**Calvary Fellowship 3.19.2023 Matthew 27:1-14 “Arrested Development”**

* **How many of U have been on Splash Mountain? How many of U enjoyed riding Splash Mountain? Pray for these people - they enjoy torture**
* I know it closed a couple of of months ago b/c apparently Splash Mountain is racist - so do w/ that information what U will
* Well, my mom has this pic at her house of Carey & I riding Splash Mountain at Disney - Now here's 2 pieces of info U need to know about my wife & I
* #1- Carey loves roller coasters - the feeling of impending death is fun to her
* #2 - I hate roller coasters - I believe that if U like the feeling of falling from high heights, then U need serious counseling and/or shock therapy to fix that
* Well anyway, back to the picture - Here's the odd part about it: 1st, we're in the front row - why? B/c Carey said it would be more fun
* I didn't want to sit in the front - she said, "Well, where do U want to sit?" I said, "The gift shop!" - But I agreed b/c I want to be a good husband
* So we go on the ride, but the picture tells the whole story - Carey is laughing w/ her hands raised & this expression of total joy
* I, on the other hand, had the look of death on my face & I was holding onto the bar like it was the only thing keeping me alive
* **Here’s the thing about holding the bar - there’s nothing rational about it**
* It isn’t actually helping U - but we humans we have this instinctual desire to control, so when we feel out of control we try to hold onto something
* We all do this - We all find ourselves in circumstances where we try to grab hold of even the smallest thing b/c it gives us the feeling on control
* And the further the space between our ability to control things & reality is what we fill w/ worry, anxiety, & even questioning God’s love for us
* Yet it’s in this space where spiritual maturity is born - when we’re able to recognize our inability to control & God’s complete control on all situations
* This is the hardest lesson to learn & U don’t learn it once - it’s a continual lesson, but if U want to be spiritually mature, U have to learn it & live it
* **But we have a choice in what we fill w/ the space between control & reality**
* And the happiest people - the people w/ the most joy - the people who are the wisest - they don’t fill the space w/ worry & anxiety - they fill that space w/ trust
* How? B/c they have experienced God’s faithfulness to them in their own lives in the past & even when they didn’t have that experience yet, they were able to rely on the experiences others who took God at His word
* And what was the result? Everything we’re looking for - Peace, joy, purpose, & a confidence that God will never leave me or forsake me
* **So we’re in message #43 in our series in the Gospel of Matthew & Jesus has just been arrested & sentenced to death by the Jewish leaders**
* Now, we’ll meet Pontius Pilate - a powerful Roman governor who’s in a little bit of hot water & a Jewish council who knows it
* And they are going to leverage that for their own purposes b/c by the end of the day, they want Jesus dead
* And here’s what we’re going to learn in our time together - none of this is taking God by surprise - in fact, He has predicted all of it
* And if that’s the case here, then don’t think for a minute that God has forgotten U or that some detail of your life has slipped His mind
* The moments where we’re waiting on God are the moments where our trust is tested - but I’ll tell U this, life is better when U trust Him
* “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31 NKJV)
* I’m sorry if you’re a member of PETA, but according to this verse, God cares more about people than animals - but He still cares about the animals too
* When we don’t see God working, God is working behind the scenes
* And we live in a world where, if U don’t post it on social media, it didn’t happen
* God isn’t like that - God isn’t out there flexing & bragging about everything He does - instead, He’s worked in the past to change your present
* And right now, He’s working in your present to change your future…

