

Day Twenty

Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

The Last Word

John 19:19-22(NIV) Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹ ***The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”*** ²² ***Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”***

Isaiah 53:3(NIV) He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

The volatile relationship that existed between Pilate and the Jewish people, especially the Jewish leaders, is clearly seen throughout their interaction. To say that they did not like one another, is a gross understatement of epic proportions. “Loathing” would be a much more appropriate term; two groups of people where the only thing in common is their hate for one another. We see this in them going back and forth during Jesus’ trial. The angry, hostile, charged atmosphere is clearly evident. We know that Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus, but because of the Jewish leaders’ threats he finally acquiesced. But Pilate had one more trick up his sleeve. He knew he could not avoid giving the order to crucify Jesus, but he could have the last word.

Crucifixion was more than just a punishment for criminals; it was a way for Rome to show its absolute authority. “We are in charge, and if you cross us, you will end up on a cross.” So, it was typical to have the name of the person being crucified, as well as their crime, on a sign. In this way, people could “read it and weep,” if you will. Pilate had the sign inscribed in three different languages; Aramaic, the local language, Greek, the most common language, and Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. In that way, he made sure that everybody who could read, would be able to read it. So, in a passive-aggressive move, Pilate had the sign read: ***“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”***

This was not a sign of respect or acknowledgment of Jesus as King. It was complete mockery, and a last insult to the Jewish leaders. That’s why they went to Pilate and protested that the sign be changed to, *“This man claimed to be the king of the Jews.”* Pilate refused. This was the ultimate “diss” towards Jesus. For Pilate, it was a way to get one more jab in towards the Jewish leaders. Jesus rejected and despised, held in low esteem, receiving a title of mockery. All the collusion, animosity and evil collaboration now finally coming to fruition with Jesus on the cross. It would seem that

they would have the last word. Have you ever heard the expression, “famous last words”? It definitely applies here. Listen to what Luke writes in **Acts 4:25-28(NLT)** “*You spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, ‘Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? ²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.’ ²⁷ In fact, this has happened here in this very city! **For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. ²⁸ But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will.**”*

He reiterates what Peter said in His sermon at Pentecost: **Acts 2:23(NLT)** “*But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.*” All the plotting and conspiring. All the anger and brutality. All the mockery and rejection. The betrayal and insults. In all of it, God has the last word. God uses the hatred and envy of the Jewish leaders to accomplish His purpose. God uses the mockery of Herod to reveal the Messiah. God uses the brutality of the Roman soldiers to fulfill prophecy. **God uses Pilate’s sarcasm as His first tool of evangelism. Jesus, the King of the Jews is being displayed for all to see and read in their own languages.** The final word belongs to the Father!

Acts 2:36(NLT) “*So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!*”

To know that my Father has the last word, brings me incredible comfort and peace. No matter what I might be going through. No matter what I might be facing. No matter who is against me. No matter what conspirators might be concocting, my Father knows. No matter what illicit, evil desires are being birthed, my Father knows. **The arrogance of the human heart is on display when we think that we can plan without the Father’s knowledge.** How smart do all of those who conspired against Jesus look now? God uses a method of execution as a vehicle for redemption. God uses the evil hearts of hateful people to demonstrate His pure unending love. God uses the unbridled mockery, to proclaim Jesus as King! **They thought they had Jesus where they wanted Him, but Jesus was where the Father wanted Him.**

1 Corinthians 1:22-24(NLT) “*So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense. ²⁴ But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, **Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God’s weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.**”*

Is there anything in your life that your Father is not aware of? Has anything happened to you that your Father does not know about? Your Father is aware of all assignments against you. Just follow Jesus' example by doing what the Father tells you to do. When evil seems to have triumphed, just remember that your Father's foolishness outsmarts the wisest of all plans. When it is all said and done, you will find that your Heavenly Father has the last word.

Prayer:

- **Thank the Lord for His incredible wisdom.**
- **Pray for God's wisdom to flood your life.**
- **If you are hurting, pray and thank the Lord that His purpose will ultimately prevail in your life.**
- **Ask the Lord to show you what you need to learn in times of difficulty.**
- **Pray that, in the midst of a world in turmoil, the church will continue to preach Christ crucified.**