

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

03.17.2024 | His Blood Be On Us | Matthew 27:11-31 | Ben Day, Senior Pastor

You may be seated. If you have a Bible this morning, I want to invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 27. Matthew chapter 27, we've been walking through the whole gospel according to Matthew for over a year now. And we're coming to the end of the study of this gospel. Matthew chapter 27, we're going to be leading right up to Jesus' crucifixion. I hope that you'll join us next Sunday for Palm Sunday. It will be actually considering Jesus' death on the cross. Throughout Holy Week we will be considering his sacrifice. And then as we come two weeks from now to Resurrection Sunday, as we celebrate the fact that Jesus has not only died, but he has risen from the dead. But today we get led right up to the crucifixion as we look in Matthew's gospel. In the last couple of weeks have been somewhat heavy in terms of what we've been discussing from Matthew's gospel. The day has brought us to a place where we are really to consider our sin, really to consider Jesus' sacrifice in our place. And this text will be really no different. In some ways this text might be one of the heaviest of them all in terms of us coming face to face with the depths of our depravity as people. Really considering the seriousness of our sinfulness. But this text also confronts us with the standard of the nature of God's grace. The fact that in the gospel guilty people go free. You see in this story we see this phrase that I've made the title of this sermon. His blood beyond us. We're going to see that as a declaration from the people as they called for Jesus to be crucified. And what a powerful statement that is. A statement of guilt, but also a statement that we can repeat now with hope.

Let's read our passage for this morning, which is Matthew chapter 27, 11 through 31. Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked him, are you the king of the Jews? Jesus said, you have said so. But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, do you not hear how many things they testify against you? But he gave no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now on the feast, the governor was accustomed to release from the crowd anyone prisoner whom they wanted. And they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, who do you want me to release from you? Barabbas or Jesus, who was called Christ. For he knew that without enemy, that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife had worked him, had nothing to do with that righteous man. For I have suffered much because of him today in a dream. Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, which of the two do you want me to release from you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Jesus who was called Christ? They all said, let him be crucified. And he said, why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, let him be crucified. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, rather than a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of this man's blood. Teach it to yourselves. And all the people answered, his blood be on us and on our children. Then he released for them Barabbas, having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered to hold the Talion before him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. Twisting together a crown of thorns, they put him on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And even before him, they mocked him, saying, hail, king of the Jews. And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. Now, if you consider this narrative this morning, I think it's really important that as we look to Jesus, when we are seeking to understand more about who he is and what he has done, I think that really happens as we see ourselves in the narrative.

I think we get a better picture of what Jesus is doing if we see ourselves somewhat involved in the story. So there's kind of three elements of the story, somewhat three characters, or they're not particular characters, if you will, but kind of three elements or themes of the story that I think it's really important for us to see ourselves in so that we get a better understanding of what Jesus is doing as he lays down his life. So the first element of the story that I think is important for us to grasp and see ourselves in is what I'll refer to as the passive politician. So if you'd like to take notes or fill in the blank that's in your bulletin, the passive politician. I'm referring here to Pilate. Pilate, throughout the story, is seemingly almost a passive kind of role. He's trying to direct things, but he's not really in control of them much. Now, it would be really a misnomer to refer to Pilate in general as passive. Actually, what we know about Pilate from history and from other stories is that Pilate was not passive. Pilate was brutal. He was heavy-handed. Oftentimes, if there ever was a riot about to break out, Pilate would squelch it with force and violence. In fact, we even read in the account of Jesus's life that there was a time when Pilate mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. What that means is he had

people killed during a worship service. You should imagine that happening today. People who gathered for worship, being killed during their time of worship, this is what Pilate had done to improve people in Jesus's day.

Pilate, for the most part, is not a passive guy, but in this part of the story, it's pretty interesting how things play out. We saw last week that Jesus was on trial before the Jewish authorities. The chief priests and elders held this really fake trial of trying to accuse Jesus of different things. The fact is, the Jewish people are still under Roman authority, so they cannot put Jesus to death legally without the Roman governor signing off on it. They can cause the fake trial all they want, but ultimately it's going to come before this Roman governor. This governor is named Pilate. Pilate is the ruler over this area during the time. He is now to hear this case. We see the very beginning that he is skeptical about this case. It says in verse 11, "As Jesus said before Pilate the governor, the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." So, if you're standing here, what is Jesus being accused of? Jesus is being accused of, I think at least in terms for the Roman authorities, of claiming to be the king of these people. Of claiming to be the king of the Jewish people so much so that the Roman government might get threatened that he no longer sees Caesar as king. Or he no longer sees Pilate as the ruler of this area, but he is going to take authority in and of himself and be the king of the Jews.