**———(v. 1-2)———**

**#1 - God was Working Before You Started Praying**

* **It’s about 5AM-6AM & according to Luke 22, the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) officially sentenced Jesus to death**
* There’s so much in these 2 little verses that U can miss if U don’t know the background - B/c if the Jews sentenced Jesus to death, why did they need to take Jesus to Pilate? And also, who is this Pontius Pilate guy?
* **Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea from 26-36AD - he had only been on the job for about 4-5 years when he saw Jesus**
* Here’s the weird part - Pilate was not Roman - he was Spanish
* He was from Seville, Spain & when the Roman came to conquer his town, he joined the Roman army - so how did he get such a good job?
* He married well - he married Claudia Procula - she was the granddaughter of Tiberius Caesar - sometimes it’s all about who U know
* **But Pilate got off on the wrong foot w/ the people of Israel**
* He marched into Jerusalem on his 1st day w/ soldiers carrying their banners, topped w/ eagles of gold & silver - into the temple area
* The Jews saw the eagles as an idol & were so infuriated they started a riot
* Pilate decided that the best ay to squash the riot was to gather up all the rioters & bring them to an amphitheater outside Jerusalem
* He threatened to execute all of them unless they relented
* The rioters laid their heads on the ground & responded, “Kill us & tomorrow there will be 10,000 more to take out place.” - So Pilate backed off
* **2 years later, Pilate wanted to make up for his bad start w/ the Jews**
* So he built an aqueduct system that would carry fresh water from the north down to Jerusalem - it’s an amazing feat of engineering
* However, to pay for it, he raided the treasury of the temple
* As U could imagine, Jews went crazy & Pilate had to shed blood to put down the insurrection
* **Lastly, just a few months before Matthew 27, Pilate ordered new armor for his soldiers - the new shields had Caesar’s face on it**
* The Jews saw this as idolatry & rebelled again
* When the emperor, Tiberius, heard about it, he was really upset & told Pilate that 1 more problem w/ the Jews & you’re out of a job
* So even though Pilate is a powerful person, he’s in a weakened political state
* The other question we should be asking is, “If they want to kill Jesus, why don’t they just stone Him?” - that’s a huge question for us
* The problem is, the Jews lost their ability to execute capital punishment years earlier when the Romans took over
* But I need to reference a prophecy in the book of Genesis for us
* “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” (Genesis 49:10 NKJV)
* **In Gen. 49, Jacob speaks a blessing over all of his kids**
* When he gets to his 4th son, Judah, he says this
* Jewish scholars have universally agreed that Shiloh refers to Messiah & the scepter is the ability to execute capital punishment
* And the method that the Jews used for capital punishment was stoning
* When Israel lost this ability in 12 AD, jewish priests & scholars tore their clothes & said, “The scepter has departed & Shiloh hasn’t come”
* But at 12 years old, a boy was in the temple confounding the scholars w/ His questions & when His parents found Him Jesus said…
* “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49 NKJV)
* So here’s something to think about - remember in John 8, they were going to stone a woman caught in adultery? In Acts 7, they stone Stephen
* So why don’t they want to stone Jesus? Probably b/c He was too well known & if they stoned Him, it would get back to Rome
* That’s why the prophets, describing the Messiah’s death, describe the Roman form of execution, crucifixion - David described it 1,000 before it happened
* “For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.” (Psalm 22:16 NKJV)
* We’re going to do a deeper give into Psalm 22, 2 weeks from now
* But understand, the Persians invented Crucifixion, but they never used it bc they said it was too gruesome - the Romans perfected it
* “Then Pilate said to them, ‘You take Him and judge Him according to your law.’ Therefore the Jews said to him, ‘It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,’ that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.” (John 18:31-32 NKJV)
* Here’s my point - every detail was prophesied 1,000 years before it happened
* That means, God is working on it before U started praying for it
* **When we were building this building, we were told that we had to pay a county assessment - we had no idea, it was out 1st building project**
* But it was over $100K & we didn’t have that kind of money lying around
* So we started praying that God would have someone drop a $100K check in the offering - unfortunately, none of U did that
* So that Monday, I sent someone from the staff down to the county
* They got there & I wanted to know exactly how much the assessment was & now what we were dealing with
* So they get to the county & they call me & say, “Pastor Bob, there’s a problem.”
* I said, “What’s the problem?” They said, “They said the assessment is paid for”
* I said, “OK. There’s 2 things U need to do right now. #1 - get a receipt, showing that the assessment is paid for. #2 - I want U to run out of there fast!”
* Listen, that assessment got paid 3 years before we bought this property
* Listen, sometimes we’re praying b/c we don’t see God working & He took care of it already - we just haven’t seen the receipt yet
* **When Carey & I were 1st married, we were totally broke - I was in college finishing my theology degree & Carey & I are both working full-time**
* Our monthly budget for groceries was $35 - not a day or a week - a month
* And 1 day we had nothing in the cupboards & payday was a few days away
* We were committed to getting out of debt, so we had stopped using the credit cards, but there was nothing for dinner
* We were faithful tithing, but we had a gap of a couple days where were was no cash - So Carey says, “Let’s go check the mail.”
* So we walk from our apartment to the mailbox & there’s a letter from this girl who was in our small group but went to be a missionary in Guatemala
* She thanked us for opening our home every week & she said, “U were always so generous to buy food for everyone. I’d like to buy some food for U.”
* In the letter was a Publix gift card for $25 - outside of the birth of my children, I don’t know if I’ve ever been so happy in my life
* I said, “Carey, let’s go get some steaks. Jesus is buying.”
* That gift card was already in the mailbox - God was working before we we started praying
* But we lose our joy & we wonder if God care for us & we start making bad decisions - when all along, God has had it covered

