

## Daily Devotional, July 27, 2021 Making God Driven Choices

*“So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.” Matthew 27:17-18 (NIV)*

We like just outcomes when they apply to other people or to those whom we think should suffer the consequences they deserve. This describes the condition of the heart, doesn't it? It shows a heart that is not overflowing with the love, grace and knowledge of God. Vengeance is the Lord's not ours, yet we like to be witness to it when it happens to those who we think deserve it. This isn't the way God calls us to live. In fact, God calls us to be quite different. This is presented in very harsh terms throughout the narratives of the Passion Week and the crucifixion.

During the Passion Week, Pontius Pilate sought to derail a potentially volatile situation by offering to free one of the prisoners under his watch. The choices were Barabbas, a known revolutionary and murderer, or Jesus of Nazareth, the religious drifter. Pilate was in a tight spot. He was locked into a survival mode that was both physically and politically motivated. Pilate was trying to avoid a riot during the Jewish Passover, when the population of Jerusalem had swollen by the thousands. He knew Rome wouldn't put up with any type of insurrection, and if one were to occur, he could be sweeping out horse stalls in Rome, or far worse. Another thought on his mind, was the fact that he had to placate the Jewish High Priests and religious leaders as not to further rupture a fragile relationship with the Hebrew people. On top of all that, Pilate's wife had told him earlier, not to do anything to Jesus: *“Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” (v. 19)*

On the fringes and at the center of this event, are the Hebrew people. These are not the ones that you would think would be eager to do something harmful to the Son of God. The Jewish crowd that gathered before Pilate was eager to see harm come to Jesus. Riled up by the religious leaders, they wanted this Messiah to be someone all-together different; they wanted a military/political leader that would push the Roman out of their territory. When given the choice by Pilate as to which prisoner to release, they chose Barabbas. The Jewish leaders assured this selection by passionately lobbying against Jesus. They feared the crowds that Jesus was gathering, and the ways that He spoke authoritatively against their abuse of power.

When people are as far away from God that they will punish His messenger, even if it's His Son, there will be consequences. There are many accounts of this and Biblical parables that speak to this fact. 2 Samuel 12:10 tells us, *“Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”* This is the outcome for the first chosen of God. We live in a world that is running full speed away from the truth. Our time as a Church is now. We must boldly proclaim truth with love and grace and show the world what knowing and following God looks like in our daily lives. Will we make a better choice?

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your guidance. Forgive me for getting ahead of Your plans and help me know when to stop and listen for Your direction. Your ways are perfect, Lord. Thank You for Your grace when I stumble in my decision making. In Jesus' Name, Amen.***