

REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 84: “THE TRUE AND INNOCENT KING”

LUKE 23:1-12

Ps. Eric Yee

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone! If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 84 of our sermon series called “Rediscover Jesus,” where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon: “The True and Innocent King.”

Sermon Introduction

My wife and I recently watched a movie called “Damsel.”

<Show picture of damselmovie.png>



The premise of the movie is that the royal family, for no apparent reason at all, has killed the only three freshly hatched dragons of a mother dragon. And in order for all the people in the land to be spared their lives, the dragon demands that, every generation, the royal family must present their own three offspring of royal blood as sacrifice.

<Show picture of damselcouple.png>



But this royal family devises a plan that, every generation, rather than sacrificing their *own* offspring, the prince marries three different, unsuspecting women—one at a time. And at the end of their marriage ceremony, on the top of a mountain that overlooks a cliff, they do this blood ceremony where they each cut their hands and mix their blood together, so that his new wife has the scent of royal blood.

<Show picture of damselthrow.png>



And then the prince carries his new bride in his arms, and it's supposed to be this wonderful picture of love and romance, where the bridegroom carries his bride home to be his wedded wife for the rest of his life.

But instead, he chucks her off the cliff to present her as the sacrifice for the dragon.

<pause>

Now, this is obviously *not* the way it's supposed to be. In marriage, the two have been made one, and the husband is supposed to love and care for and protect his wife for the rest of his life.

He—as the *husband*, as the *king-to-be*—should be the one jumping headfirst into the cliff to give up his life for his bride. But in an act of terrible cowardice and evil, he throws his *innocent* wife off the cliff, and he sacrifices *her* life for the sake of his *own*.

And so, as you see this all happen in the movie, you can't help but feel like this is terribly wrong.

But thank God that our King is *not* like that wicked king-to-be.

Christ (the bridegroom) does *not* present his bride (the Church) as sacrifice. Rather, our King, though he is perfectly innocent, gives himself as a willing sacrifice to love and care for and protect his bride, though she is truly sinful.

Our King innocently suffers in the place of his guilty bride to save her eternally from her sins.

And that's what we'll look at more closely today.

The One Thing

Jesus is the true King who innocently suffered in the place of sinners.

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 23:1-12.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

We are in the morning of Jesus' crucifixion.

It's already been a long night for him with the betrayal of his disciple Judas and his arrest at the Garden of Gethsemane; and the denials of his other disciple Peter, mocking and beatings from the temple guards, and pretrial questioning at the high priest's house (Luke 22:47-65; cf. John 18:19-24).

And at the crack of dawn, the Sanhedrin (or the religious council of 71 elders that made up the supreme court for the Jewish people) held a formal trial of Jesus, where their sole purpose was to incriminate Jesus by getting him to admit to being the Christ—the long-awaited messianic King in the line David that God had promised to send (Luke 22:66-71).

Jesus finally responds, "You say that I am" (Luke 22:70). They take that to be his admission, they deem it to be blasphemy because they don't believe he is really the Christ, and they conclude their trial, deeming Jesus guilty and deserving of death (Luke 22:71; cf. Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:64).

And that's where we are in today's passage.

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 23:1-12.

¹ Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." ³ And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." ⁵ But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

This is God's Word.

Overview

We'll look at this passage in three parts:

- I. Jesus is declared innocent (vv. 1-4)
- II. Pilate abdicates responsibility (vv. 5-7)
- III. Herod mocks the true King (vv. 8-12)

I. Jesus is declared innocent (vv. 1-4)

Look at verses 1-2.

[¹ Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”]

The Sanhedrin has tried and found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, which was punishable by death, but they did not have the right to execute the death penalty. Since the Jews were under Roman occupation, only the Romans had the legal authority to inflict capital punishment.

And so, they bring Jesus to Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman authority over the province of Judea.

Normally, he would have been in Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem during the week of Passover to maintain peace and to prevent any rebellious activities or riots, as Jews from all around Judea came into the city to celebrate the Passover.¹

So the Sanhedrin bring Jesus to Pilate and begin to *accuse* him.

