

John - Part 56 - Sermon Manuscript - Remain In Jesus

Go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 19. We're getting close to the end! After today we only have four more Sundays until we finish John.

So last week we talked about Jesus going to Caiaphas and then to Pilate. I thought it might be helpful to start this morning by talking about who some of the major people are in this narrative...

Caiaphas was the official Jewish high priest - picture from Hanna-Barbera's *Bible Adventures*

You might remember him from back in John chapter 11, after the death and resurrection of Lazarus, the religious leaders were trying to figure out what to do with Jesus. They were all afraid that Jesus might start a major rebellion against Rome. And in the first century, Rome was ready to crush anyone that stood against them.

So it was clear to the religious leaders that they needed to stop Jesus. So they all got together, and Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke up. He's like, "You know nothing at all! You don't realize that it's better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

And with that, they put out an arrest warrant for Jesus. But jail wasn't enough for them. They wanted Jesus dead. So as we look at chapter 19 today, remember Caiaphas... because he's not only the instigator of all this, he's actually one of the driving forces behind wanting Jesus to die (also Satan).

So that's Caiaphas. We also talked about Pilate last week...

Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. The Jewish religious leaders needed to bring Jesus to Pilate because they didn't have the authority to execute Jesus.

So last week we saw Pilate talking with Jesus... The two of them were inside Herod's palace while all the religious leaders stood outside waiting to hear the verdict. But to their surprise, Pilate came out and said...

John 18:38 - "...I find no basis for a charge against him." (Also Luke 23:4)

It's at this point Luke tells us that the religious leaders said Jesus "stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching." They said, "[Jesus] started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

When Pilate heard that, he asked Jesus if He was a Galilean. And because He was, that meant Jesus was actually under Herod's jurisdiction; and fortunately for Pilate, Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. So Pilate sent Jesus to him.

Who's Herod? This is Herod Antipas. There's a bunch of men in the Herodian family, so it can get a little confusing. Herod Antipas is one of Herod the Great's sons. Sometimes people refer to him as King Herod, but technically he wasn't a king...

He in charge of Galilee and Perea. He lived by the Sea of Galilee in a city he built called Tiberias...

[Tiberias Picture] It's still there today (I spent the night there)

[Herod Antipas] Herod's mentioned quite a few times in the gospels - He's probably most famous for killing John the Baptist. Luke also tells us that Herod and Pilate were enemies until the day Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

Herod was glad to see Jesus. He wanted to see a miracle! But Jesus didn't do or say anything. So Herod and his soldiers started making fun of Jesus and they eventually sent Him back to Pilate.

And once Jesus was back with Pilate, here's what Pilate had to say to the religious leaders...

Luke 23:13-16 - 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."

Scholars think Luke 23:16 is talking about the *first* time Jesus was flogged. This is where John 19:1 picks up...

John 19:1 - Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

I don't want to get into too much detail about flogging. But, I will say that Romans had their way of flogging and the Jews had their rules. Roman allowed soldiers to whip someone until they got tired. But Jewish only law permitted someone to be whipped 39 times.

But it's more complicated than that. The weapon you were beaten with depended on whether you were a Roman citizen, a soldier, a slave, or someone else. Also, there were three different types of flogging...

Each type had their level of intensity. If you committed a low level crime, you might get beaten up a little and humiliated, then sent on your way. The highest level of intensity sometimes led to death.

The Bible scholars that I read think that Jesus endured the lowest level of flogging here in John 19:1. Because both Pilate and Herod already made their decision - Jesus was innocent. But clearly the Jews were still upset. So to appease them, Pilate had Jesus beaten and humiliated - which we see in the next two verses...

John 19:2-3 - The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe 3 and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

This was kind of a king's coronation designed to make a mockery of Him. They put a fake crown on His head, and they put a purple robe around Him...

BTW - Purple was an expensive color to produce. Only wealthy people wore colors in the first century.

So keep in mind, this was all an attempt to rough Jesus up a little... humiliate Him... and then give Him back to the Jews. Pilate figured this would be enough.

John 19:4-5 - Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." 5 When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

At this point Jesus isn't looking so good. He's probably got some bruises; He's bleeding... And He looks ridiculous with His fake crown and robe.

So when Pilate said, "Here's the man!" Pilate seems confident that this would be enough for the Jews. He figured he did his job and he could move on to other things. But the religious leaders weren't satisfied...

John 19:6-7 - As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." 7 The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

Again, **Pilate was sticking with his original verdict!** After all, Herod didn't charge Jesus, so why should Pilate?

But the Jews appealed to their own law... Remember last week when we saw that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God - the one "like a son of man coming on the clouds" (Daniel 7)... It was a claim to be God.

For the Jewish leaders, they're thinking that anyone who claims to be God is committing blasphemy, which according to their law was a crime worthy of death.

John tells us that when the Jews weren't satisfied, Pilate became even more afraid - we'll find out why in a bit. So Pilate took Jesus back inside the palace and questioned Him again. He said...

John 19:9-10 - “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

John 19:11 - Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore *the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.*”

Who’s the one who handed Jesus over to Pilate? Caiaphas! Caiaphas and the entire Sanhedrin - but as the high priest he also represents all of them.

