

Mark 15 (between verses 5 and 6) Luke 23:3-25

³ Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*" ⁴ So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." ⁵ But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place." ⁶ When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. ⁷ And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. ⁹ Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. ¹¹ Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. ¹² That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other. ¹³ Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, ¹⁴ said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; ¹⁵ no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. ¹⁶ I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*" ¹⁷ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). ¹⁸ And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this *Man*, and release to us Barabbas"-- ¹⁹ who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. ²¹ But they shouted, saying, "Crucify *Him*, crucify Him!" ²² Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let *Him* go." ²³ But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. ²⁵ And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

We ended in Mark with Pilate saying, I find no fault in this man. That is also in this Luke text in verse 4. Here Luke tells us all about the Herod involvement. Mark is silent about this.

It looks like Herod got the idea to push Christ off on Herod from the religious leaders. In verse 5 they said that Jesus began at Galilee. We can almost see the light bulb over Pilate's head at this point. Oh, a Galilean. He's one of Herod's

citizens. It should be Herod's problem. That will get me out of the middle of this mess.

⁶ When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. ⁷ And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Acts gives us some insight here, as to why this had to happen. Tom read Psalms 2 a few weeks ago. In it it says:

Psalm 2:2-4

² The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, ³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision.

Then as the folks in Acts pray they let us in on a secret. Psalms 2 was fulfilled by both Herod and Pilate. Both of them were intended to be involved.

Acts 4:24-28

²⁴ So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, ²⁵ who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: '*Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?*' ²⁶ *The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.*' ²⁷ "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

So God had destined for both Herod and Pilate to pronounce Christ's innocence and to take counsel against Him anyway. God's ways are beyond figuring. While events may look like they are out of control, they aren't.

OK, what do we know about Herod Antipas?

Herod was a son of Herod the great and was born in 20BC. He was the tetrarch over Galilee and Perea. When he came to power he built several cities. This was no small feat. It was a great help to the economy in the regions he ruled over. He helped put them on the map, literally.

Now Herod was originally married to the daughter of Aretas 4. Her name is not known. But Aretas 4 was a Nabatean King. This would have cemented relations between the two areas. That seemed to be going ok until Herod Antipas visits his brother Philip and falls in love with Philip's wife. Herodias, who was actually the cousin of both Philip and Herod. Herodias didn't to seem to be in the relationship for love. Herod offered more power and that appealed to Herodias. So she agreed to marry Herod, but only if he would dump his first wife. So Herod did just that, which ultimately led to problems with the kingdom king Aretas oversaw.

It also led to problems with John the Baptist. John condemned the marriage since Herod married his brother's wife while the brother was still living. This was forbidden in the OT law. Herod pretended to be Jewish and John kept calling him on it.

Eventually Herod arrested John to silence Herodias, probably. And then Herodias manipulated Herod into a situation using her promiscuous daughter to force Herod's hand into killing John the Baptist.

There are only a few other references to Herod Antipas in scripture.

Mark 14:1 tells us that Herod thought Christ was John the Baptist reincarnated.

Luke 13:31-33 tells us that people warned Christ to get out of Herod's jurisdiction as Herod wanted to kill Christ.

Luke 13:31-33

³¹ On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." ³² And Christ said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.' ³³ Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

I wonder if that message was ever delivered. If it was it might explain why Herod vented his anger on Christ. A fox is an animal that is weak but cunningly deceitful. Jesus's response to Herod is basically saying that Jesus is not going to be bluffed by death threats. Herod was not going to kill Christ. It was too risky. And Christ was going to do what He had to do without concern about what Herod would do. The Lion of Judah was not going to submit to the fox of Galilee.

The last reference of Herod is today's text.

Now, a little more history.

After Christ died and rose again, in AD 36 Aretas attacked Galilee and overcame Herod's army. Remember that Aretas was the father of Herod's first wife.

Tiberius gave orders to the procurator of Syria, Pilate's boss, to go help Herod.

But Tiberius died so the procurator of Syria waited to see what would happen.

Caligula, who was the next emperor, gave Antipas's brother, Agrippa, the title of King of some areas in the middle east. Agrippa, it should be noted, was a friend of Caligula. That was proof that he had **no virtue whatsoever**. Naturally when

Herodias heard that, she urged her husband to go to Rome and get the same title. She wanted to be married to a king. But while Antipas was in Rome, Agrippa sent

someone to bring accusations against Antipas. As a result he was banished to France. Herodian was not also banished, but maybe, because she didn't have a

better card to play at the time, she went along with her husband. It certainly didn't have anything to do with love or loyalty.

Agrippa was, by the way, the one in Acts that accepted worshipped and died with worms.

