silence. We can but guess at the purpose. He could not say that He was not the Son of God. And if He had said it in this connection, it would have been understood by Pilate in a grossly pagan sense. So He said nothing. Besides, it was too late now.

Almost angrily Pilate breaks out, ***“Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”*** But Jesus soon set him straight on this point. Talking about power? Why didn't he show it? And what about justice, truth, innocence, and conscience?

And as to power, in reality he had none except the governmental powers given to him from above. And he should be very careful not to abuse this power. Of course, Pilate thought that he had been forced into this present trial; yet he would not be excused for the miscarriage of justice.

He would still be guilty, while the prosecutors were even more guilty. ***Jesus answered, “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.”*** Thus with infinite dignity, and yet with infinite tenderness, Jesus judged His judge, who just a few minutes before had given Him over to torture.

Pilate returned. He was still intent upon releasing the Prisoner. For the third and last time on that early Good Friday morning Pilate ascended the tribunal erected on the pavement called Gabbatha. And this time he was determined at all hazards to carry out his purpose. A crisis had come, and the frantic rioters could plainly see that there was fire in his eyes.

3. Behold Your King!

In his speech Pilate never got beyond the opening words. For once he was willing to secretly allow their cherished and ill-concealed royalistic aspirations. ***“Behold your King!”*** he said. But again he failed. For once the enemies of Rome would not have their disloyalty to the “dearly beloved government” of Rome flung into their face.

Loyalty? Patriotism? Why, they even questioned Pilate’s, ***“If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”*** Pilate could not take the part of Jesus and retain the friendship of Caesar. There he had it. Then ***Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”***³ If Tiberius had only heard! How was that for patriotism as coming from that hot-bed of insurrection?

That settled it; for Pilate, for the priests, for the people, for all. Nothing would stop the crucifixion now. That was the last straw. ***“If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.”*** At that terrible name Pilate trembled. At all events there must be no complaint lodged against him at Rome. Rather the loss of an innocent life, yes, a thousand lives, is better than the loss of the friendship of Caesar.

And what about that hypocritical loyalty to Caesar ***“We have no king but Caesar!?”*** Indeed, how true! Pilate took them at their word. Henceforth they had no Saviour, no Redeemer, no Friend, no King, but Caesar.

“Behold your king!” And still He would have been their King, their Saviour King. But with this rejection they flung into the winds every Messianic hope.

“Behold your king!” He is a King, your King! Thorn-crowned, rejected, but a King. Behold Him in faith. He comes to you.

With these words we conclude this series on the Trial of Jesus.

⁵ ***“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you.’⁴ ... ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!’*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 21:9

² Hymn 59

³ John 19:15

⁴ Matthew 21:5