

Scripture: Luke 23:50-56

Title: Those Who Stood with the King / translated by Yeaun Han

1. Pilate's Confession

"As the lights slowly dim with heartbreakingly solemn music—soon the sound of a strong wind and roaring thunder can be heard loudly. Meanwhile, flashes of lightning occasionally streak through the darkness like flares. In the midst of that, a phrase from the Apostles' Creed, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified', is repeated in an echo, with male and female voices mixed like a chorus of curses. As the echo begins to crescendo, Pilate's agonizing, blood-curdling scream, close to a shriek, pierces through the darkness.

[Pilate] Stop! Stop! Stop!"

I have read you the first scene of a mono-drama titled "Pilate's Confession" written by an individual named Jin-soo Lee. It is a work that interprets Jesus' death and depicts Pilate's inner psychology and emotions through the monologue of Pilate, the name remembered on our lips every time we confess the Apostles' Creed. When Pilate cries out 'stop, stop, stop,' the sound of the Apostles' Creed disappears. When the silence created by the tension becomes extremely uncomfortable, Pilate glares at the audience in desperation under a long pin spotlight. And, as if pleading, he struggles to open his mouth.

"That's right. I am indeed the governor of Judea, and Pilate, the very one responsible for having Jesus crucified to death. <As if in agony> But I had no choice! I really couldn't help it! Please --- please just take my name out of the Apostles' Creed! I'm begging you. Are you saying that's absolutely not possible? That that is the one thing you absolutely cannot do?"

What on earth did Pilate do wrong that he must still suffer in agony even now? From Pilate's perspective, it might feel unfair. Because if you look at the Gospels, Pilate tried to release Jesus several times. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. However, Pilate was the decision-maker. Because he was the ultimate decision-maker in the trial and sentencing regarding Jesus' death, all the responsibility lay with him. That is why he continues to be talked about on our lips and criticized to this day.

2. Pilate Who Washed His Hands

In Matthew 27:24, there is a scene where Pilate takes water and washes his hands in front of the crowd. As he washes his hands, he says this: "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Ever since this act by Pilate, the expression "to wash one's hands" has come to mean "I bear no responsibility." Responsibility is a word that comes from Response. Responding to the pain and suffering of another is

responsibility, but there was no such aspect in Pilate. However, Jesus was different. Instead of washing his own hands, Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

Through the act of washing the disciples' feet, he revealed a life of bearing the faults and burdens of others on their behalf. The actions of Pilate, who washed his hands, and Jesus, who washed feet, seem the same in that they both involve washing the body with water, but their meanings were a world apart. Pilate, who did not want to be intertwined with another's suffering, refused to clear Jesus' false charges despite being the ultimate decision-maker. It was because of a heart that feared people. To Pilate, achieving righteousness or doing good was not important. He was only interested in his own safety, and fearing that the crowd would rise up, he cowardly washed his hands of it. However, Jesus, despite being the Son of God and the Teacher, personally washed his disciples' feet. Knowing that the one who washes the filth of others also gets their own hands cleansed, Jesus willingly chose a life of washing others' feet and bearing their burdens. What were the words this Jesus proclaimed as he began his public ministry? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near (Matthew 4:17)." The Greek word written as 'kingdom' is 'Basileia'. A Kingdom, which has a king, territory, and people, is Basileia. During his 3 years of public ministry, Jesus personally demonstrated the Basileia of justice ruled by God's love. He proclaimed that the citizens of this Basileia would live a truly peaceful and blessed life, not one of corruption and death. Revelation 11:15 presents us with the vision: "The Basileia of the world has become the Basileia of our Lord." The life of the cowardly Pilate, the representative of the world's Basileia, and the life of Jesus, the representative of heaven's Basileia, are contrasted this greatly.

3. Those Waiting for the Lord's Basileia

The text is the story of Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus' body in his own tomb. The same story appears in the Gospel of Matthew, which introduces Joseph as a disciple of Jesus and a rich man (Matthew 27:57). The Gospel of Luke reports that he was a member of the Council and a good and righteous man. In addition to this, it introduces him as someone who was waiting for the Basileia of God. In other words, he was a person waiting for the heavenly Basileia that Jesus had proclaimed and demonstrated. He knew that Jesus was the king of that Basileia and was confessing it openly. Being a member of the Council meant that he was part of the privileged class at the highest level, both religiously and socially, enjoying the trust and respect of the people. Nevertheless, he personally made and prepared a tomb for the burial of Jesus' body. During Jesus' time, a tomb was not a method of burying a corpse in the ground, but a method of placing it in a cave.