Often times in the Jewish people, the Jewish community at the time, there would be riots and revolutions and insurrections trying to overthrow the Roman authorities. And so, this is what they're bringing to Pilate. A man who's claiming to lead a revolution. Maybe trying to start a riot. He's claiming to be the king of the Jews. And so, Pilate puts that out for Jesus. "Well, are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus certainly knows that he is the king of kings, but that's not what Pilate is asking. So, Jesus keeps his answer short. "Well, you have said so." And it goes on that as the chief priests and the elders are asking more questions and bringing more accusations, Jesus just remains silent. So much so that it really leaves a compression of Pilate. Says in verse 14, "As Jesus gave no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed." Other times in the New Testament, that phrase "for greatly amazed" really gives the idea of being impressed. It almost seems like Pilate recognizes that this isn't a guilty man. Guilty people don't act this way. Guilty people try to come up with excuses or push back against accusations. But here's a man who is just allowing people to bring charges against him and say nothing. Pilate seems to believe that Jesus is not guilty. In fact, he thinks that he probably knows the motivations for why this case is being brought to him in the first place. So, we go a little farther down to verse 18. It says that Pilate knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. So, Pilate knows that this is why this case is coming to me. These aren't real accusations. Jesus has done nothing to actually show himself to be a threat to the role of the authorities. What they are doing here, these chief priests and these religious leaders of the Jewish community, they are doing this out of envy. Not only does Pilate know that Jesus seems to be innocent, but his wife knows it. It says in verse 19, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. For I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."

Now, I would say this is a bit of a side application, not the main point of today's sermon, but an important side application. Maybe if you are married, I would suggest you listen to your wives. If your wife has a hunch or a feeling, you should probably listen to what she said. Now, Pilate's wife here doesn't just have a hunch or a feeling. It seems that God has probably been supernaturally revealing something to her. She knows that this is a righteous and innocent man. She knows that her husband should have no part in bringing this innocent, righteous man to a guilty verdict or to being punished for false accusations. See, Pilate is kind of in a predicament in some ways. I mean, ultimately Pilate is a politician. He is seeking to govern people. He loves to keep peace. Pilate often gives 12 riots and insurrections, but that's not what's happening here. There's something more at play, so for some reason, Pilate really takes a very passive approach. He's seeking to be someone of a people pleaser, but he also thinks he knows what is the right thing to do. He knows Jesus shouldn't be killed for these false accusations. So what Pilate does is he tries to get people to make the right decision.

Apparently, during the time of the Passover, there was this custom that the governor would release a prisoner to the people. It's a pilot that tried to give them two options. Jesus, who is called Christ, or this prisoner, Barabbas. Now, we'll talk more about Barabbas later in the sermon, but this is a political play for Pilate to not have to take a strong stance to let the people make a decision. But of course, this political play backfires on him, and the people say, "Release us, Barabbas, crucify Jesus." So when Pilate sees that his plan is not working, it says that he basically concedes. Verse 24, "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves."

This is where I want us to see ourselves in the story. This is how a politician, this symbolic gesture of washing his hands before the people. You have to think that Pilate is not really fooling anybody here. Pilate does this act of washing his hands and saying, "Look, I am innocent of all this." But throughout history, people have looked back on this account and said, "Oh yes, Pilate is innocent of all this." Most people have realized that Pilate is the one who is ultimately the governor. I mean, he is the judge and the jury in this situation. If justice was to be done, it was ultimately going to be his decision. Pilate could have done what he knew was right. He could have squelched this uprising from the people because he had done it before. But yet Pilate goes along with it, and he tries to convince himself and maybe others that he is innocent. I think Pilate is probably only deceiving himself. I don't even wonder if Pilate even deceived himself. I mean, do you really think Pilate went home that day with a clear conscience? Do you think Pilate always thought back of this event and never thought, "Did I do the right thing there?" Do you think Pilate's wife never let him hear about it? Come on. I told you not to get mixed up with that righteous man.

