



Potomac Hills Community Church, PCA

GRACE ORIENTED • CHRIST CENTERED

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Jesus, Pilate, Herod, Barabbas “Revealed Grace” - a series from Luke **Luke 23:1-25**

OPENING THOUGHTS: “*Suffered Under Pontius Pilate*”¹

We’ve come now to the political trial of Jesus, having looked last week at the religious trial of Jesus. This trial takes place primarily before a man named Pontius Pilate. The mention of Pontius Pilate is a reminder that both trials of Jesus were actual historical events.

Whenever Christians recite the Apostle’s Creed, they confess their faith in Jesus, “*who ... suffered under Pontius Pilate.*”

This is a way of saying that Jesus was a real person who lived at a particular time in a particular place. To be specific, He was put on trial around 30 A.D., when Pilate was governor of Judea. In the past, some scholars doubted whether Pilate ever existed. But in 1961, a team of Italian archaeologists discovered an inscription at Herod’s amphitheater in Caesarea that read, “Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius.” Archaeologists have also discovered the stone pavement of the very platform where Jesus appeared before Pilate.

There they stood, early in the morning: Jesus and Pilate.

In a legal situation like this, the powers of the Roman governor were broad. He served as both judge and jury, conducting his own investigation and rendering his own verdict. And unlike the high priest, he had the prerogative to question the accused. Therefore, once Pilate heard the charges, he interrogated Jesus. It didn’t take him long to realize that Jesus was completely innocent. Pilate knew revolutionaries when he saw them, and it was obvious that Jesus was no

¹ Information on Biblical Archaeology comes from *Archaeology and the New Testament* by John McRay, page 145. Introduction and exposition of the text is adapted from *Jesus On Trial* by James Boice and Phillip Ryken, pages 55-56, 73-84 and *Preaching the Word: Luke, Volume 2* by R. Kent Hughes, pages 361-372.

revolutionary, at least not in the political sense.

However, by the time this trial was over, the scales of justice would be overturned. An innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth, would be condemned to death, while the man who sentenced Him, Pontius Pilate, would prove his own guilt.

Let's read today's passage ...

Luke 23:1-25, *"Then the entire council took Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor. [2] They began at once to state their case: "This man has been leading our people to ruin by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming He is the Messiah, a king."*

[3] So Pilate asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."

[4] Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, "I find nothing wrong with this man!"

[5] Then they became desperate. "But He is causing riots everywhere He goes, all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!"

[6] "Oh, is He a Galilean?" Pilate asked. [7] When they answered that He was, Pilate sent Him to Herod Antipas, because Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction, and Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time.

[8] Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about Him and had been hoping for a long time to see Him perform a miracle. [9] He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer. [10] Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. [11] Now Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Then they put a royal robe on Him and sent Him back to Pilate. [12] Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies before, became friends that day.

*[13] Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, [14] and he announced his verdict. "You brought this man to me, accusing Him of leading a revolt. **I have examined Him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find Him innocent.** [15] Herod came to the same conclusion and sent Him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. [16] So I will have Him flogged, but then I will release Him." [17]*

*[18] Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Kill Him, and release Barabbas to us!" [19] (Barabbas was in prison for murder and for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government.) [20] Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. [21] **But they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"***

[22] For the third time he demanded, "Why? What crime has He committed? I have found no reason to sentence Him to death. I will therefore flog Him and let Him go."

[23] But the crowd shouted louder and louder for Jesus' death, and their voices prevailed.

[24] So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. [25] As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he delivered Jesus over to them to do as they wished."

Jesus had just emerged at dawn from His religious trial before the Sanhedrin, where the enraged court had concluded that He must die. His admission that He was the Son of God, in their eyes a blasphemous admission, launched them into a murderous, robe-tearing rage. They would have killed Him outright, but they lacked the political power to do so. The right to inflict capital punishment had been taken from them by the Romans, as we see **John 18:31**, *"Then take Him away and judge Him by your own laws," Pilate told them. "Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied."*

A political trial under secular Roman authority and law was necessary.