The first charge of “misleading our nation” meant that Jesus was leading people away from loyalty to Rome and inciting rebellion. This would have caught Pilate’s attention because he was in Jerusalem to stop this kind of Zealot movement that sought to overthrow Roman rule and re-establish Israel’s autonomy.

The second charge of “forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar” meant that Jesus was telling the Jews that it was wrong to pay taxes to Caesar. This would have caught Pilate’s attention because he was in charge of collecting these taxes.

The third charge of “saying that he himself is Christ, a king” meant that Jesus was setting himself up as a rival king to Caesar. This would have caught Pilate’s attention because, in the Roman empire, there was to be no king except Caesar.

So the Sanhedrin are basically trying to portray Jesus as this influential political rebel who's a major threat to the Roman rule.

But notice, that’s *not* what the Sanhedrin *originally* charged and found Jesus guilty of.

In their trial of Jesus earlier that morning, they found Jesus guilty of *blasphemy*.

But here, as they accuse Jesus before Pilate, there’s no mention of blasphemy at all. Instead, they accuse Jesus of being this dangerous political revolutionary—as if Jesus were some kind of insurrectionist lurking inside the Roman empire.

They know that Pilate, as a Roman authority, could care less about any religious charges of blasphemy. So, as the Sanhedrin is seeking the death penalty for Jesus, they spin their charge against him in a way that makes it seem as if he’s this terrible political danger to the Romans.

But all these charges were all *false*.

¹ Study note on Luke 23:1 in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

Jesus was *not* misleading the nation, but he was leading them into the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Jesus was *not* forbidding Jews to pay taxes to Caesar, but he had famously said, “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Luke 20:25) and he was even known to associate with tax collectors (Luke 5:27-30; 7:34; 15:1; cf. 18:9-14).

Now Jesus *was* the Christ, the long-awaited messianic King in the line of David, but he was not the *kind* of King that everyone expected him to be. His first coming was *not* to overthrow the Roman government, but it was to accomplish salvation for sinners—for the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

So all these charges were clearly false.

<pause>

But remember, these were the religious council of 71 elders that made up the supreme court for the Jewish people who were making these false charges. These were men who were adamant about adhering to God’s Law.

And yet, somehow, they were able to justify these false charges in their own minds and conscience.

Perhaps they thought that they weren’t *really* lying. They were just making their religious charge more relevant to Pilate by spinning it as a political charge.

Perhaps they even alluded to Scripture, pointing to how their forefather Abraham spun the truth about his wife Sarah, calling her his sister, to preserve his life in a foreign land (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18). And they foolishly thought to themselves, “Well, if Abraham did it, surely we can do this as well.”

Perhaps they *knew* they were lying, but somehow justified it as for the greater good. “Yes, we’re lying, but it’s because Jesus is threatening the status quo and our way of life. So in order to preserve life, we need to lie and take his life.”

Who really knows what was going through their minds? But “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9).

But somehow, in some twisted, self-justifying way, all this made perfect sense to the Sanhedrin.

But are *we* so different?

Ask yourself: “How have I spun the truth for my own purposes?”

- Perhaps you’re late for a meeting because you didn’t leave on time, but then you blame your lateness on the traffic, so that you don’t risk coming off as irresponsible or undisciplined.
- Perhaps you engage in questionable business practices, but you rationalize it away by telling yourself that everyone does this, and therefore it must be ok.
- Perhaps you downplay a much bigger issue in your personal life or family—like how you make or spend money, sexual sin, or anger—making it seem or sound like not a big deal, because you’re fearful of the consequences if people around you really knew.
- Perhaps when you’re confiding in someone, you exaggerate and selectively omit information as you recount your interactions with someone else, painting yourself in a positive light and the other person

in a negative light, so that people will think the best of you—even at the expense of how they think about the other person.

And when you think of such moments, are you tempted to still justify yourself?

- Perhaps you think it was only a white lie that everyone tells.
- Perhaps you think of creative ways to misapply Scripture or the gospel for your own comfort.
- Perhaps you think that it was for the greater good, and surely God would understand.

