

I.N.I.

Good Friday
April 3, 2015
John 19:1-16

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Pilate asked Jesus. The Roman Governor had already concluded that Jesus was innocent. He had announced, **I FIND NO FAULT IN HIM AT ALL.** Yet he didn't let Him free. Instead he humiliated Jesus with a crown of thorns and a purple robe. His soldiers beat Jesus and mocked Him as the king of the Jews. When Pilate said, **BEHOLD THE MAN!** what they saw was a beaten, bloodied, humiliated prisoner. The chief priests and elders saw Jesus but with no sympathy or pity they shouted, **CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!**

Pilate was unmoved until the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God. That got Pilate's attention. He was afraid. He went back inside to question Jesus again. Jesus now gave a surprising answer to Pilate's renewed questioning.

On this Good Friday, we remember the death of the Son of God. Throughout the world, this day is set aside to commemorate Jesus' crucifixion. We have come here this evening to do the same thing. Let us sharpen our focus once again on the cross of Jesus and understand what happened there.

SEE HIS CROSS! JESUS DIED WILLINGLY!

I. HE BECAME SUBJECT TO HUMAN AUTHORITY.

Jesus stood before Pilate, but it was not His first appearance before those in authority. He had been arrested and brought to the high priest's quarters. First He had appeared before Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest Caiaphas, and then He was brought before Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the highest Jewish authority. He had been appointed by the Romans to his position. As the head of the Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin, he was a powerful and important figure. He was a politician who knew how to get things done, and he was ruthless and clever.

But, of course, he was an enemy of Jesus. Along with others, he had watched the ministry of Jesus with growing fear. The prophet from Galilee had gained a wide following and had accused the Jewish leaders of hypocrisy, calling them a brood of vipers. The Jewish leaders were concerned that what Jesus had started would bring an end to their power and influence, including their national identity as Jews.

At the raising of Lazarus, these leaders had seriously begun to plot the death of Jesus. In the discussion they wondered, **WHAT SHALL WE DO? FOR THIS MAN WORKS MANY SIGNS. IF WE LET HIM ALONE LIKE THIS, EVERYONE WILL BELIEVE IN HIM, AND THE ROMANS WILL COME AND TAKE AWAY BOTH OUR PLACE AND NATION.** Caiaphas had advised **YOU KNOW NOTHING AT ALL, NOR DO YOU CONSIDER THAT IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR US THAT ONE MAN SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE, AND NOT THAT THE WHOLE NATION SHOULD PERISH.** (John 11:47-50)

So they concluded, sacrifice the troublemaker Jesus, and all the commotion about Him would go away. Life would go on as before. They would still be in power.

When they finally arrested Jesus, their indictment of Him was the conclusion of that plot. The Jewish leaders believed that sacrificing Jesus was in the national interest. If they did not bring the death penalty to bear on Jesus, the consequences would be worse for them and their country. The Romans would bring their national identity to an end. But although they could not carry out the death penalty because of the Roman occupation, they were clever enough to bring Jesus to Pilate and force him to carry out the death penalty.

So Jesus stood before Pilate. He had been arrested quietly in the dark of night. Jesus had been condemned by the Jewish Senate who now turned Him over to Roman control at the first light of day.

Pilate himself was a powerful man. He had been appointed governor by the emperor Tiberius Caesar. And that appointment gave him power over the entire province, including control of the army of occupation. He had the power to execute and the power to pardon. He was the power of

imperial Rome in Jerusalem and throughout Judea.

The Jews hurled their accusations against Jesus, and the one that caused Pilate fear was the accusation that He was the Son of God. When Pilate questioned Jesus, at first, Jesus remained quiet. Pilate's anger flared and he proudly declared, **ARE YOU NOT SPEAKING TO ME? DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT I HAVE POWER TO CRUCIFY YOU, AND POWER TO RELEASE YOU?**

Pilate must have been quite surprised at Jesus' response: **YOU COULD HAVE NO POWER AT ALL AGAINST ME UNLESS IT HAD BEEN GIVEN YOU FROM ABOVE.**

Jesus was not the helpless victim He appeared to be. He had preformed miracles. He had healed the sick and raised the dead. He had walked on water and calmed the sea. When they came to arrest Him, He knocked the whole detachment down with His words **I ME HE!** Jesus had firmly told Peter to put away his sword and then healed the ear of Malchus. Jesus had willingly submitted to the arresting mob in the garden, the Jewish leaders' questions and mistreatment, and now to Pilate. He was accused of making Himself a king and claiming to be the Son of God. Pilate might have thought those accusations were trumped up charges to bring Jesus to His execution, but Jesus is both a King and the Son of God.

