

The Death of Christ (5)
Making Sense of the Senseless

KSBC 03.15.09

Luke 23:1-25

INTRO Why would a large crowd of people demand that an innocent person be condemned to death? Jesus was innocent on all counts. Through multiple trials before two civil authorities he was declared innocent. No evidence of wrongdoing was verified, no basis for the charges brought against him and no cause for the death penalty. Yet, the passion, volume, intensity and anger of his accusers grow with each declaration of innocence.

In our study of the death of Christ we are finding that hanging out around the cross is not for the faint-hearted or shallow-minded. Unseen forces are colliding. Something significant is happening. These events, sayings, dialogues, trials and actions have meaning that forces us toward decision and appreciation. We learn about our true selves as we observe the actions of the characters around the cross.

Back to the question . . . can you make sense of it? Why the senseless demand for the death of an innocent man? Related to this is the question of how does this seemingly senseless death actually take on so much meaning? The cross, Jesus death, this killing of an innocent man becomes the core factor that people cling to for forgiveness, proclaim at the risk of their lives and come back to repeatedly for hope and strength.

To understand the dynamics of the motivation behind the crucifixion of Jesus, we need to examine what the scriptures reveal to us about Jesus and about the characters involved in his trials and sentencing. In between the lines of the storyline of these trials, we see the love of God reaching out to the sinful heart of mankind. It is a study in contrasts, the sinless Son of God humbling himself and actually dying for the benefit of the sinful people who condemn and ultimately crucify him.

The 'message of the cross' was foolishness to those who crucified Jesus but it is in fact the 'power' of God to rescue and change people (1Cor. 1:17-18). Be encouraged today to worship at the foot of the cross, cry out for cleansing, be strengthened in your love for Christ and more as we look at the sinless Christ being condemned by sinful people.

Luke 23:1-25

Jesus trial before Pilate.	1-5
Jesus trial before Herod.	6-12
Jesus sentenced by Pilate.	13-25

To understand the cross in biblical and Christian terms, you must have a . . .

1. Growing appreciation for the sinless Christ. 23:4, 14, 15, 20, 22

In presenting the repeated emphasis in this section on Jesus' innocence, Luke wants the reader to see that Jesus is not a blasphemer who dies for offending God. People are largely indifferent to the conspiracy taking place. The perfection and purity of the Christ, which are of such incredible value to heaven and the gospel mission, are mocked and rejected by the ones he came to save.

Review lamb without defect – Isa. 53:7-9

The fear of whole hearted commitment to truth is marked by:

- Repeatedly avoiding the issue of what is true.
- Attempting to settle with half measured responses.
- Shift blame and responsibility elsewhere.

The envy of the Jews.

2, 5, 10, 18-19, 21, 23

Matthew (27:18) and Mark (15:10) tell us that the heart motivation for the persistent accusations of the Jews was in fact envy. Jealousy. What did they want so badly that they were willing to do and say such senseless, evil things toward an innocent person?

Envy or jealousy is a desire to maintain control of your life over a threatening rival such as Christ and is seen in:

- Manipulating arguments and people for personal gain.
- Using anger and volume to intimidate.
- Tireless persistence against all evidence to the contrary.

Summary/Conclusion

The stunning background picture from Luke 23:1-25 that seals the meaning of the cross is that of Barabbas slinking off into the crowd and freedom. The truly guilty one goes free in exchange for the death of the truly innocent one, Christ.

The cross appears as a senseless and meaningless act of injustice until you consider the sinlessness of Christ, the sinfulness of man and the wonder of substitution and release.

Take Aways

1. Renew your enthusiastic allegiance to the message of the cross today.
2. Cry out from your heart today . . . ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’
3. Boast in the cross of Christ to someone this week by sharing a brief summary of this sermon.
4. Invite someone to hear the rest of this series on the death of Christ in the coming weeks.
5. Pray that people will repent and trust Christ as a result of this sermon series.

Study Questions

1. What questions, observations or thoughts do you have from the study of Luke 23:1-25?
2. Read Lk. 23:1-25 as a group. Observe and note the characters and their role in the trials. How many times does Pilate declare Christ's innocence? How many times do the Jews press the issue with more intense accusations?
3. Review the notes on the sinlessness of Christ. Which benefits impress you the most? What does Christ sinlessness mean to you in a practical way?
4. Read Acts 4:27-28. Review the context of Peter & John's arrest/release and the believer's prayer. How do these early believer's view Herod and Pilate's involvement? What additional truth do they understand in verse 28? From their prayer, who would they say killed Jesus?
5. Review the heart issues exposed at the cross. Which ones do you relate to the most? How are these expressed in lives you are trying to reach?
6. Read Romans 1:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:4. Discuss how you can connect the message of the cross with people in your life to reach their hearts.
7. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?