Thus came the most infamous trial in history, a weird, twisted thing that began before Pilate, the Roman politician, then detoured to the tetrarch Herod, and finally returned to Pilate where the awful judgment was rendered.

Herod was the half-Jew puppet ruler of a fourth of his famous father's kingdom, tetrarch meaning the sovereign or governor of the fourth part of a country.

The drama was exquisite — almost like a classic Greek play with its chorus and actors. The chorus was first, the Sanhedrin howling for Jesus' death, then the multitudes crying, *"Crucify Him!"* Jesus stood at center stage in serene mastery, and around Him were the supporting actors Pilate and Herod, their decaying consciences creeping toward death.

We start with ...

v. 1-7: JESUS AND PILATE²

"Then the entire council took Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor. [2] They began at once to state their case: "This man has been leading our people to ruin by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming He is the Messiah, a king."

Now, after Jesus had been found guilty in a religious trial, the Sanhedrin frantically pushed for political judgment as they rushed Jesus over to Pilate.

They leveled three political charges against Him:

1. This man has been leading our people to ruin. This was a bald-faced lie. There was not a hint of sedition in any of Jesus' teachings.

2. Telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government. They

² Some of the information on Jesus and Pilate comes from The Gospel According to Luke, Volume Two by Joseph Fitzmyer, page 1475.

continued with another blatant lie. That was not what He meant when He said, **Luke 20:25**, *“Well then, give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God.”*

3. And by claiming He is the Messiah, a king. Though at the Triumphal Entry He had received the crowd’s praise, **Luke 19:38**, *“Bless the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”* He himself never made the claim, and certainly not in the political sense with which they were charging Him.

And Pilate, the wily politician, saw through their bogus accusations. He was skeptical, verse 3, *“So Pilate asked Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”*

To which Jesus answered indirectly, *“Yes, it is as you say”* — literally, *“You say it”* or *“It is you who say this!”* — *“The statement is yours, Pilate.”*

Jesus was calm and casual — almost nonchalant. So Pilate rendered his initial verdict, *“Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man!”*

He could see that Jesus was harmless. “Case closed!” And it should’ve ended there. But it didn’t, verse 5, *“Then they became desperate. “But He is causing riots everywhere He goes, all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!”*

It was a frantic, indefinite charge. And Pilate could see the situation was out-of-hand. But their mention of “Galilee” gave him an idea, verses 6-7, *““Oh, is He a Galilean?” Pilate asked. When they answered that He was, Pilate sent Him to Herod Antipas, because Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction, and Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time.”*

And so Pilate passed the buck to Herod.

v. 8-12: JESUS AND HEROD

And Herod was thrilled ... but for all the wrong reasons.

- **Herod’s Delight**

“Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about Him and had been hoping for a long time to see Him perform a miracle.”

Herod had no spiritual interest whatsoever in seeing Jesus.

For him it was show time. He wasn’t really interested in seeing Jesus prove His claims by signs and wonders, like those in **Luke 11:16, 29**, *“Trying to test Jesus, others asked for a miraculous sign from heaven to see if He was from God.”* ... *“As the crowd pressed in on Jesus, He said, “These are evil times, and this evil generation keeps asking Me to show them a miraculous sign. But the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah.”*

All he wanted was a spectacular show — a religious Houdini. His old spiritual interests had evaporated. There’s no fear now. All he felt was a depraved delight anticipating a few tricks. His murder of John the Baptist had produced an inability to see anything in Jesus.

- **Jesus' Silence**

And so Jesus gave no response to Herod whatsoever, verse 9, *"He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer."*

The phrase *"He asked Jesus question after question"* is in the Greek imperfect tense, indicating that Herod conducted a lengthy interrogation. He was having fun!