Because the cave he prepared was hewn out of rock, it was not a tomb prepared in a day or two. He had been preparing for Jesus' funeral for a long time. He was a person who agreed with the vision of that Basileia that Jesus wanted to achieve. He was a person who dreamed of that vision where the Basileia of the world would become the Basileia of Jesus.

As Luke records about him, he uses two adjectives to modify him. It is Joseph, the good and righteous man. The word 'good' probably means that he is full of humanity. To be 'righteous' means to be right and proper, referring to a character that chooses what is right even if it means taking a loss. To put it in Korean terms, it means being loyal. Joseph did not abandon his loyalty toward Jesus, the owner and king of the Basileia he so desperately desired. In the Council to which he belonged, the prevailing opinion was that everyone said Jesus must be killed and that it was right for him to bear the cross. However, he was an upright person who could say 'no' to the mainstream of the world. We call a person like this someone overflowing with a sense of responsibility. He is a person who responds to the suffering of another and willingly intertwines himself in their difficult affairs. Unlike Pilate, he was not a person who turned away from doing the right thing for the sake of his own face and comfort.

4. The Man Who Lives with the King

King Danjong is a king who was killed by his uncle, Grand Prince Suyang. After Grand Prince Suyang usurped his throne and became king, he exiled him to Yeongwol in Gangwon Province and had him die there. In the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty, specifically the Annals of King Jungjong, there is a record of an official named Sang Shin, who held the position of U Seungji during King Jungjong's reign, going down to Yeongwol to find King Danjong's tomb. It is said that the story of a village head named Heung-do Eom retrieving Danjong's body appears there.

The movie "The Man Who Lives with the King (The King and the Clown)" is a historical imagination created based on precisely this one sentence of historical record. I watched this movie when I went to the Chicago presbytery because the pastor sharing my room asked to watch it. I hear it's opening soon at the Minneapolis AMC as well, so I recommend you watch it once. Heung-do Eom, the role played by actor Hae-jin Yoo, initially worked hard to have a nobleman exiled to his village in order to make the village prosper and develop. However, he finds out that the person exiled to his village is a king. Ultimately, Danjong dies, and despite the threat that anyone who collects his body will have three generations of their family exterminated, Heung-do Eom does not abandon his loyalty to Danjong and retrieves his body. While reading the story of Joseph of Arimathea, Heung-do Eom from <The Man Who Lives with the King> overlapped in my mind. Even though he was once on the throne, had his throne usurped by his uncle, and was exiled, Heung-do Eom does not abandon his loyalty to Danjong. Joseph is also currently a citizen of a nation ruled by the Basileia called Rome, but he does not abandon his loyalty toward Jesus, the Son of God and the king of the heavenly Basileia. He intends to take responsibility for Jesus' body, no matter what loss he suffers, or even if he becomes severely ostracized in society. There is nothing good that will come from getting intertwined for no reason, but he insists on becoming intertwined with Jesus. He is responding responsibly to Jesus' death in this way.

5. Those Who Retrieve the Body

Retrieving a body contains the meaning of respect toward the deceased. Joseph personally goes to Pilate and asks him to hand over Jesus' body. At that time when Jesus was hanging dead on the cross, Joseph went to Pilate. Joseph knew that burying the body is the core of a funeral, a courtesy to the dead, and the right thing to do. When my father passed away last year, the greatest sorrow I had was that I could not bury my father's body with my own hands. I felt that I could not fully repay the grace I owed him just through the videos on the cell phone screen sent by my siblings. And I came to realize what a profound meaning it is to mourn the dead by seeing them with your own eyes and touching them with your hands. Among famous holy paintings, there are many works depicting the people retrieving Jesus' body. A representative work is the 1603 painting titled <La Deposizione Nel Sepolcro, The Entombment of Christ> painted by the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

