

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DEC 26TH-27TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

BLOOD MONEY (MATTHEW 27:1-10)

The narrative picks up the morning after Jesus was betrayed at the hands of Judas Iscariot, arrested by the Jewish religious leaders, and given an unjust trial in the house of the high priest (26:47-68).

- The Jews had no legal authority to issue the death penalty, so they brought Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate.
- Pilate had a history of anti-Semitism and was on thin ice with Rome at this point.

As morning came, Judas, the “betrayer”, apparently realized the impact of his actions when he saw that Jesus was condemned to die (vs. 3).

- Judas “changed his mind” (Greek, “repented himself”)- this doesn't indicate a sorrow for sin that leads to a change of mind and action.
- This seems to describe regret, remorse, and deep shame that leads to despair- feeling guilty and truly repenting are two different things.

Judas was trying to “fix things” by returning the money he'd made from betraying Jesus.

- But the chief priests and elders wanted nothing to do with him- he had already served his purpose and they had no sympathy for him.
- In his despair and shame, he threw the coins back into the temple, departed, and went away to hang himself in an act of final and debilitating despair (vs. 5).

In an absurd display of religious hypocrisy, the Jewish leaders counsel together about what they needed to do with the money, because it was against the law to put “blood money” into the temple treasury (Deut. 23:18), so they used the money to buy a field as a burial place for “foreigners”.

- They didn't seem to care that they had broken the law multiple times in Jesus' trial and had manipulated to condemn an innocent man.
- This is what religious legalism does.

Matthew sees this act as a fulfillment of Jeremiah 32:6-9, where Jeremiah bought a similar field during the 1st siege of Jerusalem (vs. 9-10).

- Here we see the end of Judas- someone who had spent 3 years with Jesus hearing about God's love and willingness to restore sinners even despite their failures.
- In his darkest moment of despair, shame, and remorse, Judas chose not to believe.

The greatest sin of Judas wasn't really his betrayal- it was his unbelief.

- Instead of repenting and believing what He'd heard from Jesus about forgiveness, love, and redemption- Judas chose to believe the lie that the only way out was to end it all.
- We can choose to disbelieve the promises of God when we've fallen, and instead of repenting and receiving forgiveness, we can run farther away from Him.

PONTIUS PILATE (MATTHEW 27:11-24)

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36.

- Pilate had secured his position as governor with help from his associate Lucius Sejanus, who was executed in A.D. 31 for plotting to overthrow the emperor Tiberius.
- Pilate & Sejanus were both well-known anti-Semites, and when Sejanus was executed, Tiberius ordered that hostilities against Jews in the Roman emperor must cease.

We can understand why Pilate seems so hesitant to have Jesus crucified- he doesn't want any more attention from Rome at this point.

- So instead of accepting these charges, he asks Jesus himself if he's guilty of declaring himself to be king (vs. 11).
- Jesus's response, “you have said so”, amazed Pilate, because most accused men usually argued back to defend themselves (vs. 14).

But Jesus gave no answer, not even to a single charge that the Jewish leaders brought against him (vs. 14).

- So now Pilate tries another approach to get Jesus released- he will offer to the gathering crowd the release of another prisoner named Barabbas in the place of Jesus (vs. 16).
- Barabbas was a robber (Jn. 18:40), murderer and insurrectionist (Mk. 15:7).

The choice of prisoners to release seemed so clear between Jesus, the miracle working Rabbi and Barabbas, the stealing, killing, insurrectionist.

- But the chief priests and elders manipulated the crowd and persuaded them to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus (vs. 20-21).
- Even though they couldn't see it then, this was a picture of the gospel- the guilty man went free while the sinless One was condemned.

While all this is happening, Pilate's wife sends him word that he's not to get involved with Jesus because she's had a dream about him (vs. 19).

- Pilate must have been exceptionally conflicted- he doesn't want to execute an innocent Jewish man, but he doesn't want to quell a riot amongst the Jews either.
- So he tries reasoning with the mob (vs. 22-23).

