

VOICES OF REASON

Mark Beard 3/99

Text: Luke 23:23

The story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a story that calls us to a decision—*it's a decision of where we will stand with God*. The cross is not one aspect of the gospel story; it is the central focus of the gospel story. And on Palm Sunday we focus on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

In the days prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, an event that we celebrate on Easter Sunday and in the hours prior to the crucifixion, we see a man by the name of Pilate face one of the greatest decisions of his life. He had to choose whether or not to turn Jesus, who had done nothing wrong, over to an angry mob that wanted to crucify Him. He didn't want to. He didn't have to. But the scripture tells us, concerning the mob, that **"their voices prevailed."** Simply put, Pilate gave into peer pressure and did the unthinkable. He allowed an innocent man be crucified.

What kind of man was Pilate that he would do such a thing?

Someone wrote, "Pilate is a good example of the unprincipled achiever who will sacrifice what is right to accomplish his own selfish goals. Although he recognized Jesus' innocence and had the authority to uphold justice and acquit Jesus, he gave in to the demands of the crowd rather than risk a personal setback in his career." (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Pilate almost did the right thing, but he didn't. In our lives there are many opportunities for us to make a stand for Christ—but the question is, "do we always take them?" *"Well, most of the time I do,"* some would say. For too many, being identified with Christ is something that is done only if the situation is right and the crowd is for them. But just as with Pilate, God is giving us every opportunity and every reminder to do the right thing. **For Pilate, although he ultimately ignored them, there were three voices of reason that called him to follow Christ.**

I. HE COULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE VOICE OF JESUS (23:3).

Luke 23:3 says, "Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say." (NKJ)

The same verse in the NIV reads, "So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied." (NIV)

A. It was in reality God Himself saying, "Here I am, reject me or accept me."

Pilate had come face to face with God three times, what would he do?

B. This is the message of God’s Word, “Accept me or reject me.”

Put aside your cold or lukewarm acknowledgment of Christ. He doesn’t want an acknowledging “nod” from us, He wants a decision!

II. HE COULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE VOICE OF HIS WIFE (Matthew 27:19).

In Matthew 27:19 we have her words of wisdom. It reads, “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.” (NKJ)

A. Her message should have confirmed his doubts about condemning Jesus.

How many times has the Holy Spirit spoken to us prior to the decision to accept or reject following Christ in a particular situation?

B. Her dream was no doubt sent from God for Pilate’s own good.

No man is forced into rejecting Christ—even when it plays into the plan of God. God *knew* that Pilate would hand Jesus over to His enemies. *He knew it but He did not plan it!* That’s the difference in for knowledge and predestination.

III. HE COULD HAVE LISTENED TO HIS OWN VOICE (Luke 23:4).

Luke 23:4 tells us of Pilate’s response to the crowd, “So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.” (NKJ)

A. He said with his own words that he could find no fault in Jesus.

B. It’s one thing to fail to stand because of someone else’s conviction, but it’s something different to cave in on our own convictions.

CONCLUSION

Max Lucado writes, “Pilate learned the hard way, that this stance of “almost” is suicidal. The other *voices* will win. Their lure is too strong. Their call too compelling. And Pilate also learned that there is no darker hell than the one of remorse. Washing your hands a thousand times won’t free you from the guilt of an opportunity ignored. It’s one thing to forgive yourself

for something you did. It's something else to try to forgive yourself for something that you might have done, but didn't.

Jesus knew that all along. For our own good, he demanded and demands absolute obedience. He never has had room for "almost" in his vocabulary. You are either with him or against him. With Jesus "nearly" has to become "certainly." "Sometimes" has to become "always." "If only" has to become "regardless." And "next time" has to become "this time."

No, Jesus never had room for "almost" and he still doesn't. "Almost" may count in horseshoes and hand grenades, but with the master, it is just as good as "never."

The *voices of distraction* will always be there. But the *voices of reason*, sent by God, will always be there as well.

References

* Three (3) main points and conclusion from Max Lucado's book *No Wonder They Call Him Savior* pp. 81-82