

Pilate's Indecision

Luke 23:1-25

Indecision: the inability to make a decision quickly

Anyone suffer from indecisiveness?

I am not referring to gathering info to make an educated decision. I am referring to the inability to decide.

Maybe its one of those decisions that no matter what way you go there is not good answer.

This is where we find Pilate. He was stuck between a rock and a hard place. He knew the answer he should make, but he gave into pressure.

Last week I had mentioned 6 trials, the first three trials were religious in nature and held by the Jews, while the last three trials were civil in nature and held by the Romans.

When I think about the death, burial, and resurrection, I don't think much about just how unfair and unjust the last 24 hours of Jesus life was.

- The 1st trial took place at the home of Annas around 2 am.
- The 2nd trial was held in the home of Caiaphas (high priest) at 3 am.
- The 3rd trial was a formal hearing before the Sanhedrin at 6 am.
- The 4th trial was before Pilate around 6:30 am
- The 5th trial quickly occurred before Herod.
- The 6th trial went back to Pilate and was done in just a few minutes.

In about 14 hours Jesus went from Gethsemane to the tomb. Rush decision? In the past few weeks, we have looked at Judas and his betrayal, Peter and his denial, this week we are going to focus on Pilate and his response when presented with THE TRUTH.

Read Luke 23:1-7

"Are you the King of the Jews?" (Verse 3) This question is recorded in all 4 gospel accounts.

Acceptance or rejection of Jesus as your king is still the real dividing line even today. You can walk into virtually any room in America and ask, "Do you believe in God?" and expect to get an answer in the affirmative. But if you push it a bit and go on to ask, "And do believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Only means of going to heaven?" then you will quickly sense an altogether different atmosphere.

Read John 18:33-38

"What is truth?"

The same dilemma Pilate faced is the same one we face today. In a time and culture where truth has become relative it has almost become irrelevant. People have no commitment to truth. We've become politically correct in every area of our lives to please men instead of God.

We all need to understand something important in this text – Jesus was not the one really on trial – Pilate was on trial. And as we gather here this morning, Jesus still isn't the one on trial – we are!

We are all faced with the same question that Pilate asked in **Matthew 27:22, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called the Christ?"**

While we see Pilate's struggle, what learn about ourselves? What should we be asking ourselves? When truth is on trial in my life, how do I respond?

I. Pilate attempted to avoid making a decision.

• **Read Luke 23:3-7**

- When he heard that Jesus was a Galilean that was all he needed to hear, he said in effect, "Oh! So, He is a Galilean?" That made Jesus Herod's responsibility, so let him hear the case. So, Jesus is sent to Herod's palace.
- I can picture Pilate congratulating himself for getting rid of this thorny problem so easily. Not only had he managed to pawn the problem off on someone else, in this case Herod, it was someone he did not particularly like anyway. (verse 12 says they didn't like each other)
- Parents must make the tough calls. Passing the buck to avoid disappointing our kids will not help them mature.
- As Pastor – I sometimes must make tough calls on behalf of the whole that might appear unpopular and certainly can bring a negative response – yet passing the buck to someone else just to be liked is wrong.
- This is exactly what Pilate did. Rather than make the right decision to stand for the truth and release Jesus. He feared the consequences and passed the decision on to Herod. He found a loophole and thought that it was his ticket to avoiding making a decision about the truth.
- Passing off a problem for someone else to handle is not handling a problem.

II. Trying to avoid or dealing with the truth will only result with it coming back.

• **Read Luke 23:8-12**

- The problem we refuse to deal will come back to haunt us.
- Herod has his fun mocking Jesus, but there is no way he is touching Pilate's problem. Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate.

• **Read Luke 23:13-19**

- When he came out from that meeting Pilate called the chief priests and rulers of the people and told them that as far as he was concerned he could not see that Jesus was guilty of any of the charges that they had brought against Him.
- Pilate offers as a compromise to have Jesus beaten and released. And from the record of the parallel accounts I believe that Pilate offered them a second proposal.

• **Read Mark 15:8-11**

- Based on the tradition of releasing one prisoner to the people as a recognition of the Passover, Pilate offers to them Barabbas. I believe that the offer of Barabbas was meant to be an offer that no sensible Israelite could accept; the offer of Jesus' was one that no sensible Israelite could turn down. Boy was Pilate wrong.
- I really believe that Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but he lacked the courage to follow his convictions. Matthew recorded that even Pilate's wife had experienced a dream about Jesus and had urged Pilate to let Jesus go (**Matthew 27:19, While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."**)

- He put truth up for debate and the darkness chose the darkness.
- Many of the arguments we are engaging in are losing battles. Trying to argue truth with someone who is led by darkness is insane. If they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, they can't see the truth.

III. **When you have a difficult decision to make, do not discount the effects of outside pressure.**

- **Read Luke 23:20-22**
- Be advised beforehand that making the right decision could have unpleasant consequences, rejection by your peers, career derailment, even public ridicule.
- What was the crowd's answer to Pilate stating for a third time he found no fault that required Jesus to die?
- **Read verse 23**
- Pilate knew he was in trouble. It was either him or Jesus, but one of them was in for a world of hurt – and he chose himself over Jesus by choosing to ignore the truth and to allow injustice to prevail.

“Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.”

Thomas Jefferson

“I do not take a single newspaper, nor read one a month, and I feel myself infinitely the happier for it.”

Thomas Jefferson

IV. **Sometimes we know the right thing to do but we do the wrong thing because we are unwilling to pay the cost of doing the right thing.**

- **Read verse 24**
- This may seem to be a particularly odd statement in a democratic country but “truth is seldom determined by popular opinion.” Three times during the trial, Pilate cleared affirmed the innocence of Jesus (**vv. 4, 14, 22**). He had carefully questioned Jesus and even trembled at the answers, but the truth of the Word made no difference in his decisions.
- But just like Pilate, we often try to exonerate ourselves rather than taking a stand for the truth. Why? B/c it appears to be the easy way out.
- The easy way out is seldom the best way out. The best way is always the right way.

V. **Personal Responsibility cannot be avoided for the decisions that we make.**

- Matthew's Gospel explains that at this point Pilate took water and washed his hands in the front of the crowd to symbolize his innocence in condemning Jesus (**Matthew 27:24**). Oh, but don't we wish that it were that easy to avoid our personal responsibility?
- Pilate tried to wash his hands of the decision – you can't wash your hands of the truth.
- **Read Luke 23:25**
- Had he been a man of real courage he would have done what was right, and taken the consequences, but his past made him a coward.
- Sometimes the Devil will use our past failures and mistakes to keep us from doing the right thing in the present.

- The only right decision is the truth. Only in standing for the truth can one hope to prevent injustice.
- The only way you and I can make a right decision, is to always take a stand for the truth – no matter what it may cost us.

Conclusion

When truth is on trial in your life how will you respond?

I do not know what your response to Jesus Christ has been, but if it is anything less than receiving Him as the Son of God and your personal Savior, it is not enough, it is rejection.

Your rejection may be polite; in fact, it may appear that you have not rejected Him at all. It may be that you have simply ignored Him. But if you have not accepted Him, then you have rejected Him.

Just as Pilate could not avoid making a decision about Jesus, so you and I must make a decision as well. When you make a decision by ignoring Him and refusing to make a decision, let me simply remind you that this too is a decision, a decision to reject Him.

When confronted w/ living the truth are you deferring your decision – hoping someone else will take responsibility for you? Are you hoping to buy your way out or wash your hands of the entire matter – it won't work.