But look here again at the Sanhedrin and the false charges they are bringing against Jesus—and see the same tendency *we* have to spin the truth for our own purposes. We're *all* prone to *convince* ourselves that the wrong we do is somehow right.

The *Sanhedrin* may have fooled themselves. And *we* may fool ourselves or even others. But *God* is not fooled.

<pause>

And here, we see that *Pilate* is also not so easily fooled.

By the way that the Sanhedrin was presenting all these charges, he would have expected to find some Jewish resistance fighter.

Instead, he sees the gentle and lowly Jesus, who has already been mocked and beaten by the temple guards earlier that night. Nothing about Jesus screams political rebel or dangerous insurrectionist.

Not only that, but what was odd about all this is that it was the *Sanhedrin* that was bringing this up to Pilate.

Pilate didn't have much regard for the Jewish religion, and he had once brought pagan Roman soldiers into the temple to take money and use it to build an aqueduct.² So Pilate was *not* popular with the Jewish people and he didn't have the best relationship with the Sanhedrin. And so, the *last* people he would expect to care about protecting Roman rule over the Jews would be the *Sanhedrin*—the Jewish religious authorities.

In fact, the other Gospel accounts tell us that Pilate perceived that it was out of *envy* that they had delivered Jesus to him and called for his death (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

So Pilate clearly knows that something is *not* right here.

But he cannot ignore these charges, so he questions Jesus. And he focuses primarily on the third charge against Jesus—that he is setting himself up as a rival king to Caesar.

Look at verses 3-4.

[³ And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."]

Pilate asks Jesus directly, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus pretty much gives the same response as he told the Sanhedrin earlier that morning, "You have said so." And surprisingly, Pilate doesn't respond by declaring Jesus guilty as the Sanhedrin did, but he gives the *opposite* verdict. He says to the Sanhedrin and the unfavorable crowds that they brought against Jesus, "I find no guilt in this man."

² Study note on Luke 23:1 in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

So what is going on here?

Now, we need to understand that Luke is consolidating events. This conversation that Pilate has with Jesus is not just one question and one response, but John's Gospel account gives us more detail into their exchange.

If you look at John chapter 18...

- Pilate first asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews, and he responds by asking Pilate if he really thinks he is or if it's just that others are saying this about him (John 18:33-34).
- Pilate responds by basically saying that he's not a Jew and he could care less, and he asks Jesus what he has done that his own people have delivered him over to him to be killed (John 18:35).
- And then Jesus responds, "My kingdom is not of this world..." (John 18:36).
- Then Pilate asks again, "So you are a king?" And then Jesus answers, "You say that I am a king" (John 18:37).

So in essence, as soon as Pilate hears that Jesus' kingdom is *not* of this world, then he realizes that Jesus is *not* a rival king to Caesar. All that Pilate is concerned about is the Roman empire, so if Jesus is a king of another world, it doesn't concern him in the least bit.

And that's why Pilate returns to the Sanhedrin and the crowds to give his verdict: "I find no guilt in this man."

So the Roman authority declares that Jesus is innocent of all the charges that were brought against him

In fact, Jesus is the only perfectly innocent man the world has ever known, for he was without sin. Throughout his life, he was tempted in every respect as we are, yet was without sin (Heb. 4:15).

And that is the tragic irony of it all. "He came to his own. And his own people did not receive him" (John 1:10).

Even the *pagan* Roman authority, Pontius Pilate, can recognize Jesus' innocence, and yet the perfectly innocent Jesus is deemed guilty by his *own* people.

His own people ought to have acknowledged and submitted to him as their long-awaited messianic King, but instead, they are so blinded by the deceitfulness of their own hearts that they can somehow justify to themselves the rejection and killing of the only perfectly innocent person the world has ever known.

<pause>

So first, Jesus is declared innocent; and second...

