

UNIT 27

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THE KING

OF THE JEWS

“This Man Has Done Nothing Wrong”

by Greg Kilgore

“That isn’t fair!” We’ve heard it at school, we’ve heard it on the ball field, we’ve heard it in movies, and we’ve heard it in our own homes. Likely we have even said these very words ourselves. We feel inside ourselves a need to let others know when things are not fair and complain when things we think are fair do not actually happen.

GOD’S GRACE WHEN WE DESIRE FAIRNESS

The truth is no one should want God to be fair to us. What we have often failed to realize is that our sinful rebellion has so corrupted us that we truly are not able to understand what is fair on our own. We really do not know what is fair because our sinful pride has blinded us. We think fairness is based on what we deserve. But the fact is we truly do not know what we deserve considering our sinfulness against God.

The person who says he wants God to be fair to him does not truly understand

who he is and who God is! He does not understand the holiness of the Almighty God and the sinfulness of fallen man.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ shows us that we need God to be unfair to us. For everything that happened to Jesus on the way to and including the cross is what we deserve: punishment and death. In our sinful rebellion against God, we are the ones who deserve what Jesus endured. He was sinless but took our punishment for us.

Nothing is more unfair than the grace of God that He has shown us in His Son, Jesus Christ. When we understand our sin properly, against the righteousness of God—the holy God we offend—we see that we truly get what we do not deserve in Christ.

THE HORRIFIC WONDER OF THE CROSS

On the cross Jesus experienced hell—He became a curse for us. He did this so that

one day we could be saved from our sin and its consequences. The death of Jesus was horrific. He was forsaken, not for anything He did or deserved but forsaken for us! Do you see the horror of the only sinless One to ever live suffering and dying on the cross? He did that all for us.

This shows us that though the cross was horrific, it was also a wonderful act of love. Romans 5:8 says that God proved His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That there is true love.

WHY JESUS DID NOT COME DOWN

Why did Jesus not come down from the cross, knowing that He could? Why did He stay? Certainly, with Jesus being divine, He had the power and the ability to come down with angels at His beck and call.

The soldiers mocked Him, dividing up His clothes and insulting Him. They yelled, "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" The irony of their mocking is that Jesus could have descended from the cross to save Himself. It was not the nails that kept Jesus on the cross, He stayed because of His love for His people. He stayed to rescue us from sin. Jesus loves

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His people so much that He bore our sin and punishment on the cross. He stayed because it was the only way for any of us to be saved from the eternal punishment due for our sins.

WHAT THE CROSS ACCOMPLISHES

What does the cross of Jesus accomplish? Salvation! And at the heart of this salvation is redemption. Redemption is the work of Christ to bring repentant sinners back into right relationship with God.

Back at the beginning, in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned against God. They trusted the word of Satan over the word of God, and they sinned against God. Sin entered the world, and along with sin came the

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wages of sin: death. What did God do? He did not wipe out the human race then and there. God had every right to do that—He is the Creator—He did not have to save anyone.

God could have treated humans the same way He treated the fallen angels. In 2 Peter 2:4 it says that God did not spare the fallen angels but cast them into hell. God could have done the same thing right then and there in Genesis 3 to humanity.

Instead of casting Adam, Eve, and all humanity into hell for their sin, God promised to send a deliverer. Genesis 3:15 speaks of One who would come and crush the head of Satan. God promised redemption, He promised to restore those who have trusted in His Deliverer to a right relationship with their Creator.

Without the cross, all would be cast out of God's presence, but now through the cross, all who place their faith in Jesus are welcomed into relationship with the Almighty God! The cross accomplishes the payment we need to be brought into right relationship with our eternal King.

ALL OF HISTORY CENTERS ON CHRIST

All of history centers on the life and death of Jesus Christ. The good news of the gospel, however, does not end with our Savior and King crucified on the cross. Yes, His life ended, darkness covered the land, the earth shook, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. But when those who buried Jesus's body closed the tomb with a large stone, it was not the final time light would penetrate inside. Three days later, Jesus exited the tomb as the King who holds the power over sin and death! Jesus's resurrection reveals His victory over all, which allows us victory over all as well!



THE ACCUSED KING



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to die, even though He did no wrong.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Luke 22–23

+ **SETTING:**

After three full years of ministry, the time had come for the promised Messiah—the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King who had been anticipated for millennia—to finish what He had started. His mission was clear and His resolve strong. Through the enabling strength of the Spirit by the unshakable will of the Father, the Son of God set His face to the cross. Much suffering awaited Jesus, some of which would be physical, but it would also be emotional as He watched His followers and friends abandon Him, betray Him, and become a part of condemning Him to death.