It’s interesting that Caiaphas isn’t mentioned after John 18, but he’s casting a large shadow over chapter 19. He’s been the main driving force behind wanting Jesus dead. (also Satan & the spiritual forces of wickedness)

So the thing we should notice as readers is that while Caiaphas holds a lot of weight, Pilate is the one who technically has the power to kill Jesus. But Jesus reminds us that Pilate’s just an instrument. Everything that’s happening is happening because Jesus is allowing it. He’s the one with the real power...

John 10:17-18 - (Jesus said) “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again...”

Again, the irony is that Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod all think they’re in control. But in reality, Jesus is the only one who has authority in this situation.

So notice in John 19:12 that Pilate continued to try and set Jesus free, but it wasn’t working. The Jewish leaders only became more upset, until finally they backed Pilate into a corner. They said...

John 19:12 - “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

Caesar was the Emperor of Rome. And if for some reason word got out that Pilate opposed Caesar, even if it wasn't true, most likely Caesar would have him executed.

Note: This whole passage with Jesus and Pilate is kind of like a game of chess. Pilate makes his move, but every time he does it seems like the religious leaders are one step ahead of him... and now Pilate has played right into their hands. It's as if the religious leaders said: *Checkmate*.

[Blank] So Pilate brought Jesus back outside. Then he went over and sat down on the official judges seat. Matthew tells us that Pilate's wife was with him. She said that she had an intense dream the night before about Jesus and warned Pilate to have nothing to do with Him because He's innocent.

So at this point Pilate just needs to give the Jews what they want. So he releases Barabbas - the terrorist and murderer we talked about last week. Then at about noon, Pilate brought Jesus before the Jews one last time and said...

John 19:14-15 - "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. 15 But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

John's first century audience would have raised their eyebrows at this! The chief priests just declared Caesar to be their only king. These guys are supposed to be faithful to God alone.

The Scriptures teach that their only King is Yahweh God. And yet again, they throw away their beliefs to make sure they get what they want.

They actually remind me of Peter in the previous chapter, when he denied Jesus. So here we have the religious leaders denying God and sided with Caesar - who by the way also claimed to be God.

And that was it... That was the final nail in the coffin. Pilate couldn't save Jesus. If he did, the religious leaders would make sure Caesar knew that Pilate let a

man go free that not only opposed Caesar, but claimed to be a King. Again, that would mean Pilate would be under the hot seat and probably sentenced to death.

So Pilate finally gave in and washed his hands of the whole situation...

John 19:16 - Finally Pilate *handed him over to them to be crucified.*

The Greek word behind “**handed over**” means “**to betray.**” It’s the same word that was used when Judas betrayed Jesus to the religious authorities.

Notice: First Judas betrays Jesus... then Peter betrays Jesus by denying Him... then the religious leaders betrayed Jesus... They also betrayed Yahweh God by acknowledging Caesar as their only king... and now Pilate betrayed Jesus by going back on his original verdict and handing Him over to be crucified.

This is the hour of betrayal - the hour when darkness reigns. The hour when no one seems to recognize Jesus for who He is.

But as readers, we shouldn’t be surprised because John already gave us the verdict back in chapter 3. He said...

John 3:19-20 - This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

John was talking about everyone who loves the darkness, but now that we’re deeper into his letter we’re seeing real instances of how this darkness is manifesting in some of the disciples, the religious leaders, Herod, the soldiers, and now Pilate.

Think about what Pilate just went through. He’s the Governor of Judea! He’s legally in charge. And he’s declared Jesus innocent - multiple times! And if he wanted to, he could force the religious leaders to go home.

Interestingly, this isn’t his first rodeo with the Jews. We have historical records outside the Bible that show Pilate being ruthless against the Jews.

So why is he afraid this time? Why did he give in to their demands?

He gave in because his own life was on the line. Pilate actually reminds me of Peter in a way - both of them gave in when their lives were on the line. Peter betrayed Jesus by denying Him and Pilate betrayed Jesus by handing Him over to the Jews...

Both betrayals were out of *self preservation* in the heat of the moment. **It ought to cause us to pause and think about how we might react in the heat of the moment...**

[Blank] Remember, John's letter was written to Christians being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Their lives were threatened daily. They had to carry their cross daily; and their cross was persecution!

But when they faced persecution, they had a choice. They could give in and betray Jesus, or they could stand with Jesus. This is why John recorded so much of the last teaching Jesus gave to His disciples. If you remember, one of the last pieces of encouragement Jesus gave to His disciples before He was arrested was this...

John 15:4 - Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

Imagine what those words would have meant to first century Christians facing the reality of social and physical persecution. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. That phrase would have echoed in their hearts and minds every day...

Because those words were as much of a promise as they were a foundation. These were the kind of words you'd remember - Like the writer of Proverbs 3 says, you'd write them on the tablet of your heart (Pr. 3:3).

Remain in me, as I also remain in you - Those words would have been the basis for their confidence as a first century Christian. (2 Cor. 3:3-4).

And so maybe the only encouragement we need today is that when it feels like darkness reigns, remember what Jesus said: **Remain in me, as I also remain in you.**

That's a promise that no matter how dark things get, Jesus is with us. He's walking through the darkest valleys with us. He's helping us carry our cross.

Things may feel like they're out of control, but nothing is ever really out of God's hands. There's no spiritual force of evil that can back God into a corner.

Our God - our only King, Jesus - is ready and waiting for us to trust Him no matter what comes our way.

That's what believing loyalty in King Jesus is all about.

Isaiah 40:28-31

Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Let's Pray