II. Pilate abdicates responsibility (vv. 5-7)

Now, after Pilate gave his verdict, that should have been the end of the trial. That's how trials work. Charges are brought, there is an interrogation, and then a verdict is reached. And after the verdict of "guilty" or "not guilty" is heard, the trial doesn't keep going. But unfortunately, that's exactly what's going on here—even *after* the verdict of "not guilty," Jesus' trial continues.

Look at verse 5.

[⁵ But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”]

The Sanhedrin and the crowds basically *protest* Pilate’s verdict on the spot.

“They were urgent” could also be translated as “they insisted” (NIV), “they kept on insisting” (NASB), or “they were the more fierce” (NKJV).

Basically, the Sanhedrin and the crowds were *unrelenting*. They wouldn’t accept the verdict of “not guilty.” They came to Pilate with one sole purpose—for him to issue the death penalty to Jesus—and they were *not* leaving until they saw Jesus hanging dead on a cross.

So they keep accusing Jesus of being a political rebel, essentially saying, “You may *think* he looks innocent enough, but he’s a dangerous rebel. He’s causing social unrest and instigating a rebellious movement through his teaching *throughout* Judea. Look, he started in *Galilee*, and it’s already spread all the way here to *Jerusalem*. You *cannot* let him go free, but you *must* do something to stop him.”

You get the sense that they’re getting louder and louder. Perhaps Pilate is even starting to feel that this could be the beginning stages of a riot in Jerusalem... under *his* watch.

So he faces a dilemma. He *honestly* believes that Jesus is *innocent* of all the charges that the Sanhedrin has brought against him, and that he is definitely *not* deserving of death. But at the same time, he’s *in* Jerusalem right now to keep the peace and prevent any rebellious activities or riots.

So should he do what is *right* by letting Jesus go free, and risk a riot breaking out, which would look very bad for him as the Roman authority in charge of that place?

Or should he do what he knows is *wrong* by killing an innocent man, which would prevent a riot and keep the peace, and would also protect his reputation as a capable Roman governing authority?

You can begin to feel the tension inside Pilate. But then, after hearing that Jesus is from *Galilee*, he thinks of a possible way out.

Could there be a way to abdicate—or avoid—his responsibility to judge at all? That’s what Pilate hopes for and what he begins to pursue.

Look at verses 6-7.

[⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.]

According to Roman law, a person could be tried *either* in the place where he was accused or in the province where he came from.³

So after confirming that Jesus is indeed from Galilee, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, the Roman authority over Galilee, who also happened to be in Jerusalem during the week of Passover.

³ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

Now just to give a bit of background on Herod, this is Herod Antipas.

His *father*, Herod the Great, was the Roman authority in Judea around the time of Jesus' birth who ordered the *slaughter* of all the male children in Bethlehem and in that region who were two years old and under (Matt. 2:16).

And Herod Antipas was not much better than his father in his cruelty. In this midst of his birthday banquet, at the request of his wife's daughter, Herod had John the Baptist beheaded and his head brought on a platter to give to her (Matt. 14:6-11; Mark 6:21-38). And later on, in the book of Acts, we see that he "laid *violent* hands on some who belonged to the church," being responsible for the murder of the apostle James and intending also to kill the apostle Peter (Acts 12:1-19).

So Herod was a *cruel* Roman authority that had a track record for killing righteous men. And Pilate *knew* this.

So in sending Jesus to Herod, he likely expected Herod to do his dirty work (so to speak). Pilate, in a sense, was unwilling to violate his *own* conscience in sentencing an innocent man to death, but he seemed to have no trouble allowing someone *else* to do what he knew to be wrong.

Also, in referring this trial to Herod, Pilate was also, in a way, giving Herod a "gracious compliment"⁴: "Herod, although Jesus was accused *here* and is under *my* jurisdiction, he's also from *Galilee* and under *your* jurisdiction, and I personally think that you're better suited to try this case than I am. Why don't you have the honors of judging this case?"

We'll see later in verses 12 that Pilate and Herod had a rocky relationship, so if Pilate could compliment Herod in this way, it would only be for the better for their relationship.

So this seemed like a great solution for Pilate.

