

Easter Series No. 4 – Matthew Chapter 27: v. 1-26.

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.² And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.³ Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*"⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood."⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced,¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*"¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?"¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.²¹ The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"²³ Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it.*"²⁵ And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children."²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

Introduction

We have now arrived at part four of our Easter series.

In part one we covered the preparations for the death of Jesus.

We discovered that spending 3 million yen on a bottle of perfume to pour over Jesus in the home of Simon the Leper was not a waste of money.

It was preparation for the death of Jesus and an example of sacrificial service.

In fact, Jesus said that this sacrificial act by Mary was so important that wherever the "Gospel" would be preached in the future, this act of kindness would be told as a memorial to Mary.

We also discovered in part one that the last "Passover" that Jesus celebrated with His disciples was an opportunity for Jesus to teach His disciples something very important.

Jesus taught the disciples that His up and coming death was connected very symbolically with the "Passover" ceremony.

Just as the Israelites trusted in the blood of the lamb to protect their homes in Egypt from the wrath of God, so the disciples would now need to trust in the blood of Jesus, God's lamb to also protect them from God's wrath in the future.

In part two we discovered that although Jesus was fully God, He was also fully man.

We learnt something about the sorrow and agony of Jesus as He submitted to God's will.

In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus went through an awful time as He contemplated becoming sin for us, so that we might receive God's righteousness.

In this section we learnt of the arrest of Jesus and the desertion of all the disciples.

Last week in part three we discovered about the illegal and unjust trial of Jesus.

We learnt that all of the Jewish rules had to be broken in order to proceed with a guilty verdict of the crime of blasphemy against Jesus.

False witnesses and wrong and improper procedures were carried out in the middle of the night in order for the High Priest to condemn Jesus.

Jesus allowed all these things to happen, even though He was God and 100% "Holy"

Jesus was innocent, but had to die, so that we the guilty ones might be set free.

We now come to the fourth part of our Easter series and for this we focus upon the text in Matthew Chapter 27: v. 1-26.

There are two important things that the text teaches us.

1. The suicide of Judas – v. 1-10.
2. The just person replaces the unjust – v. 11-26.

1. The Suicide of Judas – v. 1-10.

In the text we are told that Jesus was bound and led away and delivered to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Israel.

After this act it was clear that Jesus was now about to face His execution.

Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, noted all these events, and realised that his betrayal of Jesus had caused this to happen.

Judas took personal responsibility for his actions.

We are told in the scriptures that Judas was remorseful and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.

Judas said "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

The chief priests and elders told Judas that it was nothing to do with them, it was his responsibility.

Judas then threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and left.

Later he hanged himself because he couldn't live with the responsibility of getting an innocent person convicted.

Judas had lived with Jesus for 3 years; he knew that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

Judas had witnessed all the miracles that Jesus had performed and he had observed the life of Jesus.

He among all people could declare that Jesus was indeed the "Son of God".

The Chief Priests took the silver pieces that Judas had thrown down into the temple and declared that it was against Jewish Law to put the money into the Temple Treasury.

After a meeting together, the Priests and Elders decided to use the money to buy a Potter's field in order to use the field to bury strangers.

The field was named "The field of blood".

Although the Priests and Elders didn't realise it at the time, their actions were a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

(Jeremiah 32: v.6-9) & (Zechariah 11: v. 12-13)

In this section of scripture there are two big contrasts that stand out.

First there is the contrast between the guilty Judas and the Innocent Jesus.

Second there is the contrast between the hypocrisy of men and prophecy of God.

1. The contrast between guilty Judas and the innocent Jesus – v. 3-5.

What we need to understand in these verses is the difference between "remorse" and "repentance" and the fact that the actions of Judas further supported the innocence of Jesus.

We are told in the N.K.J. text that after Judas saw what had happened to Jesus, he was remorseful and returned the silver, perhaps as a way of dealing with his guilt.

No matter how evil a person can behave, he can't escape guilt in his heart and mind.

We know from the scriptures that Judas loved money, he was a thief.

His last action of obtaining money was done without thinking of the consequences. It is likely that Judas observed the way in which the innocent Jesus was treated. Remember from chapter 26: v.67 that Jesus was beaten, spat at, and struck with the palms of people's hands.