Jesus was willing to reason with the scoundrel high priest Caiaphas, and even to prophesy to Him.

Jesus talked with Pilate and gave him great substance for thought.

Jesus grieved over Judas as He reached out for his soul in the Upper Room.

But now, this same Jesus maintains silence before Herod. Herod's day of grace was already over! Herod had stifled his conscience long before, and now it couldn't respond. Verses 10-11, *"Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. Now Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Then they put a royal robe on Him and sent Him back to Pilate."*

Jesus' silence was matched by Herod's dismissal. He stood face to face with God the Son who is absolute righteousness and absolute goodness and saw nothing in Him. Herod was so dead that he dressed God in a robe so he and his bodyguards could mock Him! He held God in contempt.

But he no longer viewed Pilate that way.

You see, there had been long-standing animosity between Pilate and Herod that was rooted in the political order of Palestine. Pilate administered the hard-fisted power of the Romans. Herod was the puppet ruler of the local dynasty. The two had nothing but mutual disdain for each other.

But all that changed on the day Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for judgment, verse 12, *"Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies before, became friends that day."* Pilate had simply passed the buck. But Herod took it as a sign of Pilate's respect. And Herod's interview of Jesus produced the same conclusion as Pilate's regarding Jesus' innocence, despite the Jewish establishment's wild charges. The two men seem to have had a similar dislike for the Sanhedrin. So Jesus' trial brought about a political reconciliation between them.

v. 13-16: JESUS AND PILATE: TWICE INNOCENT³

Pilate, though pleased about the new peace with Herod, was naturally

³ Some of the information on this meeting of Jesus and Pilate comes from The Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 18:35-24:53 by John Nolland, page 1124; The Gospel of Luke by Earle Ellis, page 264; and The New International Greek Testament Commentary: Luke by I. Howard Marshall, page 859. Descriptions of Pilate's disregard for the Jews comes from Josephus, Antiquities and The Jewish War; and Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History.

disappointed with Herod's returning Jesus to him. But the return also bolstered his initial assessment of Jesus' innocence.

*"Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, and he announced his verdict. "You brought this man to me, accusing Him of leading a revolt. **I have examined Him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find Him innocent.** Herod came to the same conclusion and sent Him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty."*

Pilate had initially listened to the charges against Jesus with a Roman ear and discerned they were unfounded. Now Herod's Palestinian ear had heard the same charges and had come to the same conclusion. The agreement of such an unlikely pair about the innocence of Jesus renders beyond doubt the absolute guiltlessness of Jesus. In fact, Herod's cruel mockery of Jesus placed his judgment that Jesus was innocent beyond question. He didn't like Jesus, yet still found him innocent. Pilate was rightly convinced of Jesus' innocence.

So Pilate voiced a decision calculated to save Jesus, verse 16, *"So I will have Him flogged, but then I will release Him."*

Under Roman law a beating was sometimes given along with a warning, so the accused would watch his behavior more carefully in the future. Pilate was trying to appease Jesus' accusers, hoping that a lesser judicial act would suppress their blood lust. At this point it had become dramatically apparent that Pilate (the thoroughly political man) was, surprisingly, trying to save Jesus. Evidently influences beyond the merely political were inwardly tugging at this Roman leader.

This is especially significant in that Pilate was not a sensitive man. Early in his administration he had caused a riot by his disregard of Jewish sensibilities regarding idolatry. His predecessors had ordered the Roman soldiers to remove the images of Caesar from their standards when they marched into Jerusalem. But Pilate refused, causing a riot. Another occasion Pilate raided the treasury of the temple (a treasury used only for service to God) to pay for the building of an aqueduct. Soldiers beat those who objected. And ultimately he would lose his position when he ordered his cavalry to attack Samaritans who were assembled at Mt. Gerazim in a religious quest. The fourth-century historian Eusebius records that from then on life went so bad for Pilate, he eventually took his own life. Pilate was almost pathologically insensitive and could be vicious when crossed.