If Jesus is killed at the hands of Herod, then the Sanhedrin and the crowds will be satisfied and a potential riot in Jerusalem will be successfully averted. And so, his reputation as the Roman authority over that place will be kept intact.

And if he's *not* responsible for the wrongful death of an innocent man, then he feels like his conscience is clear. Jesus' blood would be on King Herod's hands rather than his own.

And even more, by *abdicating*—or *forsaking*—his responsibility to judge this case and *passing* it to Herod, he can pay a compliment Herod and begin to mend a shaky relationship with him.

<pause>

Now for us, whether we like it or not, we *all* have responsibilities. And oftentimes, due to our sinful nature, we are tempted to *abdicate* or *forsake* them—and *push* them to someone else.

In the workplace, I'm sure there are people who abdicate responsibility and pass it to others. But generally, if we have jobs, most of us would not suddenly stop showing up at work or just sit there and do nothing because we know there will be more immediate consequences. Our supervisor will contact us, we may get demoted, we may lose our jobs, we may not have income to support ourselves. So we work hard, even outside of work hours, to make sure that we fulfill our work responsibilities.

⁴ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

Yet, when it comes to other areas of our lives, when we don't see the immediate consequences, we're prone to abdicate our responsibilities.

Husbands, God has divinely called you to take the primary responsibility for Christ-like servant leadership in your family (Eph. 5:22-33). Just as the church has been made one body with Christ, so your wife has been made one flesh with you. So are you nourishing and cherishing your wife as your own body? Are you giving up yourself to sanctify your wife as Christ does his church? Do you know how your wife is *really* doing, and does she know how you're *really* doing? And are you leading yourself and her back to God through the Word and prayer and songs of worship?

Fathers, God has divinely called you to take the primarily responsibility to bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). So in partnership with your wife, are you raising your kids to know and love the Lord above anything else? Do they know that is your utmost desire for them? Do you apologize to them, so they know that you are also a sinner who needs the gospel just as much as they do? Is worshipping the Lord together with your church each Sunday a non-negotiable in your family?

These are hard responsibilities, but husbands and fathers, these are our God-given responsibilities that we dare not abdicate—for the sake of our own souls, for the overall well-being of our spouse and kids, and ultimately for the glory of our God, whose name we bear and whom we reflect in our families.

I know it's tempting to abdicate these responsibilities and pass them to your wife, children, parents, nannies, helpers, schools, or other church leaders or programs. Yes, they can all partner with you, but God holds *you* primarily responsible for leading your wife and kids.

<pause>

I'm not speaking about this as someone who is so great at it. In fact, I'm not and I can't say it comes naturally, but by the grace of God, I'm getting better. It's easier for me at times as well to get too focused on work, not realizing that I'm actually *functionally* abdicating my responsibility to be present and lead my family well. At times, my wife has pointed these things out, and we've had good conversations about them.

So again, I say these things not as someone who has it all together, but as a fellow sinner who is struggling and striving to be faithful in this area.

If you are struggling, need prayer, or even just need some ideas on how to do this better, please talk to me and others in our church. As husbands and fathers, we bear the *primary* responsibility but not the *sole* responsibility. But God's good design. He's given us the church to come alongside us to do this together.

<pause>

And for every Christian—whether you're married, single, with or without children—consider the spiritual family that you are a part of—whether that's our local church or another—and the responsibilities that God's given us to care for, love, and disciple one another.

As members of the family of God, Scripture calls us to love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, rejoice and weep with one another, encourage one another, build one another up, and guard one another in the gospel.

Our Membership Covenant seeks to summarize the “one another” responsibilities that God’s Word calls us to, but at a bare minimum, we’re responsible to be regularly present and in relationships where we are intentionally helping one another in our followership of Christ.

Of course, we ought to aim for more than the bare minimum, but just imagine how powerful of a witness it would be if every member in the church were regularly present and could give regular evidence of intentionally helping one another in their followership of Christ.

But even in thinking about that, it can be tempting to be think about other members and *not* yourself.

