

THE CROWD OR CHRIST: WHO ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

2000 yrs. ago two men stood before an angry crowd and the crowd was given a choice of which man they wanted released: 1) **A political terrorist with a known history of extreme violence against the Roman and Jewish citizens of Judea** or 2) **A peaceful religious teacher and carpenter's son from Nazareth who was without sin or wrongdoing even in the eyes of the Roman officials!**

Matthew 27:11-31 (NIV) **11** Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. **12** When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. **13** Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" **14** But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. **15** Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. **16** At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. **17** So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" **18** For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him. **19** While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." **20** But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. **21** "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. **22** "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" **23** "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" **25** All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!" **26** Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. **27** Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. **28** They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, **29** and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. **30** They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. **31** After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Today we are in **Week 6** of the **WORD MADE FLESH**. We are continuing our journey through The Bible and we have made our way to the point where everything is about to change for the disciples of Jesus. The point at which the promised MESSIAH (JESUS) is going to demonstrate God's love for mankind by sacrificing Himself on the cross for the sin of all mankind. The fulfillment of the promise given to Adam and Eve upon their act of rebellion in the Garden. The fulfillment of the promise made more clear through what God had promised Abraham when He

told him He was going to make him a great nation and through that nation He would bless all the world.

When we left off last week Jesus was giving some final instructions to His disciples regarding what they can expect when He is gone and as we arrive here in Matthew 27 Jesus has since been arrested and has now been brought before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor to decide what they will do with Him. As we just read in Matthew's account of what took place that day, the angry crowd choose Barabas to be released (the infamous Jewish terrorist who despised the Roman government and all it stood for). Why? **Because Jesus was considered by the crowd to be more dangerous!**

What I want you to take notice of is that the same spirit that cried out in anger for the crucifixion of Jesus 2000 yrs. ago, is the same spirit that is alive and well today!! There is a spirit that is alive and well today that promotes the idea that followers of Jesus are a danger to society and to life on earth. (This is very prevalent in our culture today and it has been building since the day Jesus was sentenced to be crucified!) As a result, those who follow Christ are considered to be as dangerous if not more dangerous than an extremist who wants to just see the world burn to the ground. Let me share a few quotes that supports this argument:

Napoleon (French emperor 1769-1821) – “Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet.”

Unknown atheist – “Humanity without religion is like a serial killer without a chainsaw”

Richard Dawkins (Professor of Biology at Oxford University) essay written 9/15/01 referencing 911 terrorist attacks: “Those people were not mindless cowards.... It came from religion.... To fill a world with religion, or religions of the Abrahamic kind is like littering the streets with loaded guns. Do not be surprised if they are used.”

The question that haunts me as I consider this familiar passage and the quotes which I just read is this: **Why are they so angry? Where does this hatred for the Son of God and His followers come from? And why do they consider Jesus more of a threat than they do Barabas?** Two important truths we need to highlight before we move on #1) Jesus was not found guilty of any wrongdoing! He was completely innocent!! Not only was He innocent but He did nothing but good as He preached about God's desire to save mankind from their sin.

Matthew 27:19 (NIV) While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

Matthew 27:24 (AMPLIFIED BIBLE) So when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but rather that a riot was breaking out, he took water and washed his hands [to ceremonially cleanse himself of guilt] in the presence of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this [righteous] Man's blood; see to that yourselves.”

#2) His wrongful execution was not just on the crowd that formed that day! It was on all of us as well! **vs. 25** All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!” This statement by the crowd was actually a prophetic statement that really includes all of us even though we were not there because it was due to our sin that Jesus had to die in the first place.

Isaiah 53:3-6 (NKJV) **3** He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. **4** Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. **6** 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.....

Isaiah 53:10-11 (NKJV) **10** Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. **11** He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

But why was the crowd so angry? Let's be careful before we pass judgment on this crowd or on the quotes that I just read. You see, the same heart attitude that plagues them can also plague all of us if we are not careful! This morning I want to give you **THREE REASONS THE CROWD WAS ANGRY** and then I want us to examine our heart and see if any of these are true of us? So if you will find **Luke's Gospel** we are going to look at three passages from Luke that will help us understand why they were so angry and why it was that they decided to release Barabas instead of Jesus.

Reason #1 – They did not like having to ADDRESS their SIN!