So that is Herod. He is a man that is led by his lusts. And he also is a man of no principles. He seems to have been a competent administrator. But his choices to follow his lusts doomed his career.

Jesus, clearly, did not think much of Herod and showed him little respect. Herod killed Jesus's friend and cousin, John the Baptist. So Herod was going to get very little satisfaction in any conversation with Christ. Christ said much more to Pilate. Christ gave Pilate much more opportunity than he gave to Herod. Herod had **had** his opportunity when one of God's favorites sat in his prison. Herod had spent that opportunity and was not going to get any more.

Be very careful what you do with your spiritual opportunities. They don't always come again.

⁸ Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.

Here is what happens when spirituality is a novelty. This is what happens curiosity meets spirituality. Look at the reason Herod was glad. Herod wanted to be entertained. He wanted to be impressed. He wanted a good show. Notice there is nothing here about truth. Herod did not want to hear Jesus preach. He did not want answers about the dilemma's in Herod's life. Herod did not want to hear how he could be right with God. He wanted to see a sideshow.

What comes to mind here is the same thing that happens when people claiming to be ministers come into town with healing ministries and all manner of spiritual extremes. People come to see the show. They want to see God at work. They don't come to have their hearts broken with their own sin. They don't come to hear the truth that will set them free from their prison of sin. They want to be entertained. They want their flesh to be healed, improved. There is something in flesh that wants flesh catered to. Natural wants natural. Our flesh wants to demote God's work to a spiritual equivalent of a three ring circus. And there are plenty of shysters who are glad to provide such a show. But true spirituality will not cater to such demands.

We see here that Herod probably knew much more about Christ than Pilate did. Herod could probably have pronounced Christ guiltless much easier than Pilate. Because Herod would have known more about what Christ was doing and preaching. But Herod was not going to use anything he knew for Christ's benefit. He was just hoping for a good show. And He probably figured that, since Christ was in a tough spot, He could be coerced into performing. Herod was wrong.

One more thing we see here is that a person **glad to see** Christ is not always a person who **longs to know Christ**. **Interest** in Christ is not always a sign of spiritual openness.

⁹ **Then Herod questioned Him with many words, but Christ answered him nothing.**

If you are Herod, you are not used to being treated this way. You are the big shot. Christ is the little shot. The little shots are supposed to cater to the big shots. Well, that is not working out so well.

Christ is not taking the bait. Christ shows no need for the help of Herod. And Christ would have had little respect for Herod. Herod had killed Christ's friend and co-worker, a man whose greatness would never be understood by a lustful man like Herod. So Herod could ask all the questions he likes. He will get no satisfaction from Christ. Herod thought he had power. But he had not been prepared for being in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Christ was silent.

Herod thought that Christ was on trial before Herod. Really Herod was on trial before Jesus. Herod is showing effort here. He is asking lots of questions. He is expending energy in this effort. But Christ is giving him no satisfaction whatsoever. He cannot be moved to saying a word. And really, why would Christ say anything? It would make no difference to this godless human being who has already shown what he thinks of true spirituality. He kills it when he can.

¹⁰ **And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.**

These religious rulers were following Christ like a school of sharks. They desperately want Christ dead. They didn't care if it was Pilate or Herod who killed Him, as long as someone did.

Neither Herod nor Pilate were fond of the religious rulers. They both would have had them pegged. They knew they were not worthy of respect. The religious leaders dealt in the world of politics, just like Herod and Pilate. They were simply smaller fish. These religious leaders had no **spiritual** power. They had lost that long ago. They now relied on **political** power. And as such they were a travesty. So the only effect the religious rulers had on Herod and Pilate was political power. Both Herod and Pilate would be evaluating the capacity of these rulers to do them harm. If they perceived a threat of harm, they would act. If they didn't, they would not. Herod, evidently, was not threatened and could easily pass this back to Pilate.

¹¹ **Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.**

Herod was used to having power over people. He, like Pilate, was used to having his own way. But Jesus could not be pushed around. This probably made Herod angry. So Herod stoops to his real level. There was nothing noble in this action.

He begins acting like the thugs he surrounds himself with. He treats Christ with contempt. This word is very interesting. The word means to set at naught. It means to value with the lowest possible rating. To view as being utterly worthless. That is what they did to Christ. They, as the prophecy says, esteemed Him not. They treated the **most valuable human** as the **least** valuable human. And they mocked Christ. They jeered at Christ. They derided Him. And they did this simply because they could. They showed what they were by what they did. Now, Herod is intending to send Christ back to Pilate, so he adds his own flair. They place on Christ a gorgeous robe. This would have been a robe that someone who was running for the Roman senate would wear. It would be clothing that only the rich would wear. It would have been like putting Charles Manson in a Brooks Brothers suit. It would be a mockery. That was the intention. The clothing would be incongruous with the battered human inside of it. So Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate.