You see, I think Pilate gives us a picture of those ways we often treat our sin, our rejection of Jesus, our rejection of God. In so many ways, we try our best, I think, to take water and wash our hands of our sins. We do it in different ways. Sometimes we do it by being very religious people, being very moral people. Sometimes we try to say that we've done a lot of really good things, and so that washes off some of the bad things that we've done. Sometimes it is by a version of comparison. I mean, look at how much others are guilty of this. They were much more complicit than I was. I was just kind of passive in all of this. We seek to wash our hands in different ways. Sometimes I think of people today who try to wash their hands by just kind of removing God and God's law completely. They say, "Well, what if there is no God? What if the rules that are in the Bible of these commands and scripture, they aren't really from anybody but just man-made, and I'm not really guilty of doing anything wrong?" Many times people will distance themselves from religion, and many times in our culture that's what we see. People think they just kind of get rid of God, they're going to get rid of the guilt and the shame, and their hands are going to be washed clean. You know, maybe for some that works. But by and large, I think if we look at our culture, we look at people, I don't think we would say that that's working. It seems that the more our culture has moved away from beliefs in God and religion and values, it doesn't seem like it's actually gotten rid of guilt and shame in people's lives. In some ways, I think people struggle more with guilt and shame and what they're doing with their lives, even as they moved away from what they thought was bringing them that guilt and shame.

It seems that there's something deeper. The Bible says that God has given each one of us a conscience. And sometimes it's more seared and more broken than others, but I do think that within we all recognize that there's something we need to wash our hands of. There's something that we are complicit in or a part of, that we are guilty of. In fact, we see it really clearly in the story, the fact that it's not just Pilate or just one person, but it's really all of humanity that is a part of this rejection of Jesus. It's really all of humanity that is included in Jesus's betrayal. So the second part of the story that you have to see yourself in is what I'll refer to as a progressive betrayal. There's a part in the story that you have to catch, and it can be really hard to catch if you're reading the Bible really quickly or even just maybe if you're reading the Bible only in English. So there's this idea throughout this narrative that Jesus has been betrayed. As we talked about last week, most of the time that's referring to Judas. Judas is known as the betrayer. When we looked at Judas's account last week, he betrayed Jesus. I mean, one of Jesus's closest friends kissing him on the cheek, turning him over, he is the betrayer. It's kind of interesting that if you go and you read these couple of chapters about Jesus being arrested and crucified, this idea of Jesus being betrayed or sometimes it is translated as delivered over is all throughout this story.

You see, there's this Greek word, *pareidabai*. I don't often tell you Greek words because I don't know if they're that important. But this one is, I think, important because it's always translated the same way, but it exists throughout the story. So let me just show you a couple different places where we see this, and maybe you'll see what I'm saying about a progressive betrayal. So if you go back to chapter 26, where we were a couple of weeks ago, in Matthew chapter 26, verse 2, Jesus is speaking about what's going to happen. He says, "You know that after two days, the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." So here's this Greek word, *pareidabai*. It could mean it could be translated as betrayed or handed over or delivered up. So Jesus says here, when the Passover comes, the Son of Man will be delivered up. He will be handed over. He will be betrayed to be crucified. Now again, we see this happen in a very individual way with Judas. You down to verses 15 and 15 of chapter 26. Judas goes to the chief priest of the elders, and he says, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" There's that word again. "What will you give me if I betray him, give him over to you?" And it says, and he saw, and excuse me, and they paid him 30 pieces of silver, and then in

verse 16, and from that moment, he saw an opportunity to betray him. Same word used in two different verses right there, 15 and 16, translated in two different ways. So Jesus has just prophesied that he is going to be handed over. He's going to be betrayed. Now Judas is taking his part. He goes to the chief priest, and he says, "What will you give me if I betray Jesus?" We talked about that last week. The beginning of chapter 27, the beginning of the chapter, before we start reading today, what we read last week in verse 2. It says that after Jesus' trial, they bound him, and they led him away, and they delivered him over to pilot the governor. There's that word again. This act of delivering Jesus over has been prophesied about, and now it's taking place on multiple levels. Judas has delivered Jesus over to the chief priest of elders, but now these religious leaders have delivered Jesus over. They have betrayed Jesus and given him to the governor.

