



WEEKLY STUDY

The Last Days of Jesus - Week Five

This week's passage from Luke detailed the trial of Jesus. We like to find our villains and heroes in the stories we read. In this story, the villain role is not so straightforward. The Roman ruler that Jesus was brought before was not inclined to punish him because he found no fault in him. It was the crowd that demanded his death. It's a tragedy that, every time I read it, I want to see a different, "more fair" ending. But it's a tragedy that God will soon turn around for good. This is a long passage of scripture so we will break it up into the 5 "episodes" laid out in the sermon.

We are adding a prayer focus each week for those of you who faithfully study and pray with us. Look for the box below and join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for families who will join us for worship and the Easter Egg Hunt on April 13th (Palm Sunday). Especially pray for those who are attending for the first time (or the first time in a long time). Pray that they would experience the movement of God at Providence Church and find hope, healing and wholeness in Jesus!
- Pray for our 40+ students who will be attending the Confirmation Retreat next weekend. Pray that God confirms to them their true identity in Christ.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 23.1-5 (ESV)

Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."³ And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so."⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."⁵ But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

- Jesus was a victim of pure mob mentality. We see this all the time, a movement can go in a positive or negative direction. It starts with a statement or accusation from an individual or group and then it becomes larger than the whole group. The movement to convict Jesus had grown so loud that guilt or innocence was no longer the point. It started with leaders who were threatened by Jesus' ability to stir people up—meaning he rocked the boat. Have you ever found yourself tempted to just go along with the crowd even though you knew the truth? Why are we likely to believe that the momentum of the mob is unstoppable?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, (Hebrews 10.23-24)**
- *God, I want to be a part of your movement that is based on truth and righteousness. Forgive me for being swayed by popular opinion that goes against your will. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 23.6-12 (ESV)

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

- The power dynamics are all over the place in this passage. It appears that Pilate was passing the buck. When he realized that Herod had some authority over Jesus, he sent him there. It's possible that Pilate was genuinely following protocol, or that he wanted to hear the wisdom of someone

who might know more about Jesus' reputation before a final verdict was given. It seems that Pilate didn't want to be responsible for what happened to Jesus and he didn't want to have to face the angry crowd. Herod, on the other hand, seemed enthralled by all he had heard about Jesus. In that setting, Jesus maintained some control by not answering questions. Are there times today when the person who doesn't speak actually holds more power? Does that go against the norm in our culture?

Prayer Prompt: The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3.12-13)

- *Jesus, I want to learn from your ways. I want to remain calm in the face of false accusations, and I want to step up when the time is right. Show me more of your mind and your heart today. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 23.13-16 (ESV)

Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore punish and release him."

- The weakness of Pilate's authority is revealed when he begins to appease the crowds by committing to punish and release Jesus. He is holding to his innocence claim regarding Jesus, but is not willing to consider that Jesus had already been through enough. Why would he punish an innocent man? The crowds clearly needed to see him suffer. And although Pilate had the title, the crowds held the power. What feelings do you have towards Pilate? Pity? Disappointment? Can you think of a time when you were able to stand up to a crowd on behalf of Jesus?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1.10)**

- *God, I want to stick with you, no matter what the crowds around me seem to be saying. I want to want your approval over theirs. Help me God. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 23.18-22 (ESV)

But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus,²¹ but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”²² A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”

- The momentum of evil created a moment where reason had no place. The crowd was demanding the release of a murderer. They were willing to endanger their own lives in order to get their way. Can you imagine that one of the members of the crowd might have been impacted by Barabbas’ crimes? The crowd had lost its collective mind. They began to shout “crucify him!”-- a form of punishment that had not even been on the table until that point. The crowd not only decided on his guilt or innocence, but also chose the punishment. Pilate was then in a position of choosing between one innocent man’s death or a certain riot. What does this account say about the role of reason in a time of chaos?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool. (Isaiah 1.18)**
- *God, we are living in uncertain times and there are loud crowds yelling on many sides. May your justice prevail over the chaos and bring peace to the earth and to my heart. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 23.23-25 (ESV)

But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed.²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

- *Their voices prevailed.* It’s no secret that, in our world, the loudest voices often seem to win. For Pilate, the voices around him became louder than the voice within him. What are some of the eternal voices that seem to crowd out what you know is right? Do they sometimes seem to drown out even the voice of God?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1.21)**
 - *God, let me hear your still, small voice. I listen for you. I desire a depth of relationship with you that drowns out the prevailing voices of this world. Amen.*

SATURDAY: LUKE 23.1-25

- Spend today thinking through the passages we read this week. Which one spoke to you the most? How is God challenging you or bringing comfort through this story? What are the places and situations where you saw God this week?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.” (Luke 23.5)**
- *God, would you stir up in me through the teachings and life of Jesus? Lead me to a resurrection-life that makes a difference in your Kingdom. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

We noted the five episodes in Luke 23 that make us think of famous trials in our day. It can read almost like a miniseries or documentary.

Jesus on Trial:

1. Pilate’s First Declaration of Jesus’ Innocence. (Luke 23.1-5)
2. Jesus’ Appearance Before Herod. (Luke 23.6-12)
3. Pilate’s Second Declaration of Jesus’ Innocence. (Luke 23.13-16)
4. Pilate’s Third Declaration of Jesus’ Innocence. (Luke 23.18-22)
5. Pilate’s Capitulation to the Crowd. (Luke 23.23-25)

What modern trial has most captivated your attention?

What about that trial drew you in?

Can you imagine the coverage and headlines if Jesus was on trial today? Would it make the news?

How would the world respond to Jesus’ conviction?