So why this display of conscience in his handling of Jesus?

There are several possible reasons.

To begin with, Roman law prided itself on being evenhanded, just as we do with our statue of Justice blindfolded, holding up the scales of justice. And there simply was not clear-cut evidence against Jesus.

Also, we must remember that Pilate's conscience, though wounded, was not

dead like that of Herod.

Furthermore, Pilate's repeated run-ins with the Jewish establishment had conditioned him to dislike their schemes.

So there were numerous reasons for Pilate's surprising scruples.

But there was also a **very specific reason** for his attempts to save Jesus — namely, his wife's dream. Matthew tells us, **Matthew 27:19**, "*Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: "Leave that innocent man alone, because I had a terrible nightmare about him last night."*"

We wish we knew more about her nightmare. What words did she hear? How much did she know about Jesus before her dream? Did the knowledge ultimately bring her to God's grace? Her message to her husband was clear. "He's innocent, Pilate! Get out of this as fast as you can."

And Pilate thought, "Yes, it's true. I know he is innocent."

Pilate's thoughts had been momentarily turned toward the spiritual.

We also know that Pilate was scared. According to **John 19:7-11**, during the trial, "*The Jewish leaders replied, "By our laws He ought to die because He called Himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked Him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. "You won't talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release You or to crucify You?" Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over Me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who brought Me to you has the greater sin."*"

So we have an inner profile of this politician's desire to save Jesus.

He knew Jesus was innocent. Herod had corroborated Jesus' innocence. Pilate feared what might happen if he gave in. His wife's dream and the mention of Jesus being God's Son were unnerving. As a result of all this, his dying conscience responds in fear. He wanted to save Jesus!

"But Jesus gave no answer."

Pilate was amazed because most of his prisoners did anything they could to save themselves, especially when charged with a capital offense like treason. And under Roman law, silence signified consent. If an accused man refused to defend himself, he was assumed to be guilty.

Innocent though He was, Jesus had no interest in mounting a defense.

In essence, pleading no contest, Jesus knew that He was guaranteeing His own execution. Pilate wanted to find an out for Jesus. But time was running out.

The political climate had changed.

And first and foremost, Pilate was a politician.

v. 18-21: JESUS OR BARABBAS

Pilate remembered that it was his custom during Passover to release a

prisoner chosen by the crowd. So, **Matthew 27:17**, *“As the crowds gathered before Pilate's house that morning, he asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?””*

It must have seemed like a winning strategy. Surely the crowd would ask for Jesus. Hadn't they just cheered Him a week ago when He entered the city? After all, Jesus was a religious leader with plenty of popular support, while Barabbas was a low-life terrorist.

However, the Jewish leaders were no longer alone in calling for Jesus' blood. The people agreed, *“Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill Him, and release Barabbas to us!” (Barabbas was in prison for murder and for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government.) Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. **But they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”**”*

Up to the present, the people had functioned as a buffer between Jesus and the murderous leaders of Jerusalem. Now the people turned on Jesus like wild dogs. There was a tragic irony in their turning. The same voices that a week before had been strained in shouting, *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”* were now screaming, *“Crucify him!”* In both cases mob psychology had carried the day. And now, in their corporate blood lust, they were more violent than they would ever have been if acting alone.

Secondly, there was tragic irony in the fact that Barabbas embodied the rebellious spirit of which Jesus was falsely accused.

Thirdly, the name Barabbas means “son of the father.” The people cried out for the release of one called “son of the father” and rejected the One who really is the Son of the Father!

A seemingly impossible reversal had taken place.

v. 22-23: JESUS AND PILATE: THRICE INNOCENT

Pilate had twice declared Jesus innocent.

Now he made it three times, *“For the third time he demanded, “Why? What crime has He committed? I have found no reason to sentence Him to death. I will therefore flog Him and let Him go.”*

There was no doubt of Jesus' innocence.