Do you see why I would say this is a progressive betrayal? So it is what it seems with one hand, but now all the religious leaders are involved. Then of course as we read, it comes before the whole people at some point. All the people have to make a decision about who are they going to free and who are they going to crucify. And multiple times, Matthew points out to us that it wasn't just some, it was all the people. Sure, they were persuaded by the chief priest of elders, that all of the people said, verse 25, and that all the people answered, "Hid blood be on us and not our children." What a horrific statement that is. I mean, they are now saying we are a part of this betrayal. This process of handing Jesus over to death, it is now all the people who are involved. Everyone has abandoned Jesus. Everyone is turning him over. Jesus is left to suffer all alone. So much so that the people are taking responsibility,(...) that his blood, blood of an innocent man, the blood of the Son of God beyond them, and their whole people, their children. And then Matthew tells us, verse 26, "Then he released a little of the rabbis, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified." There is that word again. The betrayal has progressed so far that now Jesus is going to be killed. Now he's using this word throughout to try to get us to see something. It's not just Jesus who is involved in this betrayal. It's not just a group of religious leaders. It is all the people turning Jesus over. It is the government failing to do what God has to do, rewarding God and punishing evil, turning Jesus over. All of humanity is betraying Jesus at this point.

And again, it would be easy for you to take the position of Pilate right now and try to wash your hands and say, "I wasn't there. I had no part of this. But there was a certain group of people acting in an unjust way that happens from time to time. It doesn't mean I'm guilty." You see, the Bible is telling us all throughout that, it's actually all of us, each one of us as people, for whom Jesus died. It was all of our sins that were placed upon His shoulders. That each one of us have rejected God. Each one of us have been a part of handing Jesus over. We are going to see ourselves in all the people. Last year at this time for the Easter season, we looked at a prophecy from the book of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 53. It's a prophecy about the way that the suffering servant was going to suffer. It's going to be a sacrifice. And I want to read from you the three verses from that prophecy, Isaiah 53. And I just want you to notice how many times it uses a first person plural pronoun. So notice when you hear the "we" or the "our" or the "us" in three verses, you ready? Isaiah 53 verses 4 through 6. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we were deemed as stricken, afflicted by God and afflicted. But He was punished for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds. We are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Ten times I think there are three verses. The prophet is saying it is for us. All of us have gone astray. All of us have sinned. All of us are part of this betrayal. Jesus standing all alone as He is a sacrifice for our sins.

It is really important that you see your involvement in this, my involvement in this. Because only whenever we start to understand our guilt, that we begin to understand His grace. It is only when we see ourselves in this story that we can see what He has done. And it is really clear in this story, along with seeing our sin and our guilt, that we do see His grace. Even as we see Jesus being mocked and being delivered up to be crucified, we see the grace of God. The love of God, the mercy of God here. As we get a picture of our pardon. That is the last part of the story that I want you to see yourself in. You have to see yourself as a Pilate in some way. Often try to wash your own hands and not be a part of this. But then you need to see yourself in the people. Actually a part of what Jesus is going through. You have to see that Jesus' blood is actually on us. But then you also need to see yourself in a rabbi. You know, if you read all four Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you'll find that very few people are mentioned in all four Gospels. I don't know if you know this, but all twelve disciples are mentioned in all four Gospels.

So certain figures, certain characters seem to be important enough that each one of the Gospel writers, as they take different perspectives and angles in Jesus' life and ministry and death and resurrection, that they include it all four. But one of the people included in all four Gospel accounts is Barabbas. As we're introduced to him here, Matthew says in verse 16, they have a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Notice Matthew refers to him as a notorious prisoner. So Barabbas wasn't just somebody who made a mistake. He wasn't just somebody who found himself in the wrong place the wrong time. He was known for being a criminal. He won't have crimes as he committed. Well, this is what Mark tells us about Barabbas in Mark chapter 15 verse 7. It says, "Among the rebels who were in prison, who had committed murder and insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas." So what you have to know here is something I was talking about earlier, that sometimes the Jewish people would ask somebody to rise up within them, who says, "We don't need to have this moment of pressure over us anymore." And they would try to lead some type of revolt or insurrection. And apparently there had been one probably pretty recently, that some people were trying to lead an insurrection, and certain people in that had killed people as part of it. Barabbas is probably the leader of that insurrection, was a murderer. So you have to think, if anybody ever was deserving of a punishment of death, it would be Barabbas.