This work has been copied by various painters of later generations. It is a painting depicting the scene of lowering Jesus into the tomb. In this painting, three men and three women appear. The women are three ladies named Mary. They are Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Cleophas. Each of the Marys is depicted expressing their sorrow in a different way. Mary of Cleophas expresses tragic sorrow by raising both hands high in the very back and crying out intensely. In front of her, Mary Magdalene wiping her tears with a handkerchief expresses inward and emotional sorrow. Jesus' mother, Mary, wearing blue clothes and reaching out to her son with open arms, is expressing a divine and restrained sorrow. The man wearing green clothes is John, the disciple Jesus loved, and his hand is touching the spear wound on Jesus' side. The man holding Jesus' legs is Nicodemus. John 19:38-40 says that Nicodemus helped with Jesus' funeral along with Joseph. "He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs." 34 kilograms (about 75 pounds) of myrrh was a truly enormous amount and very expensive, but Nicodemus willingly gave his wealth for Jesus' funeral along with Joseph. In this painting, Nicodemus is the only one whose gaze is directed toward the viewers looking at the picture. He is trying to tell us something. "Are you also witnesses to this event? Are you also ready to receive this body together?" he seems to be asking us.

Another painting is a work titled "The Descent From The Cross" by Peter Paul Rubens, which depicts Jesus being taken down from the cross.

It was the painting hanging inside the cathedral that Nello wanted to see so badly in the fairy tale <A Dog of Flanders>. On Christmas, Nello falls asleep and dies in front of this painting. If Caravaggio's painting is of laying Jesus in the tomb, this painting is of receiving Jesus' body down from the cross. The man with the bushy beard on

the left side of this painting appears to be either Nicodemus or Joseph. Considering their status or religious prestige, Joseph and Nicodemus should have avoided getting intertwined with Jesus. However, through retrieving Jesus' body, they openly demonstrated that they supported Jesus and were waiting for the Basileia that Jesus dreamed of.

6. Receiving the Body of Jesus as a Community

What Rubens is emphasizing through this painting might be a sense of community. They are receiving the body of Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven to this earth, not as individuals but as a community. They are cooperating together to receive Christ. It is the image of a community holding the body of Christ together. They are coming out together as a community. They are showing that "We are disciples of Jesus, and we are people who dream of the coming of the Basileia that Jesus showed us." By receiving Jesus' body, they are testifying that Jesus alone is the Savior who will save this world and the Lord of faith. It is said that these paintings I showed you are ones hung in front of the altar of a cathedral. The altar is the place where the Eucharist, which carries the meaning of receiving Jesus' body, takes place. People of that time would have passed in front of this painting while participating in the Eucharist. They would have had no choice but to meet the gaze of Nicodemus in the painting. "Will you also try to get intertwined with Jesus? Will you try living a life of giving yourself as a gift to others while washing the dirty feet of others and bearing the burdens of others, just as Jesus did?" Nicodemus is asking. Remember that Responsibility only arises when you Response to the pain and suffering of the other. Through the people who responded and reacted to Jesus' death, the news of Jesus' resurrection is passed on. Now, in one week, we will face Easter. The resurrection is a great event that tells us that Jesus' cross is not the end. Because there was the gruesome death on the cross, the resurrection is even more brilliant. Perhaps because this winter was bitterly cold, the white snowdrops I met on my walk last week were so incredibly welcome. The cold winter, which seemed like it would continue forever, is yielding its place to the energy of life and retreating. The spring for those who dream of Jesus' Basileia will also come brilliantly like that. We must strive so that the Basileia of justice led by love may arrive on this earth, just as Jesus did. We need the responsibility to Response to the tears of the poor and the sorrowful of this earth, with whom we don't necessarily have to intertwine ourselves. Jesus always approaches us in the form of the least of these. If we want to receive the body of Jesus as a community, we must welcome the least of these who approach us with sincere devotion. The lives of those who do not turn a blind eye to the poor, the oppressed, and the sorrowful, but bear their burdens, are truly blessed. True disciples of Jesus are people who, with a good and righteous heart, approach the lives of our neighbors with whom they do not necessarily have to be intertwined. Because our Lord's heart goes out to them. This is Passion Week, a week to meditate on the suffering and death of Jesus. I hope this becomes a week where my desires and ego are completely nailed to the cross of Christ and die. I

sincerely hope that during Passion Week, we all have a week where we become intertwined with the death on the cross of Jesus, our King. Through the death of Jesus, who bore the heavy burdens of others and suffered, I pray in the Lord's name that this becomes a week where we too gain the courage to give ourselves as gifts for others.