

Matthew 27:1-31, The King Condemned

I love how every once in while God lands something in your life to expose you. For several months, actually, for as long as I can remember since we started giving baths to our girls, we've had trouble keeping water in the tub. We've tried the different contraptions, nothing works. We were okay till our third Iris came around, and she just has this determination to literally pour water out. We leave them in there and come back, and its like a flood zone in there, clean up is several towels, sloshing around, its crazy. So we've been working on this for quite some time. Well not too long ago we started noticing that right beneath their bathtub downstairs this line on the downstairs ceiling was starting to form. We casually took note of it, not thinking it was that big of a deal. But our discipline tightened a bit. Then that line started getting bigger and bigger. Now it looked identical to the bathtub, so the heat got turned up. Girls, if you don't stop throwing water out the bathtub is going to fall through the ceiling. And on it goes. the line still there, getting worse, and we are getting more and more frustrated.

Well eventually where that line is on the ceiling, it starts to sag. Hmm... that's interesting I thought, so I poked a hole in the ceiling... and I mean, water came gushing out. It was a waterfall. From the ceiling to the floor was a solid stream of water. I poke multiple more holes, and same thing. I mean there must be 50 gallons of water of there, it was unreal.

Fast forward a bit and I've got the ceiling all torn out, and now we are inspecting the pipes. Just can't believe our girls can't listen and keep the water in the tub. Well upon closer inspection... that was that moment when I saw what was happening, I just couldn't wait to tell my wife. Honey... that water is not coming from the girls bathroom. It's coming from ours! All this time we were thinking it was their problem.

We were absolutely blind to what we were doing. False accusations. And worse, it was us that was causing the problem. We were blind.

The Bible paints a similar picture of us being blind, but in a spiritual sense. So when it says we are spiritually blind, it's talking about morality, blind to the truth, which ultimately reflects our wicked hearts. It's not that we are blind because we have an ailment. We are blind because we are evil.

In our text today in Matthew, we see what is nearing the pinnacle of blindness. Humanity rejects the divine Son of God. Sinners reject their Savior. Darkness rejects light. Jesus, the King, is condemned to die as a criminal through the means of crucifixion. The goal this morning, is that by the power of the Holy Spirit we would be given sight to behold and accept the King, trusting in His saving work.

There are three truths in particular that we will focus on as we walk through our text, that we need to become unblind to. 1. If you reject the King, you will die. 2. We have all rejected the King, so we all deserve death. 3. The King died in our place to give us life.

Let's pray.

1. If you reject the King, you will die

27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. 2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

This isn't the first time these religious elites get together, they've been conspiring for a while, but its just that the heat is being turned up on their pursuit. We saw back in 26:3, "plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him."

And here in the beginning of 27 the plot is set into motion. What they have going for them is that they've been able to pinpoint that Jesus says He's the Messiah, the Son of God. That's why you have the high priest tearing his robe saying this is blasphemy. But what they don't have going for them, is that they can't just put Jesus to death for blasphemy. They didn't have the legal power to do that. Only Rome had the power to sentence someone to death.

So that's what the council here is doing together. How can we get Jesus killed? They likely figure the one thing they could accuse Jesus of that would find resonance with Rome is accuse Jesus of being a King. So for the Jews, they accused Him of being the Messiah. But Rome didn't care about that. So they change the game and accuse Jesus of being King. Whatever their plan, its clear, they want Jesus to be dead.

3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." 7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Judas has this moment when he realizes that things aren't going the way he thought. Judas was "seized with remorse", its this idea of deep regret. He had betrayed Jesus for the price of 30 pieces of silver. There is no clear indication that Judas is repenting. In repentance there is a full change of allegiance, a submission to King Jesus, a turning from sin. He's rightly feeling guilt here, but running to the bad guys can't take away guilt, only running to Jesus can.

And their response is basically, whatever dude. That's your problem, not ours.

Judas responds in anger and despair. He throws the money down on the ground and takes off and hangs himself.