So ask yourself: Are you doing for others in the church what you would expect them to do for you? If you want people to be regularly present and to encourage and challenge you in your followership of Christ, are you seeking to do that for others?

It can be tempting to abdicate these God-given responsibilities we have as members in a local church—and pass it onto particular people or programs in the church.

But if we understand ourselves to be a spiritual family, then these “one anothers” that God calls us to live out are *our* responsibilities. It’s *not* primarily the pastors’ responsibilities or the deacons’ responsibilities, but this is a *family* affair—of which each of us are a vital part.

I know I say this all time, but it’s worth saying again and again because this is how God designed local churches to be:

Elders *lead* ministry, deacons *facilitate* ministry, and the *congregation* (the *whole* family) *does* ministry.

Don’t end up resembling *Pilate* who *abdicated* responsibility, but strive to resemble *Jesus* who *accepted* responsibility for even the most undeserving of sinners.

<pause>

So first, Jesus is declared innocent; second, Pilate abdicates responsibility; and third...

III. Herod mocks the true King (vv. 8-12)

Look at verses 8-10.

[⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.]

So Herod gladly receives the responsibility to try Jesus’ case, but look at the reason given: “because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to *see* some *sign* done by him.”

Jesus did most of his public ministry in Galilee, so Herod had heard a lot about him, but what particularly caught his attention were the miraculous “signs” that Jesus had performed in his ministry (Luke 9:7-9; cf. Matt. 14:1; Mark 6:14).

Perhaps he heard of Jesus casting out demons, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, multiplying loaves and fish, and so forth.

But these were all “signs” that accompanied Jesus’ *teaching*, and they were meant to confirm *who* he is and *what* he says. For example, before healing a paralyzed man, Jesus said that he was doing it so that they may *know* that he has the authority on earth to forgive sins—and then he healed the paralyzed man (Luke 5:23-25). And when he empowered and sent his disciples out, God’s Word says, “And they departed and went through the villages, *preaching* the gospel and *healing* everywhere” (Luke 9:6).

The “signs” confirm the *person* and the *message* of the gospel—the good news of forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus alone.

Yet Herod is *not* interested in *who* and *what* the signs confirm. Rather, he only wishes to be entertained by the signs. He wants to see Jesus do some sort of miracle right before his eyes, as if Jesus were some sort of *performer*.

Remember, this was a *trial*. Jesus was on trial on the charges of being a political rebel and setting himself up as a rival king to Caesar. And yet, Herod is “very glad” because he has the opportunity to hopefully be *entertained* by Jesus.

But in verse 9, it says that Jesus “made him no answer.” Even though Herod “questioned him at some length,” Jesus doesn’t respond to Herod at all.

In fact, Herod is the *only* person recorded in Scripture that speaks to Jesus and to whom Jesus said nothing at all in return.⁵

Jesus’ silence reveals *three* things about what Jesus knew; it revealed what Jesus knew about *Herod*, what he knew about his heavenly *Father*, and what he knew about *himself*.

First, Jesus knew that *Herod* was not really interested in him or any of his responses. This trial was just a show, and Herod’s questions were just part of that show. All Herod was interested in was seeing some kind of miraculous sign from Jesus, so that he might be entertained.

And Jesus would *not* gratify such a wicked desire, for Jesus had previously said that “an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign” (Matt. 12:39; cf. Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29).

Second, Jesus knew that his heavenly *Father* is the one who ultimately judges justly, and so he had no need to justify or vindicate himself before men.

This is what the apostle Peter later notes about Jesus’ trials: “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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” (1 Pet. 2:22-23).

In verse 10, we see that the religious leaders are “vehemently” hurling accusations against Jesus, just as they did during his trial under Pilate.

“Vehemently accusing” can also be translated as “*shouting* their accusations” (NLT).

⁵ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

They are loudly demanding for the death penalty. They expect Herod, of all people, who ordered the execution of John the Baptist at his own birthday party, to issue the same order of execution for Jesus.