DAY 1

READ:

Luke 22:66-71

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 22:69-70

NOTES

There are many titles and references to Christ that modern-day readers often pass without giving much thought. We assume the meaning is plain on the page, then nod and keep going. These verses are rich in meaning that we can easily miss, and it takes a trip back in time to better understand them.

When it comes to the title “Son of God,” it may seem this is simply a declaration of Jesus as the third Person of the Trinity: God the Son. But this likely was not the first thought the elders, priests, and scribes had when they asked Jesus if He was the Son of God. Old Testament meaning was ever in their minds, and the term was attached to kings, heavenly beings, and specially chosen agents to bring about God’s plan.¹ Layer on top of that the Greco-Roman cultural meaning of “Son of God,” which included a hero, ruler, and divine man.²

Jesus encapsulates both the Greco-Roman cultural meaning as well as the Old Testament connotation of the title “Son of God.” Even further, He is not simply a son of God, He is the Son of God. He is the King of kings, the Heavenly Being of all heavenly beings, the Hero of all heroes.

How have you lived your life to show that you believe Jesus is the Son of God and Lord of your life?

DAY 2

READ:

Luke 23:1-5

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 23:1-5

NOTES

The scene surrounding Jesus swirled more and more into a chaotic tornado of human opposition. The Jewish leaders had been scheming and plotting against Jesus for years. Like a lion hunting its prey, they'd been patiently waiting for the opportunity to pounce.

Amid the movement of the Passover festival, the religious leaders began to pursue in earnest the death of Jesus. Through the Jewish leaders' actions, much went according to plan in their perspective. The Roman rulers could not seem to evade the charges against Jesus. Even the yearly tradition of releasing a condemned criminal played nicely in the religious leaders' favor. Eventually their hopes and dreams came to fruition. To them, the problem of Jesus had been taken care of permanently.

What they didn't realize was that they were actually smack dab in the middle of the eternal plan of God. They were a part of a cosmic chess game that God would always win. The individuals involved in Jesus's arrest were personally responsible for their egregious decisions, but nothing could stop God's plan to save humankind through the very One they were trying to destroy. Little did they know that their attempt to stop the work of Jesus actually led Christ to His predetermined, God-given purpose.

There is no evil deed that God cannot use for good. There is no perfect plan of man that can thwart God's purpose. There is no strategic scheme that comes as a surprise to God. The Lord is always in control.

When life seems to fall to pieces, what Scripture passages can you remember to help you trust that God is always in control?

DAY 3

READ:

Luke 23:13-25

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 23:18-20

NOTES

Each year, according to American Thanksgiving tradition, the president of the United States pardons a turkey or two. Instead of ending up on a platter and placed as the centerpiece of Thanksgiving dinner, the feathered fowl returns to his or her home on the range. Recipients of a presidential pardon receive mercy with a release from his or her charges and punishments—a forgiveness of their crimes. Yet in the case of these turkeys, this is more accurately an act of justice than pardon. Justice assumes righteousness. Pardon assumes guilt. After all, what in the world did the turkey do to deserve death? He did nothing wrong. (He is, however, a delicious provision of God we get to enjoy!)

A desire for justice runs deep in our veins, and it is natural for us to demand justice where we find it lacking. That's why the Gospel snapshots of Jesus's last hours leading up to His crucifixion are so heartbreaking and infuriating. He did nothing to deserve imprisonment. He did nothing to deserve death. He should have been released and allowed to return home. Instead, Jesus was wrongly accused, condemned, and executed for crimes He did not commit. To add insult to injury, Barabbas—a wholly undeserving recipient—received a pardon for his crimes and was released to enjoy his freedom.

But thanks be to God that these unjust acts occurred! Without them, there would be no crucifixion, no resurrection, no atoning for our sins, no salvation. Something to be immensely thankful for indeed.

What can you do today to show gratitude to Jesus for enduring unjust treatment so that we could experience life eternal?

DAY 4

READ:

Luke 23:13-25

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 23:22-23

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #43: ENSLAVED TO SIN

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Romans 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2).

The pure hatred seen here is astounding. On the outside looking in, it is outrageous behavior. How could the people in the crowd do this to any man, let alone the Son of God? It is tempting to look back in judgment on these people. In part, Luke's Gospel placed the blame for Jesus's condemnation squarely on the crowd, but one must tread lightly here.

