

Mosaic Church DC

Sermon Reflection Guide

For Personal Reflection and Communal Conversation

Fifth Sunday in Lent, 22 March 2015

John 19.1-16

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

Flogged

"John tells us that Jesus was flogged. This was a brutal act of gratuitous violence. He was tied to a pole, stripped naked and then beaten with a leather whip that had knots tied at the end holding pieces of iron and bone. These would, at the very least, leave the flesh hanging off the condemned persons' back. There are historical accounts of floggings so severe that bones were exposed." How do you respond to Jesus' suffering?

Indisputable Evidence

This story is a reminder that no matter what you believe about Jesus; the historical evidence for his crucifixion is indisputable. We know the way Romans executed people. We know they were beaten unmercifully. Jesus' passion (his suffering death) is at the heart of all four Gospels. It happened. Even the most cynical would have to admit the historicity of these moments leading up to Jesus' death. We are then left with this one question: How will I respond?

Faith is Reasonable

"When you take the life of Jesus as a whole, his teachings, his interactions with the disciples, his healing ministry and then add these things to his willingness to be crucified, that is, to give himself as the Passover Lamb. I think it's reasonable to believe that Jesus is the divine Son of God, the King of glory. Either he's the Divine Monarch or he was crazy. But I find it hard to believe a crazy person would act so incredibly sane, so brilliantly loving, and so graciously compassionate." What do you think?

The Coronation

So many threads are being pulled together in this moment. The Lamb of God is being prepared for sacrifice. The Divine King is being prepared for his enthronement on a cross. The people of God have declared that God is no longer their King. And finally, a ruthless politician has maintained his power through the murder of an innocent. This is the story of our salvation.