So amidst the *shouting* of false accusations by the religious leaders and amidst the *questioning* of the wicked Herod, Jesus does *not* panic or retaliate, but he continues to silently *entrust* himself to his heavenly Father who ultimately judges justly.

Third and perhaps most profound, Jesus knew *himself* to be the “suffering servant King”⁶ of Isaiah 53. Listen to what God spoke through the prophet Isaiah about 700 years before the coming of Jesus in . . .

Isaiah 53:6-7

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

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.

In the Old Testament, God’s people needed to present animal sacrifices to *atone* for—or to be *forgiven* of—their sins against God. It was to be a reminder to them that their sin deserves death, but instead of *them* dying for their sin, this *animal* is acting as their substitute, bearing their sins and dying for them in their place.

And so, here in Isaiah 53, we see that all people are compared to sheep who have turned away from God; we’ve all sinned against him and are rightfully deserving of death.

But God speaks of a suffering servant King whom he will send to be a substitute sheep on our behalf. All of our sins—or “the iniquity of us all”—will be laid upon *him* in *our* place. And *he* will be like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, dying the death that *we* deserved, so that all who repent and trust in him may be forgiven their sins.

And so, how do we *recognize* this suffering servant King—this substitute Savior?

One of the ways that is highlighted in this prophecy is that he will be *silent*. He will *not* open his mouth. He will be “like a sheep that before its shearers is *silent*.”

And that’s what we see here with Jesus before Herod.

Ultimately, Jesus is silent because he is the promised Savior for his people. Jesus is the true King who innocently suffers in the place of sinners.

Now, let’s look at verses 11-12.

[¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.]

⁶ Tim Mackie, “Isaiah and the Suffering Servant King,” May 31, 2017, <https://bibleproject.com/articles/isaiah-and-the-suffering-servant-king>.

Amidst all the shouting and questioning, Jesus doesn't do or say anything, and Herod begins to lose patience. If *Jesus* will not entertain him with a miraculous, then *Herod* will entertain himself by making a spectacle out of Jesus.

Herod and the Roman soldiers with him "treated him with contempt and mocked him."

And to top off their mocking of Jesus, Herod puts "splendid clothing" on Jesus—to sarcastically dress him up as a king—and he sends him back to Pilate, which we know later on from verse 15 meant that Herod *also* did not find Jesus guilty of any of the charges that the religious authorities were accusing him of.

On some level, this must have been very *disappointing* to Pilate, for he had hoped that Herod would kill Jesus for him. He wanted to *abdicate* his responsibility and pass the decision-making to Herod, but again, Jesus is right in front of him, and he's left with the same dilemma that he previously tried to escape. He has nobody else to pass the responsibility to, so he must come to a decision.

But on another level, this also must have been somewhat *flattering* to Pilate. By Herod sending Jesus back to Pilate, he was, in a way, returning the same *compliment* back to Pilate⁷: "Pilate, thank you for thinking so highly of me to judge this important case, but I personally think that you are better suited to try this case than I am, so I would not think of depriving you of this great honor of rendering judgment in this case."

And so, in verse 12, we see that these two Roman authorities who were once at *enmity* with one another "became *friends* with each other that very day."

Rather than believing in Jesus and getting reconciled to God, Pilate and Herod were reconciled to each other by mistreating Jesus.⁸

<pause>

Now, in light of all this, it's *not* surprising that *Herod*, who did *not* believe in Jesus as the Christ, would mock him in this kind of way.

But what *ought* to be surprising is when *believers* mock Jesus in similar ways. When I say "mock," I don't just mean the kind of ridicule that we see Herod and the soldiers participating in. But I want us to notice the kind of *heart* that Herod had that *produced* this kind of mocking of Jesus.

He wanted to be entertained. He wanted Jesus to perform for him. He wanted some kind of experience from Jesus. And when Jesus would not jump when he said "jump" (so to speak), Herod quickly turned from being "very glad" to see Jesus to treating him with "contempt."

Can you relate to that in your own relationship with God?

Do you ever wonder to yourself, "If God really loved me, he would do this," or "If God were really good, then he wouldn't do this"?