However, hardened Judas had become against sin, his heart was now telling him that he was guilty of many things.

Guilt was something that Judas couldn't deal with himself.

He tried to deal with his guilt by giving all the money back to the Chief Priests and Elders.

This action, although commendable, didn't work.

He still felt guilt.

Judas couldn't escape what has sometimes been termed as a "divinely designed signal that reminds people of their sin and warns them of its consequences."

I once spoke to a person who had been in prison for a number of years.

He told me that during the day many of the hardened criminals acted tough and didn't seem to have any remorse or guilt for their actions as they walked about during the day.

However, at night, they couldn't cope with their thoughts and nightmares.

The guilt was convicting their minds and disturbing their sleep patterns.

Guilt is a real emotion and it needs to be dealt with. Judas could have gone to Jesus for forgiveness, but He chose to kill himself.

The only way that we can deal with guilt in our lives is by coming to Jesus and confessing our sins, and asking Jesus to forgive us.

Jesus is the only person who can forgive us our sins, because He has died on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins.

A doctor who ran a large mental hospital in the U.S. once said ..

"If only I could deal with "guilt" then I could discharge 80% of my patients"

What he was saying was that the problem with 80% of his mental illness patients was that they had experienced guilt from something they had done, but were unable to live with the consequences of that guilt.

The patients had never come to Jesus and therefore they still harboured that guilt.

We now come to the important part and that is understanding the difference between "remorse" and "repentance".

The Greek word that Matthew uses for "remorse" is the word "metamelomai".

This word just means regret or sorrow.

In contrast the Greek word for repentance is the word "metanoeo" which means a genuine change of mind, leading to a change of behaviour.

Genuine sorrow for sin can be prompted by God in order to produce repentance, but in the case of Judas that did not happen.

2 Corinthians 7: v. 9-10.

⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.

¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Judas experienced the sorrow of the world which led to death.

In spite of Judas's confession that Jesus was innocent, He did not change his mind about who Jesus was, nor about his own need for Salvation.

Judas had simply become aware of the wickedness of what he had done and wanted relief from that guilt.

One Bible commentator said

"The money that Judas had wanted so badly now burned in his hand like a live coal"

The sin that promised Judas satisfaction instead brought him sorrow and pain.

It is the same with us. Sin is never a blessing in our lives and the guilt from that can only be forgiven by Jesus.

You can put lovely gloss paint over rusty railings, but when the sun shines and peels off the paint, the rust is there for all to see.

One day our sin will be exposed by God, if we haven't trusted Jesus for His forgiveness.

Q. Why not deal with the problem of your sin today?

You can do this by asking Jesus to forgive you!!

Don't follow the example of Judas, follow the example of Peter.

Peter's sorrow led to godly repentance and God used him in a wonderful way.

God can use you too if you come to him with your godly sorrow.

2. The contrast between the hypocrisy of men and the prophecy of God.

v. 6-10.

The Chief Priests and the Elders were forced to take back the 30 pieces of silver, so they needed to devise a way to dispose of it.

They knew that it wasn't lawful to put this money into the treasury.

They declared it to be the "price of blood".

Although they had broken every rule in the Jewish Law book to convict Jesus of "Blasphemy" somehow they wanted to honour this rule.

By admitting that it was "blood money", they actually convicted themselves, and condemned themselves.

The definition of "blood money" is

"Money which is illegitimately paid to falsely convict a man of a crime that led to his execution"

The Chief Priests and Elders didn't seem to have any problem taking the money out of the Temple treasury to pay Judas, but now they had problems about putting it back into the Temple treasury.

By their actions they testified to the world of their guilt and hypocrisy.

As a good will gesture to the public and to relieve their consciences, they came up with the idea of buying a field cheaply where potters had used to collect clay for their trade.

The clay must have been removed and the field was now available cheaply.

Matthew tells us that the field is still called the "field of blood" to this day. Matthew wrote his gospel at least 50 years after this event.

Therefore, for at least 50+ years, after this incident, there was a witness in Jerusalem to declare the innocence of Jesus.

