

Saint Luke Ev. Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Lenten Vesper #6. March 16, 2016

John 19:12-16a



¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” ¹³ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. ¹⁵ But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. ¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I’m pretty sure you do not know who John Waller was. John Waller was a highwayman. That is an armed robber and thief – a scoundrel – as they would say back in 1732. Not only was John Waller a robber and thief – he was also a perjurer – that is a liar under oath. John Waller’s false testimony – his lies under oath resulted in the execution of an innocent man. So it happened that when John Waller was pilloried – that is hands and head held in place by boards – so that his neighbors might shame him – John Waller was murdered by a man named Edward Dalton – the brother of the man Waller killed! What a mess. As terrible as that was – we will remember perhaps the ultimate case of perjury in the history of the world – when the Jews perjured themselves

against the Lord Jesus. When Pilate questioned them in open court they lied when they said:

We Have No King But Caesar!

This is the 6th time since we started gathering on Wednesdays this year – to walk beside Jesus to His death on a hill shaped like a skull! As we stand in spirit beside the Lord Jesus today – we have been up through the night. Thursday night – Passover. That’s emotional! A lamb – small and soft and helpless – and we killed it – butchered it! We caught the blood and smeared it on the door frame – just as our people have been doing it for literally thousands of years. We roasted the lamb – whole – on a spit – over the fire. We made Pita bread – flat as a pancake – no time for yeast to rise. We had herbs – bitter as slavery – bitter as sin if that’s possible. We had wine to drink – made last year – from last year’s grapes. It’s all bitter/sweet. We think about the painful hurtful mistakes of the past. We thank the great I AM – for the promise of the forgiveness of all our sins for the sake of the ultimate Lamb of God – who will take away the sins of the world! There was singing of Psalms – men singing – chanting God’s Word. There is nothing quite like that – men singing A Capella – from the ♥! Then out into the dark – through the massive old city wall – down by the Brook Kidron – water flowing in the moon light. Up ahead is the Garden of Gethsemane – pudgy olive trees from all the way back to King David himself. Here was a quiet place – out of the way – where the Rabbi liked to come to pray without being disturbed! The Teacher was intense – more intense than they had ever seen Him. He went ahead of them – ahead of Peter, James and John – farther still he throws himself to the ground and prays again and again – to the point that his sweat is dark – like drops of blood – as Jesus was in spiritual mortal combat – His soul in anguish! He was

praying about a cup of suffering that he would drink to the bottom – to the bitter little crumbles at the bottom of the cup. He would drink it all – to save us. Then came Judas – one of the inner circle – betraying Jesus – selling Him out for a paltry 30 silver coins! Arrested – Jesus goes before Annas – the man who was supposed to be High Priest – but what – because he irritated the Romans he wasn't High Priest? His son in law Caiaphas is High Priest. They go to Caiaphas and he condemns Jesus as worthy of death for blasphemy – for offending His Heavenly Father by claiming to be God Himself? Then off to Pilate. One more hurdle and Jesus will die! Pilate tells the Jews to judge Jesus by their own laws – but that won't work because they want Jesus condemned to death. Pilate tries to pass the buck – sending Jesus to King Herod. That's ok. They can scream at Jesus in front of Herod, too. Herod sends Jesus – dressed in an elegant robe – back to Pilate. What is it going to take?

¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free... From then on – that is after *Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face. ⁴ Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"* Most of the time – you can get very angry at someone. You can feel like road rage – when someone cuts you off – or pushes or shoves you at the Packer game or the Brewer game because they are drunk and rude. You can be bothered when you are waiting in line at the grocery store – and somebody runs their grocery cart over your toes – and doesn't even acknowledge that they did. But if you

were to see that same person – all beaten and bloody – misused and abused – looking helpless and defenseless – somewhere deep down inside you feel a little pity – a little sympathy – and so? But not the Chief Priests – the teachers of the Law – the Pharisees – the rabble that had gathered in the court yard that Friday morning. They literally screamed, **“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”**

Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” ¹³ **When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).** ¹⁴ **It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.** ¹⁵ **But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”** Pilate tried to set Jesus free. My earthly father would say, “Try harder!” Humanly speaking – all Pilate had to do was get the attention of the nearest Roman Centurion – point at the crowd and gesture meaningfully – problem solved. Roman soldiers were the fiercest fighters in the world. A few years ago – there was a movie with Russell Crowe – that opened with the Roman legions fighting the Barbarians. The Romans did this thing with their massive shields – called a testudo – quite literally a tortoise shell – a shell that bristled with Roman spears and Roman swords. At the very first – the Roman line absorbed the best of the barbarian attack. Then the Romans started to move forward – slowly but surely – they literally hacked and trampled their enemy. Then from both sides at the same time – Roman ranks attacked – to the left and to the right – while the center continued it’s relentless advance. When the barbarians couldn’t stand it anymore – and were on the brink of panic and stampede – here came the Romans from behind. They were

surrounded – cut off – utterly defeated and destroyed. The Romans took no prisoners. Pilate tried to set Jesus free – perhaps in his heart and mind – but not with the Roman *gladius* – a short and utterly deadly sword!

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. ¹⁵ **But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.** The chief priests loved their religious and political power – thus they hated Jesus and everything Jesus stood for. The chief priests had no idea what the kingdom of God is all about. Do we? We pray about it – all the time! “Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done – on earth as it is in Heaven.” God’s Kingdom is not a place – over here or over there. It is the power of the Gospel in the hearts and lives of God’s people! Luther nails it – when he write, God’s name – His saving reputation – indeed everything about God that is made known in Scripture happens – whether we pray about it or not! What we pray is that it happens – in my heart – my life – my family and yours! Jesus’ saving reputation is all over God’s Word. The question is – are we going to read our Bible or leave it on the shelf – or leave it on the night stand – to dust – but not to read? The question is – are we going to read our *Forward in Christ* – read our *Meditations* – read our e-devotion from the Synod – watch the live stream devotion from our Luther Preparatory School and from our Lakeside Lutheran High School? Are we going to read the holy week devotions e-mailed from our Martin Luther College? Are we going to take that little red *My Prayer Book* that we got from our Pastors for Confirmation – and pray the 30 morning prayers and 30 evening prayers each month? Are we going to come to Sunday School and Teen Bible Class and Adult Bible Class – or not? Will we come to

church each Wednesday in Advent and Lent and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Ascension and all the other opportunities we have – or not? God’s name will be hallowed. His kingdom will come and His will most certainly will be done. What remains to be seen is – will it happen among us or will someone else be blessed? Will our nation be blessed or not? The blessings or the judgment will not only fall on we who are old. Blessings or discipline will fall on our children and our children’s children. What about them?

16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. Finally Pilate caved! He folded as they say – like a cheap suit! Pilate gave in to peer pressure – to political pressure. It didn’t matter that Jesus hadn’t done anything wrong. It didn’t matter that Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had brought Jesus to him. It didn’t matter that sending him to Herod didn’t work. And it didn’t matter that they chose Barabbas over Jesus. It didn’t matter that Pilate’s wife told him don’t have anything to do with that innocent Man! Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified! Irony of ironies – it looked like evil triumphed – that the bad guys won yet again. The fact is – this was but one more time where all things work together for good. One more time when people intended evil – but God made it work out for our eternal rescue. The innocent Lamb of God would go uncomplaining forth to pay for all my weaknesses, all my failures, all my painful hurtful mistakes. Jesus died to forgive all the good I have left undone. And Jesus died for all your sins, too – no matter how awful – no matter how inexcusable!

16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. There has been countless times when people perjured themselves – said things that were patiently false – and they knew it. Bernie Madoff lied again and again as he tried

desperately in vain to cover up his Ponzi scheme – taking \$ from one person to pay off another person – to postpone the exposure of his thievery and embezzling. Marc Fuhrman pleaded no contest to charges of perjury in the murder trial of O.J. Simpson. That wasn't good. Marion Jones was found guilty of perjury when she lied under oath. She said she didn't take steroids – but she did. And so they stripped her of 3 Olympic Gold Medals and 2 Bronze Medals. That was sad, too. Jeffrey Archer went to Oxford. He was a member of the House of Lords – then he was caught in a scandal and almost bankrupted. Then he became a novelist and wrote books. Do you know how many copies sold? 330 million! Troubles again – lies in court – and some 4 years in prison for perjury! How can that happen? Truth be told – we all make mistakes. We all say things we wish we didn't. Jesus was handed over to be crucified for all the times we have said things we knew weren't true. All the times we repeated gossip. All the times we said things that weren't true to try and spare ourselves from some painful consequences. Jesus was condemned and Jesus died – to forgive us. Let us spend here and now and eternity to say, **“Thank you, Jesus!”** Amen!

To God alone all glory!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rev. Anthony P. Schmitt", is centered within a light blue rectangular background.