In this interview with Pilate, Jesus was bold and self-assured. He expressed no hint of helplessness or weakness. There was no plea for mercy, no attempt to defend Himself against the charges, and no explanations for His actions. When Jesus said that Pilate would have no power over Him unless it had been given to him from above, Pilate might have concluded that Jesus was talking about Caesar. But Jesus made it clear that there was a higher Judge to whom the Roman governor was accountable. Caiaphas was also subject to that higher Judge and would be judged guilty of **THE GREATER SIN.**

The reason for that was clear enough. As the highest religious leader of the Jews, Caiaphas knew the Scriptures. He had read the prophecies but had rejected Jesus as the fulfillment of those prophecies and rejected Jesus' claim that He was the Messiah, the Christ. He knowingly and willingly rejected Jesus—a greater sin than Pilate's self-serving miscarriage of justice.

Jesus had submitted Himself willingly to a cunning and powerful Jewish High Priest and a powerful but ignorant Roman Governor. Why? The answer is really quite simple. The Son of God loves us. He stood before the Jewish leaders because He wanted to be there. He stood before Pilate because He wanted to be there. Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him. He calmly endured the abuse, the crown of thorns, the ridicule, the whipping, and the crucifixion. He willingly bore it because He chose to obey His heavenly Father, who had **SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.**

The reason for all the pain and suffering for the Son of God is because it was the way God the Father had determined to redeem sinners. He sent His Son as a substitute for all humanity and sacrificed Him as payment for the sins of the world. We did not deserve this willing sacrifice. For, **WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.** (Ro 5:8).

We are rescued from sin by God's grace, His *underserved* love. The sacrifice of Jesus was for you and for me. Yes, He is the Son of God, and His sacrifice was enough to pay for the sins of all the world for all time. We are redeemed by His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. Jesus willingly became subject to flawed human authority so we might be forgiven.

II. JESUS UNDERSTOOD HIS MISSION.

From Pilate's perspective, the idea that Jesus was the "Son of God" no doubt caused some superstitious fear in him. His gods were everywhere. They had many of them. And even if he was not particularly religious, he was superstitious. He had no understanding of the Old Testament, no comprehension of the one true God of heaven and earth, and no appreciation for what the Lord God Jehovah had planned as the mission of His one and only Son. But Jesus understood His mission.

Pilate had reservations about the death penalty for Jesus. He was afraid that Jesus just might be one of the gods standing before him. He had received a note from his wife warning him not to have anything to do with Jesus. She had suffered in a bad dream about Jesus. Pilate wanted to release Jesus. But the Jews kept screaming for the crucifixion of Jesus and warned Pilate, **IF YOU LET THIS MAN GO, YOU ARE NOT CAESAR'S FRIEND. WHOEVER MAKES HIMSELF A**

KING SPEAKS AGAINST CAESAR.

Pilate was in a corner with no escape. If he let Jesus go, these rabid Jews would make trouble for him all the way to Rome. He crumbled under the pressure and issued the order to crucify Jesus.

On the other hand, Jesus had no reservations before Pilate at all. As we said, He was not a helpless victim whimpering and whining about the injustice of the entire procedure. Instead, He displayed a bold, unwavering, self-assurance before Pilate. He laid down His life willingly. Pilate's order put Jesus to death, but Jesus willingly gave His life into death. It was just as Jesus had said, **I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVES HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP...I LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR THE SHEEP...THEREFORE MY FATHER LOVES ME, BECAUSE I LAY DOWN MY LIFE THAT I MAY TAKE IT AGAIN. NO ONE TAKES IT FROM ME, BUT I LAY IT DOWN OF MYSELF. I HAVE POWER TO LAY IT DOWN, AND I HAVE POWER TO TAKE IT AGAIN. THIS COMMAND I HAVE RECEIVED FROM MY FATHER.**

Jesus was ready and willing to finish His mission. He was our substitute. No one can redeem himself or herself. Nor can we remove the sins from our loved ones and give them life. Only one could do that—this Son of God who willingly laid down His life for us.

The nails were driven into His flesh, and His cross was raised on Calvary. We see His cross, and we hear His words: **IT IS FINISHED** (John 19:30). It's done. Mission accomplished! Our salvation is a completed fact because the Son of God laid down His life for us.

See His cross and understand what it means. Praise Jesus, the Son of God, that He willingly died for us.

Amen.