

Miscarriage of Justice

Intro: If asked to name the most watched television trials of all time you could probably name several off the top of your head without even thinking about it. (Johnny Depp doesn't count) OJ Simpson, Casey Anthony (those are 2 that come to mind from my lifetime) and we all can remember the thoughts and feelings associated to what we believed should have been without a doubt a guilty verdict.

A miscarriage of justice is defined as "an error made in a court of law that results in an innocent person being punished or a guilty person being free." In tonight's study we look at the biggest miscarriage of justice in the history of mankind. The trial of Jesus.

Setting: Last week we talked about Peter's denial from the lens of what Christ was going through vs. Peter's situation and the difference in their responses. We talked about our frailty as men and women, and also the redemption we have in Christ. We've spent the last 4-5 weeks in Chapter 18 of John's gospel looking at the final hours before Jesus would be crucified. As we pick up tonight with Jesus facing more trials, we see that he is now alone without his disciples, and marching on to do the Father's will, knowing what it would cost him. All of what we will read tonight has a bloody cross as the backdrop.

John 18:19-24 & 28-40 - Read

After being taken before Annas earlier in John 18, Jesus is now brought to questioning before Annas and then taken to Caiaphas who is the current high priest. It wasn't as if Jesus was going before Caiaphas for a "fair trial", actually far from it. Jesus was "bound" earlier while with Annas but as we talked about a couple weeks ago, this happened willingly. Let's keep that in mind as we look at his trial tonight.

V19-24 Jesus' Jewish Trial

-In V19 we see the high priest question Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. 2 things here, it would seem the high priest is trying to insinuate that Christ and his disciples were staging some kind of coup to try and infiltrate the church, and secondly, that his teaching was false. We know that as Jesus said in John 14:6 that he is "**..the way, the truth and the life**", that Jesus never once steered away from the truth, not in his life, or in his teachings. The high priest was standing before ***Truth Incarnate***.

We also know from earlier reading that Caiaphas was the one who said, **“It would be expedient that one man should die for the people”**. It was never going to be a fair hearing because Caiaphas, through fear of the Romans, was quick to go along with whatever accusations would be brought against Jesus. His ironic words “that one man should die for the people” was meant as, “it is better that this man dies, than we all die because of the Romans.” Jesus was viewed, by them, as a threat to the Roman’s and also to the Jewish leaders of the church.

1) THE HIGH PRIEST’S QUESTIONING

- When asked about his teaching, Jesus said **“I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.”** The reason behind the questioning was to try and get Jesus to incriminate himself. Interestingly, the Jews had lost the power to put a prisoner to death at this time, and that power belonged to Rome. So even in the matters of their own people they really had no say as far as putting someone to death. This whole Jewish trail was really a sham.

Matt 26:3-5 says: **“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”** The ultimate goal was to get Christ before Pilate to be executed, but to do so in a way that didn’t draw much attention to what they were doing.

If Jesus had taught heresy, he could have rightfully been charged as a false teacher, and then have a reason to be put to death. False prophets would be stoned to death when confirmed as false. But Jesus not only openly taught in the synagogues and temples in the presence of the Jews, but many had also been witness to his miracles, which just further proved him to be who he claimed to be. Jesus said in V21, **“Ask those who have heard me what I said to them, they know what I said”**. After the call of the disciples, Mark’s gospel tells us that Jesus went into Capernaum and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began teaching. Mark 1:22 says **“And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one**

who had authority, and not as the scribes.” Had there been a legitimate charge against the Lord, there would have been no need to come and arrest him at night.

V:22-23 The officers didn't like how Jesus had answered the high priest and struck him. This was the beginning of what would be a very brutal time for Christ physically. Jesus had done nothing worthy of being struck by this officer, they were furious that had could not/would not incriminate himself. Jesus even invites them to “bear witness about the wrong he has done”. We know that at this point Jesus is bound, not because he was so overpowered by the Jewish soldiers that he had no choice, but a reminder that he was willingly bound. He told Peter when Peter cut off the servant's ear **“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”** (Matt 26:53)

Could the Lord have made this man fall at the power of his words like he did when Judas and the band of soldiers came to him in the beginning for Chapter 18? Absolutely, he could have, but as he told Peter, **“this was the cup that the Father has given me..”** We know their eyes were still blind to the Savior and his words were true - **“if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”** Matthew's Gospel gives us more detail of what was going on at the time of Jesus' trial of his Jewish accusers:

Lets read **Matt 26:57-68** **“Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.” Then they spit in his face and**

struck him. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

He came to his own and his own received him not the scripture tells us....Now we see this starting to really play out to the extreme. Sure, many had seen his miracles and some even believed his teachings, but like the scene in John 10 when the Jews picked up stones to stone the Lord, they are still blinded and enraged. In John 10 they wanted to stone him, shortly after this they will be screaming to *Crucify Him!*

In Matthew 26 we see Jesus indicted on one charge (destroying the temple), tried on another (blasphemy), and condemned, not on the testimony of anyone else, but on his own words. According to **Deuteronomy 19:15** **"A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."**

The scripture I just read from Matt 26 said they were seeking false witness against Jesus, **BUT THEY FOUND NONE**, even though many came forward it was very clear whatever would be brought against him was false. They found none, because there were no charges that could be laid to this man's account.