What do you want me to do with this Jesus?”, he asks, to which they respond, “crucify him!” “But why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more...” (vs. 23-24).

- Reason doesn't work against shouting mobs, and mobs usually win shouting matches.
- Before the mob, Pilate washes his hands in a public, symbolic gesture to declare that he was innocent of the death of Jesus (vs. 24).

Who was responsible for the death of Jesus? Judas? The Jewish leaders? The mob? Pilate? The Roman soldiers?

- All of us are responsible for the death of Jesus. We can't just, “wash our hands of it” and declare our innocence- we must answer before God for what we've done with this sacrifice.
- It was our sin that led Jesus to the cross, and his blood was spilt because of our rebellion.

TORTURE (MATTHEW 27:25-31)

After the crowd cried out for Jesus to be crucified, they called down a curse upon themselves for them and their children to be cursed if this man was innocent (vs. 25).

- Jesus was then taken by the Roman guards and scourged as a preliminary to His execution.
- The instrument for scourging was a short whip with several leather lashes on the end.

At the end of each piece of leather was usually small iron balls or sharp pieces of bones or shell.

- For scourging, a man was stripped of clothing and his hands were tied to an upright post.
- The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged usually by two soldiers in tandem.
- Scourging was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of death.

As the victim's back was struck, the metal and bone on the end of the whip would cut into the skin and would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles.

- Pain and blood loss set the stage for circulatory shock, and the extent of blood loss determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.
- After He was scourged, Jesus was then stripped naked in front of the Roman battalion.

Nakedness was profoundly offensive and embarrassing to Jews, so this act of stripping Him was intended to humiliate Jesus.

- They then took to Jesus a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns, and a reed as a scepter (vs. 29) they kneeled before Him, spitting on Him and blaspheming His claims of being a king.
- The One they were mocking was actually the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

As they spat on Him and beat Him with the reed (vs. 30), Jesus took all of this humiliation and pain without speaking or fighting back (1 Pet. 2:18).

- His submission wasn't a sign of weakness; it was a sign of great strength and love.
- Jesus was loving these guards even as they tortured and blasphemously mocked Him.

It was comical picture to these men- a half-dead Jew who claimed to be their king and messiah.

- Jesus was covered in blood from scourging and the crown of thorns, covered in bruises from being beaten, and covered in spit from both the Romans and Jews (26:67).
- Finally they strip Jesus of the robe and lead Him away to be crucified (vs. 31).

WE ARE ALL LIKE JUDAS

- At some point, we have all betrayed the Lord and sold Him out for something we wanted besides Him.
- Many of us have felt the darkness and misery of despair, shame, & regret.
- The Gospel invites us by faith to run to God with our sin and choose to receive His grace over our despair.

WE ARE ALL LIKE PILATE

- Even if we claim innocence and to be uninvolved in sin against God, we're guilty concerning the death of Jesus- washing won't help.
- We all must answer God as He asks us in His Word, “What have you done with the sacrifice I gave you of my Son?”
- The Gospel invites us by faith to admit our guilt, forsake our sin, and receive God's gift.

WE ARE ALL LIKE BARABBAS

- Because of our sin, we stand on death row guilty before God and condemned to die as punishment for our sin (Rom. 6:23).
- Jesus the innocent willingly gave His life for us the guilty so we could be set free.
- The Gospel invites you to trust the reality that Jesus got what you deserved, and you get what He deserves.

If we are in Christ and covered by His blood, Jesus took for us...Our shame and regret (Heb. 12:2), our guilt (2 Cor. 5:21) and our condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Why then do we choose to stay in places of despair, darkness, hopelessness, and unbelief? The test to see if we really believe the Gospel- that God loves us, forgives us, and wants to restore us through His grace- is to watch what we do with our failures. Do we have a hard time admitting our failures? When we fail, do we run to God or away from God? Are you crippled by shame, regret, or despair over something you've done? Bring it to Jesus. Are you trying to “wash up” to try and feel like a “good person”? You can admit you're not and come to Jesus. Are you afraid of death because you know you've done bad things and deserve hell? Jesus already took your death penalty.