

15) Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. 16) And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17) Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18) For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him. 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." 20) But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 21) The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" 22) Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" 23) Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" 24) When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." 25) And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." 26) Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

INTRO: I've chosen an unnamed member of this crowd at the Praetorium in Jerusalem as the person for tonight's sermon. We shall proceed a bit differently this time. I'm going to speak in the first person, as if it were I who was there in that crowd. Think of me as Ibrahim ben Judah.

I. THE JERUSALEM CROWD CHANGED SIDES

A. We didn't have good news coverage; hard to get good information

1. no radio, TV, newspapers, cell phones, internet
2. I'd estimate thousands saw the Palm Sunday entry
3. "Hosanna" was fun, contagious; heard it 3+ miles across the valley
4. He could have been the Messiah, you know; one never knows
5. in and out of temple daily; low profile; teaching daily
6. so many people in town; arrest was rumored; fake news? Go and see

B. Quite a crowd at the Praetorium; big commotion

1. you have TV, social media; we 'hang around' outside
2. lots of uncertainty; both Jesus and Barabbas had reputations
3. Pilate tried several times: scourge, ecce homo, off to Herod
4. we all got the point of Pilate's hand washing; theatrics; buck stops w/him
5. only later we heard of Mrs. Pilate's dream
6. innocent Jesus was condemned; street talk; how did it happen!

C. Professional agitators were at work

1. Pilate tried not to rock the boat; afraid of mob, Caesar
2. had 600 Roman soldiers @ Antonia fortress; crack troops; no 1st amendment
3. thousands on mob, yet good, well-armed soldiers; riot control in past
4. real activists numbered maybe 40 of the chief priests, I'd say
5. kept moving around, talking it up, yelling the loudest (no bullhorn)
6. like Antifa or DC Jan.6; church meeting; Denver '69 LCMS, civic suffrage, etc.

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF STANDING YOUR GROUND

A. **Conformity** is a powerful law of social behavior

1. who wants to be the oddball; lone hand raised as 'nay'
2. your clothing and ours: same headdress even today
3. ladies hair styles copied; ear (et alii) piercing; Grandma's tattoo
4. easiest not to rock the boat; conform; go along with the crowd
5. not necessarily bad, per se

B. **Problem** can be ending up where you didn't want to be

1. take me: nothing against Jesus, just curious
2. so Rabbi ben Havilah prodded me to yell
3. is it a crime to yell? ..."crucify Him?" "Kill the umpire"
4. got out of hand; but I didn't start it; nor did I stop it
5. happens all the time: party gossip, workplace, pick on sub teacher; fun?
6. I don't like how this situation turned out, however

C. I've had a couple thousand years to think about this...

1. what if I had tried to speak up; influence those around me
2. be honest, haven't you ever had second thought (shoulda)
3. are there any 'followers only' in this room
4. even talking like everybody else, y'all
5. "don't appear too religious, people will notice you"
6. stand firm, you just might influence **one** other person

III. THE RESULT OF FOLLOWING THE CROWD

A. Ashamed of self

1. I've had plenty of time to reflect..

2. enthusiasm of the moment gave way to nagging guilt
3. Jesus was innocent; didn't speak up; am I complicit?
4. I can busy myself with other things, but the guilt returns
5. I can say "everybody else..." but that doesn't hold water
6. speaking of which: Pilate's phony photo-op; peoples' response

B. Burned in my memory:" "His blood be upon us and our children"

1. I still don't know who started that one; probably priests
2. sounded smart, cute at the time
3. "We assume all responsibility for this; obligate our progeny"
4. 'blood' talk got me to thinking... big deal in our history, culture (Abel's blood)
5. Passover doorpost blood; generations of lambs slain in remembrance
6. Baptizer John called Jesus 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of world'
7. we crucified the Messiah; I was a participant; I was there

C. Did you hear what happened to us and our children?

1. historian Josephus: Jerusalem destroyed 70AD by Gen. Titus, Roman army
2. a million died in siege; thousands died of famine, disease; sword easy then;
Soldiers ran out of room for crosses
3. consider the history of my people in WW II; terrorist attacks in Israel;
burned synagogues in USA, shootings
4. and that's only on earth; w/o Jesus the Messiah, eternal suffering

CONCLUSION: There is a lesson here; listen to me, please. This Man who was crucified was and is the Holy Son of God. He was doing what God had promised through all of our prophets. He was suffering the punishment for sins. Like, my sin of going along with the crowd. Later that day we heard Him say, "Father, forgive them..." My mind returns to that sentence whenever my guilt returns. You should also. He shed His blood for you, too. Because of that, you and I can be assured of forgiveness, and we can resolve to stand up to the crowd instead of just going along. Take it from me, you'll feel a lot better being right than being sorry. But if you are sorry, remember that you are also forgiven. Amen