

Pilate

Portraits of Repentance

Matthew 27:1-2, 11-26

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. ² They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." ¹² But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. ¹³ Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" ¹⁴ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. ¹⁵ Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Jesus^[a] Barabbas. ¹⁷ So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus^[b] Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"^[c] ¹⁸ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." ²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹ The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"^[d] All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³ Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood;^[e] see to it yourselves." ²⁵ Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ So he released Barabbas for them, and after flogging Jesus he handed him over to be crucified.

As we continue our deeper dive into events of Holy Week, this week we focus on Pilate, and specifically how he might call us to repentance. Our context is Jesus' final morning, which after a long day of torture and humiliation he will finally go to His death. We find Him on trial again, having been handed over to the Romans under Pilate's rule. As the Roman governor of Judea, Pilate has been in place for about 10 years; his role obviously a complex one of pleasing Rome and taking care of his people. In spite of his

wife's warning through a dream (v. 19) and his own intuition that Jesus had done nothing wrong, Pilate folds under the pressure of the crowd and hands Him over to be crucified (v. 26). **How can you relate to Pilate's poor decision made under pressure? Who are the people in your life who help you make better decisions?**

As decision-making creatures, made in image of God, we too have the freedom to change the course of our lives and history. The best way to stay on course is having the right kind of people around us, learning and growing in Christ's way with one another. Pilate "almost" pardons Jesus; he has the power to make that choice. We are all capable of betraying Jesus and making poor decisions, and even washing our hands over and over can't free us from guilt (v. 24). God sees our whole story and loves us anyway, the decisions we're proud of and the ones we wish we could do over. We celebrate the grace of God when we consider someone like Pilate who blew it, and how we see ourselves in them. **Though sometimes challenging to define grace, how have you seen it appear in your life? How do you need to better position yourself to receive God's grace? Do you fully believe in who He is and what He can still do as He makes all things new?**