The "field of blood" testified to the fact that Jesus had been falsely accused, falsely condemned, and falsely executed.

The important thing to consider in this incident is that fact that God knew it was all going to happen in advance.

The good and the bad was brought about by the sovereign purposes of God.

God knew in advance what He was going to do and the people in the story were only clay in the hands of almighty God.

We now come to the second half of my message from v. 11-26. I am calling this part;

2. "The Just person replaces the unjust".

In order for anybody to face a death sentence, approval had to be given by the Roman governor of the area.

In this case it was Pontius Pilate.

The first question that Pilate asked Jesus was....

" Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus replied **"It is as you say"**

We are told in v.12 that Jesus was being abused by the Chief Priests and Elders but did not retaliate in any way.

Pilate marvelled greatly at the patience and peace of Jesus to all the abuse that He was given.

We are told in v. 15 that it was the custom of the Roman Governor at Passover time to release the prisoners, according to the wishes of the Jewish people.

There was a known famous criminal called Barabbas in prison at that time.
 Pilate must have thought if he gave the Jewish people the choice of releasing Jesus or Barabbas, surely they would choose Jesus and not that horrible man Barabbas.
 In v. 18 we are told that even Pilate discerned that Jesus was handed to him because of envy.
 While Pilate was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife told him not to have anything to do with that "Just Man" because she had suffered many things in a dream because of Jesus.
 While all this was going on the Chief Priests and the Elders were conspiring with the crowd that they should ask for Barabbas to be released and not Jesus.
Pilate asked the crowd who they wanted released, and they shouted out Barabbas.
 Pilate was concerned at this point about the innocent Jesus.
 Pilate then said **"What shall I do with Jesus?"**
 They crowd replied **"Let Him be crucified"**
 Pilate was convicted that Jesus was innocent and said....
"Why what evil has He done?"
 The crowd ignored his question and cried out again....
"Let Him be crucified"
 Pilate was in a hopeless situation.
 The worst thing for him as a Roman Governor was to have a riot in Jerusalem.
He would be out of a job if that happened.
 He decided to make a public display of his feelings towards the crowd.
 Pilate took water and before the crowd he washed his hands saying,....
" I am innocent of the blood of this Just person, you see to it."
 In v. 25 we are told that the crowd declared,....
"His blood will be on us and our children."
 Barabbas was released and Jesus was flogged.

Q. So what can we discern from this incident that might be helpful for us today?

1. In v. 22 Pilate said "What then shall I do with Jesus?"
 This was a serious question.
 It is a question that I want to ask you this morning.

What are YOU going to do with Jesus?

By this I mean, what are you going to do about the claims of this historical figure called Jesus?
 Jesus left the glory of Heaven to come to this world.

He came in the form a baby, by the Holy Spirit, He grew up in a normal way and at the age of 30 had an amazing 3 years' ministry.

He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, raised Lazarus from the dead, feed 5,000 people with a little boy's packed lunch, he calmed the storm, walked on water, changed water into wine, cast out demons and performed many miracles.

He claimed to be God in human form and said that He had the right to forgive sins.

He said **"I am the light of the world, He who follows Me, shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: v.12)**

He also said **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11: v. 25-26)**

You can either reject the claims of Jesus or you can believe in Him.

There is no middle ground.

By saying I will think about it or consider it means for the moment, you have rejected Jesus.

May I encourage you to believe in Him today, while you are alive!!!

2. Jesus died for the guilty. Barabbas was definitely guilty of many crimes, but Jesus took his place. Jesus was crucified but Barabbas was released.

If you profess to be a Christian today, you must never forget that Jesus was YOUR substitute sacrifice, He died in your place, so that you might be set free from your eternal punishment.

That great Wesley hymn says **“Amazing love, how can it be? that thou, my God should die for me!!!”**

This weekend we start to celebrate the Cherry Blossoms season.

It is a wonderful sight.

But the most wonderful thing is that the creator of all this ,died for us, so that we might be set free from God’s wrath and have a home in Heaven for all eternity when we die.

A new resurrected body, free from sin, free from death and decay, created and prepared for us by God himself.

Thank you JESUS for dying for ME.

I hope that you can thank Him too today.