And now here is Barabbas standing opposite of Jesus. There's just a couple things I think you need to know to really set yourself right in this story. Barabbas, his name means son of the father. If you think about the name Barabbas, you could probably see it, that word "bar" often means son of, like Simon Bar-Jonah, Simon son of Jonah. So there's "bar," and then there's that word that we often know of as "aba." "Aba" means father. Barabbas's name is son of the father. You have to think, when his dad named him that, he probably didn't expect Barabbas to turn out to be a murderer. And he probably thought that Barabbas was going to grow up and bring honor to the family. But he forgot that only dad has brought shame to family. And Barabbas is standing on one side, and he has Jesus standing on the other side. Jesus is the son of the father. When some of us speak in the garden coming before the father, we see him as the son of God, the son of the father, the only one who's never brought this honor to the father's name, who's only brought honor and glory to the father's name. Which one deserves the punishment?

You need to realize that Barabbas is actually guilty of what Jesus is being falsely accused of. I mean, the accusation against Jesus was that he was trying to lead some type of insurrection. He was claiming to be king of the Jews. That's exactly what Barabbas was trying to do. Barabbas was guilty of the exact crime that Jesus is really being accused of. So here you have two guys who are, you could say, trying to lead a revolution. Two guys who are trying to set up their kingdoms. Two guys who want to be king. One is seeking to do so by violence and force and taking the lives of others. The other is trying to do so by making them blind to the sea. Making the lane to walk. Bringing people back from the dead and welcoming in the outcast. He's trying to set up his kingdom not by taking others' lives, but by laying his life down. Which one deserves the punishment?

Do you see how scandalous it is that Barabbas goes free and Jesus goes across? I mean, what an act of injustice. If there ever was an act of injustice that should upset us, it is this one. And this is where we must see ourselves as Barabbas. People who are made in the image of God. Sons and daughters of the Father created to bring honor and glory to his name. All we've done is be complicit in the betrayal of Jesus. All we've done is bring shame to our Father. We are guilty of the very crimes that this one is being falsely accused of. And yet Jesus is the one who goes to the cross and you have the opportunity to walk free. Not because you can wash your hands well enough, but because of the blood of Jesus. The Bible says that this whole act of injustice is actually according to the plan of God. Jesus was meant to take our place on the cross.(...) In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, Paul writes, For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Here's Pilate's wife recognizing that this is a righteous man who doesn't deserve to die, But this righteous man is actually going to become a sinner on our behalf. The Son of God, the Son of the Father taking the place of sinners, So that we as sinners can rightly become sons and daughters of God.

If you have to see yourself as a Barabbas, you'll never appreciate what Jesus did. Only if you realize that Jesus is taking your rightful place in that punishment on that cross, We'll appreciate what Jesus has done. Only then will you be moved, not by your own shame and guilt, but by the grace of God, A factor of life to give yourself in your place. You see, we start to realize our role in this. We all have really one of the two options. We could be like Pilate and try to use water to wash our own hands. We could try to be a rid ourselves of any thought of shame and guilt, But be a really good moral people by distancing ourselves from religion. But I think what you'll find is that you might find yourself like Lady Macbeth. And I know you know how they'll take your story of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth who has joined her husband in committing

the murder of the king. Her guilty conscience won't let her forget that she's trying to wash her hands, but she can't get that spot out. So many people live their lives trying to wash their own hands, hoping to rid themselves of their shame and guilt. You see, instead of being like Pilate trying to wash our own hands, You could instead trust in the blood of Jesus. We could see ourselves saying His blood be on us. And yes, we have to see that as a way of seeing our guilt. That His blood is on our heads. That we were a part of why He is on the cross. But it's also the statement of hope. The Jesus' blood on us is what brings us life and salvation.

You think about why the people are all in Jerusalem at this time. They are there for the Passover. What are they remembering in the Festival of the Passover? That back in Egypt, when the land had been killed and its blood had been spread on the doorposts of their house, They were saved from death. Now they don't realize that they had just condemned the Lamb of God to go to the cross. But their only hope is that the blood of the Lamb would be spread on the doorposts of their heart. That is our only hope. That His blood would be on us. And that when His blood is on us, we are forgiven and cleansed from within. His blood has the power to wash away all of our sin. If you have the option to either take the power of Pilate, continuing trying to make up our own wrongdoings and wash our hands clean, or we could take the place of the wraps, recognizing our guilt and then walking free. Because the Son has taken our place, the Son has set us free. And as Jesus said, when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

Do you know that freedom is Jesus today?