



Mark 15:1–5

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 2 ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ asked Pilate. ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied. 3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, ‘Aren’t you going to answer? See how

many things they are accusing you of.' 5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Reflection

Jesus has been found guilty of blasphemy by a rushed, all-night sitting of the Sanhedrin. Under Jewish law, blasphemy is punishable by death. But while the Jewish legal system did have some delegated authority given to them by the Romans, they did not have the right to execute capital offenders. And so, after pronouncing him guilty they've taken him to Pilate. But not before, as Matthew 27:1 says,

all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed.

You see, they had a problem. Their false charge of blasphemy would hold not water with the Romans. It's not that the Romans would see through it, it's simply that the Romans wouldn't care in the slightest about contraventions of Jewish religious law. There was no love lost between the Jewish Religious Establishment and the Romans, they had an uneasy relationship as reluctant bed-fellows. The Roman Governor needed them to keep the more zealous Jews in line. Popular uprisings were looked upon dimly by Caesar, once they were dealt with the Roman Governor would also need to pay. In return, the Jewish religious leaders were given a measure of power and influence, and nice houses like the one the high priest Caiaphas lives in. It was an uneasy truce and a reluctant

peace between two parties who despised each other.

Pilate wouldn't have been happy at the early start. He wouldn't have been pleased to see the Jews. And he would have been furious if they'd interrupted his morning routines with some minor argument over their religious laws. A charge of treason however, and the imminent threat of a popular uprising, would get his attention. And so to their eternal shame the teachers of the law and the elders have twisted Jesus' charge of blasphemy into a claim that he is 'the king of the Jews' and it is with this charge, and no doubt many like it, that they confront Pilate and urge him to give the authority to execute Jesus.

But Pilate does not address them, he ad-

dresses Jesus, standing quietly before him. Dignity, perhaps even defiance in his eyes, an air of authority and power despite his hands been bound and the bruises on his face. But certainly not a fighting man. Pilate had seen many a warrior and leader of rebellions, this man had never even carried a sword. No, some scheme is afoot, and he's not about to played for the fool, so he addressed Jesus directly,

‘Are you the king of the Jews?’

“You have said so,”

Comes Jesus' enigmatic reply. Which more has the sense of, ‘These are your words not mine.’ Or ‘I am, but not in the way that you understand the term.’ Only this was plenty for his accusers to work with,

‘There you see! He even admits it with his own mouth before you, most esteemed Governor. You can see that we were right to rush him into your presence to have him executed – even this early in the morning, and again, a thousand pardons for that. Can you imagine, with Jerusalem so full to overflowing with religious pilgrims, one word from this man might set off a revolution, and we would be loathe to be involved in anything that might bring so much displeasure to Caesar as that. So you must execute him. Immediately.’

But Pilate is no fool. In a measure of their relationship he continues to ignore the Jewish religious leaders and instead asks Jesus more urgently.

‘Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.’ 5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Now, refusing to answer the most powerful man in Jerusalem is not a good course of action even in the best of times. But when the stakes are this high, when a charge of treason punishable by immediate execution is levelled against you, to make no reply, to respond to not even a single charge – well it was enough for Pilate to simply stare back in open amazement at the man standing before him.

Think

And we should too. Jesus is altogether worthy of our open amazement. Think

how quickly we are to speak up when we're wrongly accused. There has never been anyone more wrongly accused than Jesus in this moment. The Son of God accused of blasphemy. The prince of peace accused of inciting a rebellion.

5 But Jesus still made no reply,

Because he is bringing upon himself the wrath of God for every single charge ever levelled against you and I. He is stepping into our place. He has turned up for our trial, but not as our accuser, or our Judge, but our saviour. A thousand voices accuse him of the sin that you and I have committed. Silently, he accepts the shame, the scorn and the punishment that we deserve. As we watch on he is dying for us. For you, for me, for anyone who asks his forgive-

ness for their sins and puts their trust in his name.

That's my king. He's the one I will follow for the rest of my days. He gave his life for me and because of this I'm going to live the rest of mine to him. How about you? Is Jesus your king? Have you given your allegiance to him? Do you belong to his kingdom? Does he still amaze you? Do you live in awe of him?

Pray

Jesus is worthy of our amazement and awe but it is so hard to keep our vision of him clear and uncluttered with the pace and priorities of everyday life. So please take a little more time than usual this morning in prayer.

Pray for single-minded devotion to Jesus, a devotion that enriches every aspect of your life. Pray for a devotion that floods every corner of your life with vibrancy and meaning as you glorify God with your whole life; as you enjoy your work and your children and the gifts that he has given you great and small. Pray that you would live every moment of your life to its fullest potential, enjoying all of God's good creation through a living and active relationship with him, Father, Son and Spirit. And pray as we go out to face a thousand competing voices today that we might stand firm in our knowledge and love of Jesus. Pray that we too might stay the course in laying down our lives in service of our king.