So Pilate reasserted his futile intention to have Jesus flogged and released.

If we only had Luke's account and were reading it for the first time, we would naturally think there was still hope for Jesus. But there wasn't.

John's Gospel tells us that Jesus' enemies now stooped to political blackmail, **John 19:12**, *“Then Pilate tried to release Him, but the Jewish leaders told him, “If you release this man, you are not a friend of Caesar. Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar.””*

This placed the ax at Pilate's political Achilles' heel. He couldn't risk allowing any threat to Rome — especially since his record in Palestine was notably bad. He noticed too that public opinion had changed, verse 23, *“But the crowd shouted louder and louder for Jesus' death, **and their voices prevailed.**”*

Pilate could see a riot coming. And that he couldn't allow.

And so Matthew tells us, **Matthew 27:24-26**, *“Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this man. The responsibility is yours!” And all the people yelled back, “We will take responsibility for His death—we and our children!” So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned Him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify Him.”*

v. 24-25: INNOCENCE CONDEMNED

With this Pontius Pilate caved in, *“So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he delivered Jesus over to them to do as they wished.”*

How could he do this, having proclaimed the innocence of Jesus three times? Actually, it was easy because Pilate was very much a modern man.

During Pilate's first encounter with Jesus, he had responded to Christ's assertion of truth by saying, as **John 18:38** has it, *“What is truth?”*

He had unwittingly anticipated the words of twentieth-century skepticism. Today's modernist heirs to Enlightenment relativism insist that truth is a matter of subjective opinion. The modernist says, “What is truth?” because he believes all truth is relative, that there is no absolute truth. The postmodernist says with a weary tone, “What is truth?” because he doesn't believe truth even exists.

Pilate embodied the skepticism that was fashionable among the educated, polished Romans of his day. His words were those of a man who considered himself too experienced in the ways of the world to imagine that truth exists. His words suggest that he felt superior to and liberated from the thoughts that trouble simpler people. He exuded the sophisticated skepticism of a man who doubted everything, distrusted everything, despised everything. He made light of truth. His attitude was weary and mournful, worldly-wise and smilingly sarcastic.

Pilate was indeed a stranger to truth.

And that's why Pilate gave in.

His decision produced a massive integrity deficit. As a Roman, he had a professional regard for justice, but no personal commitment to truth. Above all, Pilate was a career politician who always had a finger in the air to see which way the winds were blowing. Though he had withstood the Sanhedrin, he gave in when

the tide of popular opinion cried for Jesus' crucifixion.

Pilate, despite his superiority, his bluster, and his cruelties, was a **weak** man. He did not become weak overnight. It happened incrementally as he repeatedly gave in on lesser issues. But when Pilate decided to execute Jesus, it was the **weakest** thing he would ever do.

Pilate's behavior shows us why so many reject Jesus today.

But at the same time he blows their cover. The terminology may be new (post-Kantian deconstructionist), but the problem is not new.

The cop-out, "What is truth?" is as old as the gospel itself.

What folly to imagine a personal superiority with lazy, jargoned skepticism as so many do today. What delusion to imagine that the way to go is best determined by popular consensus.

In **John 14:6**, Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me."***

He backed up His claim by fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures.

He backed it up by living a perfect life.

He backed it up by willingly dying on the cross for our sins.

He backed it up by rising from the dead.

And He still backs it up by giving eternal life to all who come to Him.

APPLICATION: *Perishable Consciences*

A great truth shouts for our attention in this story — the conscience is perishable. It is possible for a human being to be so jaded that he or she can stand face to face with Christ **and feel nothing**. This is a real possibility for any nonbeliever. Most who descend to this level don't perform the outrages of Herod. Most don't verbalize their opposition. They're simply indifferent and feel nothing.

