



Questions from Jesus' Final Week

“What Shall I/We Do With Jesus?”

Matthew 27:15-23 | March 11, 2018

Introduction: What an incisive question: “What shall I/we do with Jesus?” This is what Pilot asks the crowd screaming for Jesus to die the criminal’s death due Barabbas (bar-abbas, “son of the father”). The injustice of this passage is heartbreaking. Matthew makes his point clear. Barabbas represents us all. When Jesus dies, the scoundrel goes free, the sinners go free, and we all go free.

“What shall I/we do with Jesus?” This is something we each have to ask of ourselves. This is what every generation has had to wrestle with. And the answers are never new even if they’re always varied.

Should we treat him kindly, like we would an aging and ailing parent? Should we crucify him, blaspheme and smear him, like the frenzied crowd in our text? Should we ignore him as a harmless if yet interesting guru or teacher? Should we bend the knee to him as God born to be King?

“What shall I/we do with Jesus? There are so many ways we could answer this. And our answers to this question are real and lived out, if not always made explicit.

In our text, the chief priests and crowds are confident they know what to do with Jesus: crucify him! Pilot seems less sure of what to do with Jesus. And Pilot’s wife knows exactly what to do with him. She advises her husband through a messenger, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream” (14:19). Once again, it takes a female to see things clearly.

The way we answer the question, “What shall I/we do with Jesus,” is really dependent on how we answer two prior questions: (1) “Who are we?” and (2) “Who is Jesus?” The way we answer these two questions will clear the way for us to know what we are to do with Jesus.

Pray: God of love, as in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us, so may we give ourselves to you, living according to your holy will. Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us; make our mouths speak the truth that Christ teaches us; fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us. In His holy name we pray. Amen.

Read: Matthew 27:15-23

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Discussion:

1. Have you ever experienced or witnessed an injustice? If possible, share that experience with the group. What were the circumstances...who was involved...how did it make you feel?
2. Who was Barabbas? What role does he play in this story? What would cause the crowd to cry for his release? Where is the logic in this pardon?
3. Why do you think the crowds are so against Jesus? What threat does he pose? Similarly, why do you think the chief priests are so opposed to Jesus? Wouldn't you think the religious professionals would see clearly what is going on? Why wouldn't they?
4. Why does Pilot seem to waver? What might be at stake for this Roman leader who controls a foreign land? What does this passage teach us about what Pilot most values?
5. Pilot's wife sends a message of warning. What does she get right about Jesus? What do you think about her reaction to the situation? What do you think about her advice to her husband? What does she see clearly about Jesus and what does she miss?
6. Who might your Barabbas be? How might we be asked to choose between Jesus and someone/thing else? How might Jesus be sacrificed, ignored, or avoided in favor of someone/thing else?
7. How does “Who am I?” and “Who is Jesus?” determine “What I/we shall do with Jesus?”

Pray: Holy God, Your Word, Jesus Christ, spoke peace to a sinful world and brought humanity the gift of reconciliation by the suffering and death he endured. Teach those who bear his name to follow the example he gave us. May our faith, hope, and charity turn hatred to love, conflict to peace, and death to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.