The fact that Herod sent Christ back shows that even Herod did not think Christ had done anything worthy of death. Herod actually did have jurisdiction over his citizens. Had Jesus been guilty of something worthy of death, Herod could have executed Him. But Christ was not. And Herod sending Him back says so.

¹² That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

For whatever reason Pilate and Herod were not friends. It could be as a result of something that Pilate did in **Luke 13:1-2**

¹ There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things?

Evidently Pilate had put to death some of Herod's citizens at the temple in Jerusalem. No one knows why for sure. But whatever the case, things like this would not endear these two leaders.

But now that Pilate had deferred to Herod, Herod may have been appeased and flattered. And they probably had common enemies in both Christ and the people trying to put Christ to death. They, after all, had a lot in common. So they worked together.

Remember this was not the only strange bedfellows created by enmity with Christ. We have also seen the Saducees and Pharisees working hand in hand. This is another odd couple with both groups hating each other before this time. The statement is true. Nothing brings people together like a common enemy.

¹³ Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, ¹⁴ said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have

found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him;¹⁵ no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.

Now Pilate is trying to reason with the unreasonable. He is trying to negotiate with terrorists. He is, more than anything else, trying to get himself off the hook. He doesn't want these leaders to have any reason to report Pilate to his boss. So he gives them the facts. I haven't found Christ guilty of any charges worthy of death. Herod hasn't found Christ of any charges worthy of death. Basically, Christ has not **done** anything worthy of death. He has not done the things you are accusing Him of.

At this point this should have been the end of discussion. If Pilate cared about justice, if he were doing his job as Rome told him to do it, Pilate would have allowed Christ to walk free. The fact that he continues to have a conversation is just more proof of his weakness. He is proving by speaking that he is open to be manipulated by these religious rulers.

¹⁶ I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" ¹⁷ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).

The emphasis in this statement is release. The chastising would have been a light punishment. The equivalent in child rearing would be a spanking. Pilate was going to teach Christ a lesson, but no more. And then Pilate would **release** Him since that is what justice demanded. And he was going to make Christ the choice for the one released this year. It is a bit silly to make Christ the choice since Christ was already innocent. This was not releasing a criminal. It was releasing a man who should have never been held in the first place.

I don't want to go any further in this text as it is now starting to overlap with our Mark text.

What we saw this morning is that Herod and Pilate were birds of a feather. Neither of them was concerned with justice. Neither of them had the qualifications for a good civil authority. Neither were worthy of any kind of trust. Neither of them minded spending a human being in the quest of their own selfish ambition. Both of them were afraid of the crowds. Both were power hungry cowards. Both had spiritual interest but no spiritual conviction. Both of them were for sale. And at the end of the day they found that they really did have a lot in common. So much so that they struck up a friendship.

As for an application for us this morning, let's consider this. Pilate and Herod both were able to discern the same truth. They were able to look at the facts and see that Jesus was innocent of any Roman crimes worthy of death. They both had all they needed to do the right thing. They did not fail because of ignorance. They didn't fail because it was too difficult to figure out. They failed because they did not want to **pay the personal cost** to do the right thing. It isn't that they

couldn't figure out what the right thing was. They knew it. They just wouldn't **do it**.

Here is an example to avoid. We often have choices like this in front of us. There are two paths in front of us. And we know which one is right and which one is wrong. We know which one expresses our **loyalty and obedience** to Christ and which one express our **disbelief and disobedience** to Christ. And we can only pick one. The right one may be very hard. In fact, choosing the right path may seem to cost us those things we value so much. We might feel we are losing everything that matters to us. In Pilate's case, I am sure that is how he would have felt. We might tremble at the thought of choosing the right path. It may threaten a relationship we value. It may disrupt a peaceful life with our spouse or children. It could threaten our financial future. It may deprive us of a crutch that we can't imagine facing life without. The right paths often come with some very expensive price tags. Pilate is looking that cost in the face. We sometimes must do the same thing.

What hard right path are you looking at this morning? Where would it be exceedingly hard and costly for you to do the right thing?

What are you **going to do**?

Before you decide, look at Pilate. He made the wrong choice. And his name is associated with cowardly failure for all time. His gutless disregard for truth has disgraced his name so much that no one calls their kid Pilate. Our wrong choices always lead in that direction. Our sin will disgrace us and our Lord. We will live to regret it. The things **we keep** or the things **we gain** by a faithless choice will never be worth **the things we lose**. And if we are believers, we will just need to revisit that decision in the future and repent of it.

What hard right path do you have in front of you?

Take it. Do the right thing no matter what it costs you. Don't be like Pilate.