

Stations of the Cross

Episode #3 - Trial and Scourging at Pilate's Fortress

Jesus before Pilate - Station #5

1. Read together Luke 23: 13-25 and Matthew 27:34-36 - 13 Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people 14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people, and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. 15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. 16 I will therefore have him flogged and release him." 18 Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" 19 (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city and for murder.) 20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, 21 but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" 22 A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." 23 But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified, and their voices prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. 25 He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished. (NRSVUE)

Matthew 27: 24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." 25 Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 So he released Barabbas for them, and after flogging Jesus he handed him over to be crucified. (NRSVUE)

2. Notice that in Luke 23:2 the charges brought to Pilate were not religious in nature, but rather that he had incited people to riot and encouraged people not to pay taxes. Why are the charges different from those Jesus faced before the Sanhedrin? How did Pilate react to their charges?
3. The *Pax Romana* (the peace of Rome) was the primary responsibility of a Roman Governor. Failure to keep peace could get Pilate executed. If you were Pilate, what would you have done with Jesus?
4. Search the internet for pictures of the Antonia Fortress and Temple compound. From the video, where did the Roman Emperor normally live? Why was Pilate likely in Jerusalem at the time of his arrest?
5. Pilate washed his hands of the whole thing, symbolically and legally. How often do we do the same thing and rationalize our sins, blaming them upon others? How often do we fail to take responsibility for what we have done wrong, preferring to assign credit to our parents for raising us wrong, our society for mistreating us, our boss for abusing us, our spouse for misunderstanding us? Where in your life have you stopped blaming and taken responsibility?
6. What irony do you find that the crowd chose Barabbas, an insurrectionist, to be released rather than the person Pilate could find no Roman reason to punish? What is the irony that "bar-abbas" means "son of the father."

Stations of the Cross

Jesus is Scourged - Station #6

1. Read together Luke 22:63-65 and John 19:1-3

Luke 22: 63 Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; 64 they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it who struck you?” 65 They kept heaping many other insults on him. (NRSVUE)

John 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face. (NRSVUE)

2. The cruelty of ancient Rome is portrayed clearly in how Jesus is treated. The guards tried to humiliate Jesus by blindfolding him while also beating and spitting on him. They made a crown of thorns and dressed him in purple, the sign of royalty to further degrade him. How did Jesus respond?
3. What was in the “Cat of Nine Tails” that caused maximum damage to skin? How many times could someone be whipped without it causing death, from Roman perspective?
4. For Jesus, the path to glory as King of kings included the path of disgrace. Because he wore the crown of thorns, Jesus would receive the crown of glory. How are we called to follow this same path of humility? When have you chosen to be humble rather than to lash out?