KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – *with Margie Muller*

Matthew 27:11-26

Week of Sunday 3rd November

Jesus before Pilate

Leader Preparation

Read Luke 23:8-25 for further background on Herod's motives for at first wishing to see Jesus, and the important detail of Jesus' trial causing Herod and Pilate to become friends (23:12), whereas before this time they had been enemies. The sayings, "adversity breeds strange bedfellows" and "politics makes strange bedfellows." (Collins Dictionary) are apt in describing this mutually advantageous relationship. They became united against a common enemy – the threat posed to them by the Lord Jesus' teachings.

Herod had an uneasy conscience in having had John the Baptist murdered, and his curiosity was aroused in hearing that Jesus was an even greater prophet than John.

To avoid confusion about the roles of Herod and Pilate:

- Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect of Judaea, which was a directly-governed province of the Roman Empire.
- Herod Antipas was ruler of Galilee, a nominally independent state, but dependent on Roman support. They were both in charge, but in different territories, and neither was in charge of the other.

Group Time

As we near the end of the year, ask you group members to share:

- Something they have enjoyed about the group this year.
- Their funniest CG moment this year.
- Something they would like to explore next year.
- A way they have grown this year.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 27:11-26 and Luke 23:8-25

Content

Let's remind ourselves of Matthew 27:1 from last Sunday's sermon – "all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death."

- Why did they then go through the hypocrisy of having a trial?

Herod, Pilate, Pilate's wife. . . they all state, restate and underline Jesus' innocence in a court of law, examined by the highest authority - a Roman governor. Yet, the people have been incited by the Jewish leaders who fear Jesus' popularity and are offended by his criticism of them. Pilate even tries a third time to reason with these people, in asking, "what crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty." (Lk 23:22) The people refuse to answer Pilate's question, calling more insistently for Jesus' crucifixion.

Despite the illegality of this trial and His stated innocence, we are reminded that Jesus was in control of these events. The only time Jesus spoke was in response to the question: "Are you the king of the Jews?" to which Jesus answered, "You say". It was not any of the trumped up false allegations that gave the leaders the ammunition they needed to condemn our Lord, but Jesus' own words.

- Call to mind an incident of when you have been accused of something you didn't do / of having motives attributed to you which are not true. How have you reacted to these?
- In an accident scenario, is our first instinct to blame the other party? To rationalize why we weren't concentrating enough and perhaps caused the accident?
- How much weight do we put on what other people think of us?
- Is defence of ourselves and our own reputation our first motivation?

Jesus was resolved to do His Father's will and nothing deterred Him from accomplishing our salvation. The law of the world is 'to give as good as you get'. The example of Christ is to seek no revenge, but to leave things to God to sort out.

Matt 27:14 Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge.

Delving deeper

The sight of our Lord before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, was surely amazing to the angels of God. He who will one day judge the world allowed Himself to be judged and condemned, "though He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." (Is 53:9) (Bishop Ryle)

Jesus was silent before His accusers, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter." (Is 53:7)

- How do these events reflect God's overall plan, and his sovereignty?

Richard has drawn our attention frequently to ironies in the book of Matthew. Verse 25 occurs only in Matthew: "All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children".

- The Jews knew the covenant significance of blood sacrifice:
- Read Exodus 24:1-8 Moses sprinkled blood on the Israelites to seal the covenant God had made with His chosen people. Yet now, the people call for Jesus' blood to be on them, condemning themselves as unbelievers.

The innocent Jesus the Messiah took his place on the cross and Jesus Barabbas was set free.

- We expect that Barabbas must have felt amazed to be released like that. Do you feel the same sense of wonder that Jesus took your place of punishment?
- Praise God that we as believers are cleansed by our Lord's shed blood.

Closing off

Our Lord Jesus, Your love is beyond compare. We are in awe of the sacrifice You made for us, of the extent of Your love in assuring our salvation.

> "To Thee I repair for grace upon grace,
>
> May I honour Thee by my entire dependency
>
> May I find Thy grace sufficient for all my needs
>
> Help me to live to Thee forever."

We were reminded by Pastor Ndaba on Sunday that prayer is a powerful resource.

Let us pray this week for our pastors, our church, each family represented in our CG groups, and our Matrics writing final exams. (https://ruc.org.za/2024/10/pray-for-our-matrics/)