If you're not a believer, if you **like** to listen to God's Word, if you have a reverence and fear for God, don't be content to simply go on hearing His words — **do** what His words call you to do! If you go on hearing the gospel but neglect it, you invite a fog over your eyes that in time will shut out all the light. Respond now while the gospel impresses you, for a day may come when **it no longer does**.

The silence of Jesus is an extreme and dramatic warning not to trifle with holy things, not to suppress the appeals of the Holy Spirit. **Psalm 95:7-8** says, *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."* (NIV)

While it is impossible for the conscience of a true believer to become dead, it can surely be weakened. The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to, **1 Timothy 1:5**, *"be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith."* A good conscience is essential to spiritual growth.

We must submit our conscience to the light of God's Word, and then we must obey it. We cannot neglect any conviction of what we are to do without

lowering the whole level of our character. If there is something we are doing or saying, if there is an attitude we ought to have, if Scripture and conscience are calling to us, we must hear and change. If we resist, the moral trembling may become less and less, and the Word of God dimmer and dimmer, both to our eyes and our hearts. And when that happens, the Bible says our consciences are not closed, but **seared**. It is a great warning.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS: *It's Simple*⁴

In a recent biography of Pilate, the author, Ann Wroe, identifies the governor as “a symbol of ... all men facing, considering, and ultimately rejecting the truth. ... [People] love to watch him. ... In some sense, they feel they are watching themselves.”

We should see a great deal of ourselves in Pilate. He was pressured into making the wrong choice, as sometimes we give in to the peer pressure we face, no matter that it is far less than he faced. Sometimes, like Pilate, we play to the crowd. And often, like Pilate, we are quick to blame others instead of taking responsibility for our own actions.

There is a sense in which Pilate himself was on trial; for God will judge him on the basis of the verdict he gave Jesus. This is also true for everyone else: God will judge us on the basis of the verdict we give about Jesus. Thus the trial of Jesus has a way of putting us on trial. We are forced to reach a verdict on Jesus; and God, in turn, judges us on the basis of that verdict.

The trial of Jesus before Pilate unequivocally affirmed **three times** that Jesus was innocent, undeserving of death. This final court unwittingly declared what is theologically true of Jesus, that He was and is, **John 1:29**, “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” He is the fulfillment of what was symbolized by the unblemished lambs slain under the Old Covenant.

Along with this, Pilate’s substitution of innocent Jesus for Barabbas unwittingly symbolized the substitutionary death of Jesus. Barabbas, the one guilty of death, was pardoned, and Jesus, the innocent one, died in his place.

Philip Ryken, the Pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, tells the story of attending a play based on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. One of the most dramatic scenes comes at the end of the trial before Pilate, when the crowd began calling for Jesus to be crucified.

Suddenly, some people sitting in the audience joined the mob shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Some of the actors had slipped in the auditorium and taken seats among the audience. The effect of their shouting was to implicate the audience in the death of Christ.

⁴ Ann Wroe quote is taken from her book, *Pilate: The Biography of an Invented Man*, pages 217-218.

Dr. Ryken writes, “My first impulse was to quiet them down. I wanted to shout, “No! Stop! You can’t kill Him! He’s innocent!” But then I remembered that I was a guilty sinner, and that Jesus came to die for my sins too. In that moment I realized that even if I didn’t **want** Jesus to be crucified, I **needed** Him to be crucified, because my salvation depends on His cross. And so I laid down my resistance. I took my place in the guilty mob and said in my heart, “Crucify Him! Yes, crucify Him, if He will be crucified, for I am a sinner who needs a Savior.”

This is the **gospel** — Jesus dying as a substitute on the cross for us.

The innocent declared guilty so the guilty could be declared innocent.

As our substitute, He took all our sins upon Himself, then gave us His life and righteousness. Jesus’ gospel is **simple**.

He says, “It’s My life for yours.

It’s My righteousness for your sin.

Will you take it?

There is no other way.”

And all who will take it said, “Amen.”