KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – *with Dave Gertzen*

Matthew 26: 57-68

Week of Sunday 20th October 2024)

Jesus' trial: Who does Jesus say he is?

Leader Preparation

This passage is probably familiar to most of us who have been Christians for a few years. It is often read at Easter and may be included in series and sermons around Holy Week (Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday).

There are two "trials" [1] described in the Gospel of Matthew:

- Jesus before the Sanhedrin: 26:57-67
- Jesus before Pilate: 27:11-26

In Luke 23 we see a separate event taking part in the trial before Pilate. Pilate sends Jesus off to Herod (vv6-12). In John 18 we also see an earlier trial before the one mentioned in Matthew of Jesus appearing before Annas (vv 19-23) [2]

We tend to think that we know the story. Our prayer for you as leaders this week is that you will see something new.

Matthew weaves two main threads through the text for this section.

The First is the interaction between Jesus and Caiaphas the high priest as part of the first "trial" v 62-64 and Jesus' response. Various people, liberal scholars and Jewish people sometimes state that Jesus never said he was the Messiah, Son of God. "Many Jewish people believe that Jesus was a rabbi, a teacher, or even a prophet but that He never claimed to be the Messiah." So is this true? We will look at what the passage says. ***Jesus' response is the high point of the Christology in Matthew from Jesus's own words.***

The Second is the back story of Peter, lurking in the shadows after his assertion in v 33 'Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."' The story of Peter and his response and restoration may be picked up in more detail next week.

[1] The word Trial is in " " as they were not a formal legal trials. Michael Green in his Matthew commentary states "about fourteen illegalities which experts have detected in the way the trial of Jesus was conducted" in terms of Jewish law. More like a mob scenario.

[2] Justin Tamlin did a series on 21 & 28 March 2021 looking at the secular and religious trials of Jesus. Feel free to look up and listen to them for background on the RUC website sermon archive.

Group Time:

Have you ever been in a situation where you were on your own / felt alone in the midst of a hostile room of people? It may have been at school, or university, in a work situation, a meeting, in a crowd somewhere? Where you felt set up to be "taken apart" (mostly figuratively)?

- What did it feel like?
- What do you remember of your emotions at that time?
- What was the outcome?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 26:57-68

We ended off last week with the verse v56b: 'Then all the disciples deserted him and fled'. This scene takes place during the early hours of the following morning. It's night and Jesus is on his own with the Sanhedrin, the high priest, the teachers of the law and the elders. Peter is mentioned following at a distance (v 58) "To see the outcome"

The Chief Priests and the whole Sanhedrin are…:"looking for false evidence" (v59).

- Why? *So they can put him to death.*
- But why "false evidence" why not just "evidence"?[3] *The false witnesses can't agree on a comprehensive compilation of their stories (Think about how hard it is to harmonise lies!)*

V59-62. Jesus remains silent. (V 62) and only answers the high priest when asked under oath(V 64) and refers to Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1 .

- What does the high priest understand from Jesus' responses? (*in v65 he accuses him of blasphemy)*
- Why do you think Jesus, in effect condemns himself? *In spite of the situation Jesus is still doing things on his terms.*

Delving deeper and application for our lives

Read Daniel 7:13, 14 and Psalm 110. Discuss the similarities in the text.

What was discussed in the Christology in the sermon on Sunday? What points struck you the most and why?

Now looking at the second thread in the story with Peter in the background:

- Have there been times in your life when, in spite of your profession of faith in Jesus, you have stayed in the background when under threat due to your faith in Jesus?
- Where did it lead to? Has it separated you from Jesus or has there been restoration of your relationship with Jesus? How do you prevent that from happening again?

Something to do as you go out from your group in closing off

I've was struck by a talk given recently by an Australian church leader about reading the bible with someone. It's something I have been challenged to do. I've started on the journey. In conversations with someone this week I asked them whether they had ever read the bible? The answer was no. Many people know something about bible stories but may never have read the bible. Do we have the courage to come out of the shadows and take the time to read the bible with them?

Print this page and read through it with your group

- Is this something you could do?
- Can you prayerfully identify someone who God might be calling you to commit to reading the bible with?

Pray together that God would

- Make you open to sharing his word with someone else.
- Show you who he would like you to invite
- Give you boldness to ask them and then trust God for the outcome.

A church leader from Australia gave a talk based on Jesus, the master disciple maker.

The word “Go” in Greek is “as you are going”, not in the past or a command as we often interpret the word in English. God’s word is alive, and we all have friends, family, people who we know who are not Christians. That’s fine!! However, we know people who would like, listen and help us. People who seem to connect with us in everyday life. He called these people” people of peace”.

So do I “see” those people as God sees them? Be on the lookout over the next month for people who you would recognize as “a person of peace”.

Then say to the person *“ I have been looking for someone to read the bible with me? Would you be interested?”*

If they accept simply meet and read a chapter together of a gospel. Maybe start with the gospel of Mark.

When you have finished reading a chapter or portion together ask them this simple question? *“What stuck out for you in this passage?”*

Allow them to talk. Don’t interrupt. Just listen to them

Share your answer to the question above, after they have chatted , but resist the urge to explain stuff to them, because a truth discovered is 10 times more valuable than a truth explained” At the end of the chat ask *“ What are you going to do differently this week as a result of what we read and discussed?”* Trust Jesus to introduce himself to them as you go on this journey.

At some point also suggest to them” *Are there people you know who might want to read the bible with you? Why don’t you ask them and do just as we have done?”*

Five simple questions, and we don’t have to have all the answers. We are just reading the bible with someone and allowing Jesus the Messiah to speak and tell them who he is! Can we come out of the shadows.

If you do this I’d be encouraged if you could send me a simple WhatsApp text with their initials so RUC leadership can pray for you as you step out of the shadows and are identified with Jesus.

Dave Gertzen 082 554-1526