Judas was blind to the saving grace of the Messiah. The very one he betrayed would accept him back. There seems to be a parallel of response that Matthew sets up between Peter and Judas. Peter denies Jesus three times, and weeps, but continues hoping in the mercy of Jesus, and Jesus will later restore Peter. Peter is a picture of hope in Christ despite sin. Judas is a picture of rejecting Christ and despairing in sin. You can't have sin and life

Though we don't know for certain what the state of Judas soul is, the evidence seems to point that he was not saved. He was a rejector of the King. The jews at least would have seen this suicide and hanging as a sign of God's judgment and curse upon the individual. Now why has Matthew has put this story here? It's not just to satisfy our curiosity about Judas, its to give us a warning.

Conviction apart from repentance leads only to anger and despair and eternal death. A feeling of conviction is a good thing, but it by itself accomplishes nothing... it must lead to repentance. Judas is the epitome of what a life rejecting Jesus leads to.

This is a grim and shocking reminder that we aren't playing games. The Bible does not hold out that everything ends up well in the end for all people. Those that reject the King bear the judgment of God in eternal death.

We need to hear a fresh warning. Judas was close to Jesus. Jesus was his friend and teacher. They did life together. But no heart change. Life with Jesus without heart change leads to death. Life in church, hearing sermons, doing bible studies, even doing your spiritual disciplines, without heart change, leads to death.

Judgment may come swift in the case of Judas, or it may be delayed in the case of these religious leaders.

It's telling to see here how these leaders, first don't acknowledge that their money could have come from murdering an innocent, but then they get tied up in the letter of the law completely missing the spirit of the law. They get technical about how to use this money, blind to what the money was used for, and blind to the ultimate reality that it is the Son of God's blood. "You tithe" but you neglect the weightier matters of justice and mercy. Concerned with ritual cleanliness, not actual cleanliness. But we aren't judged for ritual, we are judged for actual.

They were so blind they had no guilty conscience, thought they were doing no wrong. But soon enough they would have to face the judgment of God.

We see a further purpose in this narrative, it is to show us that Scripture is being fulfilled. this has been one of Matthew's primary techniques all through his letter, constantly referring to the fulfillment of Scripture. Essentially, the quote comes from Zecharia 11's words, but is intimately connected to the theme of Jeremiah 19. It's not an uncommon practice to quote one author when multiple references connect. But Matthew is doing some theological interpretation of this prophecy, seeing it fulfilled here. What's going on in the OT is that Israel is rejecting their godly leaders in favor of wicked ones, to which God judges them. The prophets were being rejected, so God would reject them, which points ultimately to Jesus being rejected, and those rejected Jesus God also rejects.

Rejecting Jesus is not a game. It's not one teacher among many that you can take or leave with no consequence. Reject spiritual leaders such as Buddha or Muhammed and no big deal. Reject philosophers or artists, its no big deal. But rejecting Jesus the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is a big deal. The price for rejecting the Son of God is infinitely costly to us.

2. We've all rejected the King

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Pilate needs Jesus to have broken Roman law for him to do anything to Jesus. The best case is for something like treason, so he asks, are you the king. Jesus' response is not a defense of Himself, its just turning the words back on his accusers. You have said so, is like, "your words, not mine."

This is the first time we will pick back up the King of the Jews language since the Magis approached Jesus in chapter 2, bracketing the whole gospel.

Jesus gave no answer. And this amazed Pilate. this was the time for the defendent to defend himself. Say something. "You hear me right?" Are you crazy, at least say something. Jesus gave no answer. No word was spoken. And to this, the govenor was greatly amazed. Little did he know that Jesus was on a much bigger mission, and more Scripture was being fulfilled as the Messiah was coming to lay down His life for sinners. Isaiah 53.

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had

gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 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 shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” 23 And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

Pilate now was starting to feel stuck. He couldn't really find anything wrong with Jesus, but he feared the crowds, and he didn't want to upset the Jewish leaders. So his idea was to try and get someone else to put Jesus to death. He decided to use this tradition to pit the crowds and leaders against one another, so he could step out. At this feast, a criminal could be released. Pilate holds out two criminals. Let's make the crowd decide. Irony.

Barabbas name means “son of a father”. Jesus Son of The Father.
Jesus Barrabas, or Jesus the Christ. Jesus of human origin, just a man, a Jesus the divine savior.

We choose a criminal over the savior. A murderer over one who loves his enemies.
The people “preferred the political and national hero to the Son of God.”