⁷ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

Perhaps you subconsciously expect God...

- to get you into the school or job you want,
- to provide you with the financial security you expect,
- to give you the significant other that you've been praying for,
- to change the state of your parents' marriage,
- to keep you from pain and suffering.

And these things become "signs" to you that God really loves you and that he's really good.

But Jesus has *already* given us the greatest sign of his love and goodness in his bloody cross and empty tomb. What greater *sign* could we ask for? What greater *demonstration* of his love and goodness could be given?

Still, when Jesus said, "It is finished," we find ourselves saying in our hearts, "No it's not." We want him to *perform* some more for us. And when he does what we want him to do, we're "very glad." But when he *doesn't* do what we *want* him to do, or when he *does* what we *don't* want him to do, we begin to treat him with "contempt."

That was the heart of Herod. And perhaps we see some semblance of that in our *own* hearts.

It's the heart that "dresses up" Jesus as king in our lives, but it's really just a sarcastic mocking of him. It's the heart that does not *really* acknowledge and submit to Jesus as the true King, but it puts Jesus on trial where we sit as a judge and the only way we'll be pleased with him is if he performs to our liking.

Brothers and sisters, if we find any seed of this kind of mocking of King Jesus in our hearts, then we need to *repent*.

The gospel is *for* mocking sinners like us. The good news is that, though we have all sinned against our Creator, he loves us still and sent his Son to be the perfectly innocent sacrifice on our behalf to take the punishment that we deserved for our sins, and to resurrect from the grave as the greatest sign of confirmation that Jesus really is the true King and he really does provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who turn away from their sins in repentance and turn towards him in faith.

The preaching of God's Word is not meant for our entertainment, but it is meant to drive us to *respond*.

So whether you're not a believer or you've been a believer as far back as you remember, whether it's for the very first time or for the millionth time, Jesus the true King still calls all of us to turn to him in repentance and faith, so that we may know his full forgiveness, his loving embrace, and the eternal life he freely gives us. So respond to him today.

Conclusion

Now, as we close, I want us to hear an eyewitness account of a man who watched a little white lamb being presented for sacrifice at a temple in India.

And as he witnessed this sacrifice, he could not help but to think of the parallels between the slaughter of this innocent lamb with the suffering of our innocent King, Jesus Christ—and that's what I want us to listen for as well. This is what he writes:

As I watched everything unfolding from my perch atop a large boulder beside the temple, I directed my attention for some time to this poor little lamb and thought I'd never seen anything that looked so pure, so innocent, and so gentle. . . . What made it all the more profound and relevant was the particularly nasty treatment of this same creature. . . . And that's what really got me. It was SO like how it indeed was with our Lord. The MOST pure, and innocent, and gentle, enduring the MOST terrible misuse and mistreatment and death—pushed about, surrounded, roughly handled, and frightfully killed. . . . They hacked its head off and threw its lifeless body on the bloody ground. My God! Is this not powerful? From this can we not grasp even a little of what He undertook—the horrible, frightful anguish He endured Himself for our sakes?⁹

Jesus is the Most High King (Ps. 42:7) and *also* the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53). He is the Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5) and *also* “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

He alone is immeasurably glorious and perfectly innocent. And yet, he endured immeasurable suffering in the place of guilty sinners.

Today is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Passion (or Holy) Week, where we remember the last week of Jesus' life before his crucifixion on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

So throughout this week, let's allow this picture of Jesus being led like a lamb to the slaughter to impress itself upon our minds and hearts. Though *we* were truly guilty of our sins, our King, though perfectly innocent, chose to suffer and die in our place to take the punishment that our sins deserve.

Praise God that Christ (our bridegroom) does not offer up his bride (the Church) as sacrifice, but he willingly lays down his own life as sacrifice for his bride.

And so, let's continue to entrust our lives to him and worship him as our true King.

The One Thing

Jesus is the true King who innocently suffered in the place of sinners.

Let's pray.

⁹ Steve Ringesen, in an e-mail report to Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church on October 31, 2006, quoted in Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).