We ought to be careful not to credit ourselves with "knowing better." If we think that we could never be among the crowd who sent Jesus to His unjust condemnation, we must think again. Really and truly, any one of us could have done the same. No one is above being controlled by sin.

Moments like these—especially in the context of a large group of people—are filled with temptation. It is hard to go against the grain. So even if we start off with some hesitations of where things are heading, over time, the emotional temperature of the crowd tends to spread. Sin is deceptive, and the devil is a cunning foe. The evil one lures and lies, warps reality and whispers deceptive promises.

This maddening scene vividly demonstrates the power of sin, the blindness of our wicked hearts, and our susceptibility to unwittingly walk right into traps set for us. Anger clouds our judgment and leads us to justify bad choices. Unfettered fury fuels unbridled, vindictive behavior.

Why is mob rule so effective?

DAY 5

READ:

Luke 23:13-25

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 23:24

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The only way to have justice in any situation is to care more about truth than we do about ourselves. If we sacrifice truth, then we will miscarry justice."³

—Thabiti Anyabwile

In some situations requiring a decision to be made, there are no good options. If option A is selected, there are sure to be negative consequences. However, option B holds different undesirable results. The choice is surely agonizing.

This type of dilemma was demonstrated even in ancient times. In his epic poem *The Odyssey*, the Greek poet Homer tells of the heroic journey of Odysseus. In one part of the tale, as he was on his way home by sea, he encountered a narrow passage that presented threats on both sides. If they drifted too far to one direction, peril was certain as the ship would be pulled into Charybdis—a powerful whirlpool. But if they sailed too close to the coast on the other side of the ship, Scylla—a carnivorous monster—was sure to attack them. To pass through, Odysseus had to draw closer to one danger or the other, but both options would undoubtedly lead to some loss of life.

Pontius Pilate had to sail through his own narrow passage with two difficult choices. On one hand, he could defy the wishes of the crowds and hold to his determination that Jesus was innocent. This choice, however, likely would lead to rioting, loss of life, and trouble for Pilate with his superiors, but this would have been the just and right option. On the other hand, he could appease the crowds and the Jewish leaders and crucify Jesus. In the end, he chose poorly, condemning an innocent man in order to avoid trouble for everyone, especially himself.

But all this happened as part of God's plan. Though Pilate was responsible for his own actions, God was orchestrating events to save humanity.

How can you trust that God is orchestrating events even when things don't go as expected?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"As our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ, so God's greatest glory that he has from his saints comes through their sufferings."⁴

—Thomas Brooks (1608–1680)

POINT 1: Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly tried (Luke 22:66-71).

After Jesus was arrested, the Jewish religious leaders didn't follow their own rules for trials as they tried to trap Jesus into the charge of blasphemy.

? **What are some examples of Christians using wrong methods when trying to share the truth?**

Jesus's claim of divinity was punishable by death. No other accusation or testimony was needed for the religious leaders.

? **What reasons did the religious leaders have for wanting Jesus condemned?**

POINT 2: Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly accused (Luke 23:1-5).

The Jewish leaders made three accusations against Jesus: (1) misleading the nation, (2) opposing Roman taxes, and (3) claiming to be king—all twisted truths geared toward influencing Pilate to condemn Jesus.


? **What are some things Christians are wrongly accused of at times?**

Though Pilate found Jesus innocent, the enemies of Jesus continued to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing.

? **How does knowing Jesus lived a holy and innocent life but still dealt with persecution and injustice encourage you when you face similar troubles?**


POINT 3: Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly condemned (Luke 23:13-25).

Again Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, but because of the insistent cries of the crowd, he condemned Him.

 From Day 4: **Why is mob rule so effective?**

KEY DOCTRINE #43: ENSLAVED TO SIN

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Romans 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2).

 **What can we do to sin less?**

MY RESPONSE

Because we have been forgiven of our sin, we cast aside guilt and shame when we sin and instead repent with assurance that we are always loved and accepted by God.

- **HEAD:** If Jesus suffered without sinning, how are we to try to endure our present sufferings?
- **HEART:** Knowing Jesus suffered unjustly, how can we thank Him for His desire to do the Father's will in enduring suffering and dying for us?
- **HANDS:** Knowing Jesus has taken away our enslavement to sin, with whom can we share this good news for their salvation also?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Surely corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace."⁵

—Thomas Boston (1676–1732)