Back in Chapter 10 of John's Gospel (v-25-26) the Jews asked Jesus **"How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."**

You are not among my sheep – This statement by Jesus tells us why they truly raise the accusation of blasphemer to the Savior. They were not his sheep, because Christ's sheep hear his voice!

2) PILATE

- Jesus is now brought to Pilate on the morning of Good Friday. The scene here is Pilate's judgement hall. Pilate meets those that brought Jesus to him, outside and

asked what accusation was being brought against him. They answered, "If this man were not doing evil we would not have delivered him over to you".

Pilate's response to this is pretty telling. He was reluctant to pass judgement on Christ based on what had been brought to him. (However let's make this clear, that does not absolve him of any guilt.) He urged the Jews to judge him by their law (which they could no longer do as that right had been taken away from them).

V.32 says this was to fulfill what Jesus had already said about his death:

- 1) He would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles
 - 2) He would be crucified.
 - a. Crucifixion as you probably know was not a Jewish punishment.
- Pilate's questioning of Jesus starts out by asking him if he is *KING OF THE JEWS*. It certainly seems as if Pilate's line of questioning was a serious attempt to see if this man was really guilty or not. Your own people brought you to me!
 - Jesus is without a doubt king. Its much deeper though than "king of the Jews." Scripture tell's us he is the:
 - *King of Zion - Psalm 2*
 - *King of Glory – Psalm 24*
 - *Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – Isaiah 9*
 - *King of Israel – Isaiah 44*
 - *On his robe and thigh in Rev 19 "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"*

**So, yeah Pilate, I guess you could say he is a king.*

I wont get into the teaching on the kingdom Christ goes into here since Pastor Reggie took us through that a few weeks ago, but we see Christ's clear answer for his reason that his is in the predicament that he is in now. "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

Pilate ask's the famous question "**What is truth**". Some argue that this was a question from a place of curiosity for Pilate and some think Pilate was upset that it was assumed he didn't know the truth. I really wish I knew the answer to how Pilate meant this question to come across by I do not.

What an amazing question though, what is truth? I think it is fair to rabbit trail for a second and say that this is still the leading question in the minds of pretty much every person. Our society has attempted to redefine truth but we know that truth is not based on our preferences or on our own feelings, but truth is based in reality. Truth is not relative it is absolute.

Christ was the only man who could make the statement “I am the Truth” (John 14) and not be telling a lie. We know this because he was sinless. Pilate was standing face to face with perfection/truth/and life and asked this question.

3) BARABBAS OVER JESUS

- Pilate then goes back out to the Jews to tell them what we already know about Jesus. “I find no guilt in him”. Why? Because he was guiltless! Matthew’s gospel tells us of the account of Pilate’s wife’s dream. “while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.”

Pilate’s political side is seen here, when he attempts to please the people and release a prisoner. Even though Pilate knew Christ was guiltless in the matter he offers up Jesus or Barabbas. The crowd chooses this truly guilty criminal over the sinless Son of God.

- Philippians 2 tells us **“Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

(a) Christ humbled himself. Think about this, the Son of God is mentioned in the same breath as a known robber, murderer, and rebel. Literally anyone’s name could have been mentioned with Barabbas and it would be easier to digest.

**Like Barabbas we all deserve to stand trial for our sins, because we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. The miscarriage of justice is not only that an innocent man is found guilty (Jesus) but that a guilty man (Barabbas & US) goes free!

All throughout John 18 we have saw Christ's power, submissiveness, and humility on display.

- 1) band of soldiers fall at his words when Judas comes to him
- 2) giving himself to be bound by the soldiers
- 3) submitting to trail and ridicule, not because he didn't have the power to overcome, but because this was his cross to bear and his cup to drink.

A few thoughts in closing

It is not uncommon anymore to hear of people wrongfully accused and acquitted for crimes they did not do. There are advocacy groups and organizations all over the world that have been formed to work tirelessly to free prisoners who should not be in prison. It is estimated that since 1989 in the US, more than 3,100 people have been exonerated. This is great and we love to hear about these stories.

What made this trail and soon to come death of Christ so special is that there was not an advocacy group trying to overturn his conviction, but actually the opposite. Jesus himself was advocating for his own conviction. We see it through so many of his teachings to the disciples. Jesus said this hour would come when he would do the will of the Father that sent him.

He wasn't trying to get this trial and conviction overturned. Isaiah 53:7 tells us he was **"oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."**

Christ loves to save sinners. Looking back on the trail of Christ in light of the love he has spoken about that he has for his own, we could almost break out in a doxology!

In closing I want to read this:

1 Peter 23-25 tells us: **“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”**