“Tim Keller points out that we have two Jesuses in our story. Both “son of the Father,” and yet they could not be more different. One rules by taking the lives of others, and the other rules by giving his own life. One wants to overthrow the king, and the other is the rightful King of the people. One is guilty and will be set free, and the other is an innocent man who is about to be killed. The real Son of the Father, who is innocent, will go to his death. They freed the wrong son.” Dave Furman summarizes, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/we-are-barabbas/>

Acts 3:13b-14, 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

the crowd goes crazy. They have been whipped up into an angry mob.

Pilate does not find him guilty of a crime, but he's still stuck in a tough position.
Matthew is not just indicting the crowds of Jews here (as some would say), Matthew is making clear that everyone is guilty. The disciples. of course Judas. Jewish leaders, crowds, and roman rulers. Soldiers. Everyone is guilty.
Who in this guilty party do you most identify with? C.J. Mahaney says,

“I identify most with the angry mob screaming, “Crucify Him!” That’s who we should all identify with. Because apart from God’s grace, this is where we would all be standing and we’re only flattering ourselves to think otherwise. Unless you see yourself standing there with the shrieking crowd, full of hostility and hatred for the holy and innocent Lamb of God, you don’t really understand the nature and depth of your sin or the necessity of the cross.” -CJ Mahaney, Living the Cross Centered Life

We've all rejected Jesus in favor of something else. Career. Reputation. Spouse. Money. We've all fallen short of the glory of God.

3. The King died in our place to give us life

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." 25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

So if in the previous section we identified with those who crucified Jesus. Here we identify with Barabbas, Our release at the price of the Son. It couldn't be any more ironic, the juxtaposition of a murderer with the author of life. And who gets condemned. Jesus to die. Barabbas goes free. That's us. At the price of the Son, we get to go free. Imagine being Barabas, guilty as charged, your cross ready, and here comes another. A substitute. And here we begin looking into that price.

It's not a cheap death. Even before the crucifixion, Jesus is to be scourged. It's amazing how much of a world of pain is contained in these words, Scourging has the idea of being flayed. "flayed to expose the bones." Jesus likely would have been stripped naked, humiliated in front of a crowd, tied to a post. The whip had long cords with pieces of metal and bone attached on the ends, which when whipped on the body of Jesus, would penetrate into his flesh, lodge themselves in his flesh, and then the soldier would pull the whip out of the body, pulling the flesh as he would. The Jews had a law that limited scourging to 40 lashes, the Romans were limited only by their own endurance. Jesus body would be "reduced to a bloody pulp, his insides and bones exposed." -Carson. It was not uncommon for people to die while being scourged.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

The Jews mocked Him as Messiah, the Romans mock Him as King. Likely several hundred soldiers show up, as if its a procession before a real king. they put the scarlet robe on him, the cape of a king, and a crown of thorns and the reed, like the scepter of authority and power that a king would carry. And there, dressed as a king, flesh ripped apart, "reduced to bloody pulp"-carson, the soldiers kneel before him with utter sarcasm, and offer their worship, hail, the king of the Jews. but they must go on, spit on him to further and continuously beat him on the head. A full mockery. Then, he was ready to be led away to crucifixion.

It might look like Jesus was out of control. It might look like he is weak and insufficient of a savior. But it was a display of perfect surrender to the will of the Father. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. Luke in Acts gives us incredible insight into this mystery, **Acts 4:27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**

Jesus was fulfilling Scripture all along. His silence before Pilate remaining defenseless, a fulfillment of Isaiah 53, probably the clearest prophecy in the OT that points to Messiah being a certain type of Messiah, a suffering servant, who will die for His people. "He was silent... it was the will of the Lord to crush Him, He bears the iniquity of many." 20:28, the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

Judas, the chief priest, pilate, the crowds, the soldiers, they are not in control. Jesus is in control. And He's surrendering His life to the purpose of paying the penalty for sin. His death is a substitutionary death. He dies in our place, so that we would not have to taste death.

Don't be sad for Jesus. Jesus does not want you to be sad for Him. He wants you to accept Him. To trust His saving work on your behalf. To understand and enjoy His unending love for you.