Luke 11:37-44 (NIV) **37** When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. **38** But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. Pharisees were really big on ceremonial cleansing rituals. And washing before eating was one of them. But while they were really big on cleansing outwardly they didn't seem to have the same zeal regarding issues of their heart. **39** Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. **40** You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? **41** But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. **42** “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. **43** “Woe to you

Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. **44** “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.” They were worried about religious rituals but not so much about the condition of their own heart or the people around them in great need. They loved religious activity and about being treated special because of who they were but they didn’t have the same passion for caring for others. Jesus is calling them to spend as much time as they do on the outward activities and apply some of that to addressing their dirty hearts. It is no fun having to deal with sin! It is ugly, painful, and extremely messy at times! But without it you can’t come to Christ and you can’t have intimacy with God! How do we address sin?

First, it requires **CONFESSION (agreement with God that it is sin)** God’s word establishes the standard and we allow our heart to be tested and examined by it. Where we are guilty of sin we need to confess and come clean that we are guilty as charged.

Secondly we must **REPENT (have a desire to put it away and turn to a new way of life)** It is okay if you are not okay. Just don’t stay that way.

The fact that Jesus was confronting the Pharisees in this way is what made the Pharisees establish a great dislike for Jesus. And it only snowballed from there.

Reason #2 – They wanted to be in CONTROL!

Luke 20:1-8 (NIV) **1** One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. **2** “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?” **3** He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: **4** John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?” **5** They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ **6** But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.” **7** So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.” **8** Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

In general people do not like authority, we don’t trust authority, and frankly we feel as if we ought to be the authority! There is a rebellious spirit in all of us. Remember one of the temptations that Satan used to lure Eve into partaking of the forbidden tree was that she would “**be like God.**” This appeals to our human pride. We want to be in control. But the truth of the matter is we are not equipped to handle it! Only one is in control and that is God!! The Pharisees loved being the authority and calling the shots. Jesus challenged that and they didn’t like it. This only added to their already growing dislike for Jesus the Messiah.

How do we keep from wanting to be in control?

SUBMIT to the Lordship of Christ! He is our GOD and KING.

ALLOW His WORD to be our AUTHORITY! You can’t lean on your own understanding and His authority

SEEK His face in PRAYER! (Taking problems to Him and wait for His answer or His solution)
"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." - **Proverbs 3:5-6**

Reason #3 – They wanted a Messiah of their OWN CHOOSING

Luke 22:66-71 (NIV) 66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. **67** "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, **68** and if I asked you, you would not answer. **69** But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God. With this phrase Jesus straight up points to Daniel 7 of the OT to point out He is" **70** They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You say that I am." **71** Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

No matter what Jesus did, they would not accept Him as the Messiah. They considered what He said to be contrary to God. The reason? They had an idea of what the Messiah should be and Jesus didn't fit the mold. He wasn't what they wanted or expected. Be careful of creating a Jesus that suits you or of creating a God in the image that you would like for him to be. This in essence is an idol that we create and if we can create Him He isn't much of a God. Today people want a Jesus that suits them. They want to redefine Jesus on their terms. Some like a softer loving Jesus where anything goes. Others like a stern wrathful Jesus that is void of grace and mercy. The problem is this! God isn't a buffet where you get to choose what parts you like and don't like! He isn't a build-a-bear that you can make like you want Him to be. He is who He is and He doesn't conform to our likeness. In fact, the opposite is true. We are to be conformed to His likeness.

How do we keep from developing a Jesus of our own choosing?

Let God's word DEFINE HIM! As you read the Bible, look for Jesus and the cross. Let scripture interpret scripture. Beware of making it say what you want it to say!

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Do any of these reasons why the crowd got angry describe you?

You don't like ADDRESSING your SIN!

You want to be in CONTROL!

You want a Messiah of your OWN CHOOSING

The world does not need another religion, the world needs to see Jesus! But don't let the attitudes that choose Barabbas over Jesus cause you to miss out on His salvation or hinder Christ's ability to work in your life, because it will if you let it!!

Will you listen to the crowd or will you follow Jesus Christ? Who you follow today will affect where you spend eternity tomorrow. Every person will walk out of here under the blood of Jesus or guilty for the blood of Jesus. Which will be true of you?