

8/30/2020

Matthew 27:22-26

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.

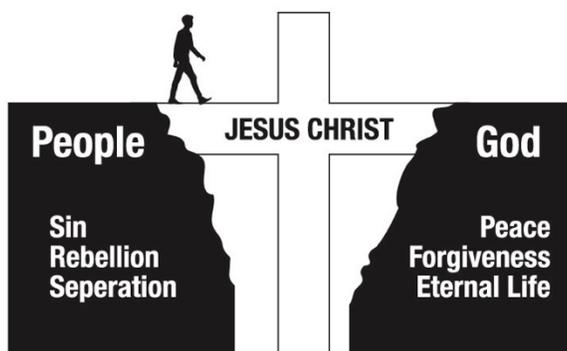
Galatians 2:20

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

***suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.***

Christ Crucified

So last week I brought a white board up here and with my very sophisticated (not) drawing skills I drew a picture to help us visualize how Jesus is the way to God.



And we know that Jesus is the perfect mediator between us (who are naturally bent toward sinning) and God (who is righteous and holy) *because...why?* Does anyone remember why? Jesus was fully human *and* fully divine. And we reaffirmed that very belief earlier when we read “I believe in Jesus Christ [God’s] only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit [and] born of the virgin Mary.” Jesus Christ is our savior because when he walked on earth he was both God and man.

But while we used this picture to help us understand the way to God, peace, forgiveness, and eternal life, *through* Jesus, there’s something in this picture that we didn’t specifically talk about last week. Can anyone guess what that might be? The cross.

The cross is the most important part of that picture, right? The symbol in the middle that bridges the separation between us and God is a cross and it is *not* a picture of a church building, it’s not the an image of a Bible, it’s not even a picture of a manger with baby Jesus inside. No, the cross is where we find our salvation, which brings us to the next portion of the Apostles Creed that we’ll be looking at this morning, that we believe Jesus Christ...” suffered under Pontius Pilot, was crucified, died, and was buried.”

Again, like we covered last week, Jesus being born of a woman affirms that he was indeed human, but there’s also another part of our human nature that Jesus also had to experience so that our whole human nature could be redeemed. Every human experiences birth and every human experiences death.

An ancient Church Bishop named Gregory from a town called Nyssa which was located in present-day Turkey said this about Jesus' human nature and death: "Jesus' birth makes his death necessary. He who had once decided to share our humanity had to experience all that belongs to our nature, how human life is encompassed within two limits, (that being birth and death) and if he had passed through one and not touched the other, he would only have half fulfilled his purpose, having failed to reach the other limit proper to our nature." Last week we covered how even in his *conception and birth* our redemption story had begun because Christ became human, but the story doesn't end there. Jesus' death on the cross was the next chapter in the redemption story of humanity...and even still there are more chapters...but we'll get to the next one next week...and believe me, you won't want to miss it.

Alright, so I don't know about you, but when I first heard and recited the Apostles' Creed, I have to admit that while I knew that Pontius Pilate is in the Bible, I thought it was sort of surprising that *his* name actually shows up in this list of statements that we say to affirm our faith together. I mean, that's really "living in infamy," right? How would you like to be the guy that's named as the one to the savior of the world "suffered under" in a statement that is still being said 2,000 years later...? Yeah, not the best place to have in history.

But, actually that's exactly the point. Pontius Pilate's name is placed in our statement of faith precisely to anchor our minds in real time and space. I hadn't

thought of it this way until reading a book about the Apostles' Creed which says this, "The name of Pontius Pilate is a historical anchor. It prevents us from turning the Christian faith into a set of general truths about the world. It reminds us that the gospel is not an idea but a fact.¹... Pontius Pilate is there to remind us that God has acted at a particular moment in human history. The salvation of the world can be dated. Certain people were there when it happened. The heart of Christianity is not an idea but a brute fact. Not a theory but a particular human life. Not a general principle but a person with a name: Jesus, who suffered under Pontius Pilate."

It is incredibly important for us to remember that the story of Jesus' birth, life, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection is *not* a myth or make-believe, but that the person named Jesus who was born of a virgin named Mary, really did grow up in a place called Nazareth...really did travel to Jerusalem and other cities in his region with people who learned from him and saw him heal people's bodies and forgive their sins...and really was a man without sin...and really was wrongly accused, unfairly tried, and sentenced to a humiliating and excruciating death by the hand of the regional ruler of that time, named Pontius Pilate. And Jesus really did die and really was buried. That story, brothers and sisters, is not fiction – it's fact. Those real events changed the course of history and continues to change the course of lives like yours and mine.

¹ Myers, B. (2018). [*The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*](#). (T. Hains, J. Reimer, & S. Awa, Eds.) (p. 62-63). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The cross can change everything.

What does the cross change for you? Are you freed up from the anger problem? Have you been released from your past decisions that used to haunt you?

What does the cross change for you? Do you no longer live under shame and guilt? Are you free from greed and instead able to be generous with your time and resources?

What does the cross change for you? Can you turn to God in anxiety instead of finding comfort in food, television, other people, or fill-in-the-blank. Are you able to feel joy for others instead of resentment?

What does the cross change for you?

Jesus Christ on the cross can change everything – have you allowed Jesus to change you?

If we were in pre-covid times, I'd give each one of you a piece of paper and a pen to write down the sin in your life that you still want Jesus to change in you and come up here and place it at the foot of the cross, to physically give that burden over to God. But, I think we can still do that in our minds' eye, and so during the next few minutes, I'm going to play our final song and if there is sin or an unhealed part of you that you haven't invited Jesus to touch, change, or heal, I invite you to imagine in your minds' eye that you are writing that down and laying

at the foot of the cross – it could be this cross, or a cross in a church you grew up in, or a picture of a cross in your home. But imagine you placing that burden at the foot of the cross and experience the forgiveness and healing that is only found at the cross.

At the Foot of the Cross by Kathryn Sarah Scott

At the foot of the cross
Where grace and suffering meet
You have shown me your love
Through the judgement you received

And you won my heart (over and over)
Yes you won my heart
Now I can trade these ashes in for beauty
And wear forgiveness like a crown
Coming to kiss the feet of mercy
I lay every burden down
At the foot of the cross

At the foot of the cross
Where I am made (where I am made complete)
You have given me life
Through the death you bore for me

And you won my heart (king of kings)
Yes you won my heart (you won my heart)
Yes you won my heart (forever and ever)
Yes you won my heart

Now I can trade these ashes in for beauty
And wear forgiveness like a crown
Coming to kiss the feet of mercy
I lay every burden down
At the foot of the cross
I'd trade these ashes in for beauty (for beauty)
And wear forgiveness like a crown
Coming to kiss the feet of mercy
I lay every burden down
At the foot of the cross

Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves God's love toward us. In the name of Christ you are forgiven.
Let's all say "Glory to God." Amen

"Jesus stands under the curse that is rightly ours, and we stand under the blessing that is rightly his. By uniting himself with us, he is identified completely with our sin and we are identified with his righteousness."²

Go forth today carrying Christ's blessing and righteousness to the world. Go in peace. Amen.

² Myers, B. (2018). [*The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*](#). (T. Hains, J. Reimer, & S. Awa, Eds.) (p. 74). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.