**———(v. 3-10)———**

**#2 - Obeying God Minimizes My Regrets**

* When Judas sees that Jesus was condemned to death, he realizes that his plan of somehow forcing Jesus into establishing the kingdom didn’t work
* So he returns the money & the chief priests don’t care about his remorse
* They’re done w/ him - Judas has served his purpose of betrayal
* **If U weren’t w/ us when we talked about Judas’ betrayal, we mentioned that there’s really only 2 reasons why Judas would betray Jesus:**
* 1st, Judas was disappointed Jesus was not the kind of Messiah he expected
* He wasn’t planning on overthrowing Rome or the religious elite in Israel
* Consequently, there was no position of prestige or power for him to take
* 2nd, the betrayal could have been Judas’ way to force Jesus’ hand to establish His kingdom if He were forced into a confrontation w/ Rome
* I personally lean towards the 2nd, but it didn’t work & Judas is so guilt ridden, that he kills himself
* By the way, U know how people are - if there was anything about Jesus that was hypocritical or duplicitous, he would have justified himself in that
* He would have said, “Well, I saw Jesus kick a puppy once, so He deserved it”
* But there was none of that - only guilt over what he had done
* Here’s the problem w/ sin - the advertisement is way better than the real thing
* And that’s why we live w/ regrets - b/c sin never delivers on what it promises
* **Have U ever noticed that the burgers that fast food places advertise never look like the burger U get at the drive thru? Check it out (pics)**
* BK Double CB/ Double whopper/ Wendy’s baconator/ Subway sweet teriyaki
* 1 time I showed that picture of the Subway sub & after the service someone from the church introduced me to a woman
* She said, “Hi, I’m the vice-president of Subway” - and I just burst out laughing
* I said, “It’s a pleasure to meet U, but I’m guessing I’ll never see U again”
* **Here’s the point - U want to live your life w/ as few regrets as possible**
* That’s what makes the backdrop of the potter’s field so powerful
* I the ancient world, if a potter discovered cracks or chips in something he made, he would throw the marred vessel outside his shop
* Over time, this area would become good for nothing except to use as a cemetery for strangers who had no other place to be buried
* That prophecy from Zechariah & Jeremiah was predicting that’s what the money would be used to buy
* But there’s beauty in broken things if the potter can turn what’s broken into something new - a mosaic is something of beauty made from broken pieces
* All of us are broken - all of us have regrets - but that doesn’t means your life is wasted - it means U need to go to the potter & let Him transform U
* Judas didn’t see any hope & ended his life - so tragic b/c he could have been so much more - but for all the time he spent w/ Jesus, he still didn’t get it

**———(v. 11-14)———**

**#3 - Understand that Truth is My Friend**

* **Now, there’s a question we need to ask: Why is Pilate leading w/ this question? It’s b/c of the charges brought against Jesus**
* “Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.’” (Luke 23:1-2 NKJV)
* **So there’s 3 charges against Jesus: #1 - misleading the nation**
* #2 - saying people shouldn’t pay taxes/ #3 - saying He’s a king
* The 1st 2 charges are false, the 3rd is true - Jesus
* And Pilate is astonished b/c Jesus doesn’t say anything about the charges against Him - why did he marvel?
* B/c do U know what every other person who has ever stood before him has done? Declare their innocence - they didn’t do it - it’s not what it looks like
* But Jesus said nothing - but He did have conversation w/ Pilate
* “Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, 'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’” (John 18:33-38 NKJV)
* Pilate’s words are so telling - he had spent his entire career bending the truth, stretching the truth & spinning the truth, he didn’t know what truth was anymore
* And here’s what we do - we justify & we say things like, “Well, is it really that bad? I mean, it’s wrong, but it’s not like I’ve killed anyone.”
* **Has anyone here ever gained weight? U were on a diet & then something happened & U went back to your old eating habits**
* No 1 goes straight from bananas to Twinkies in 1 step
* Instead, it’s a slow progression - U stop exercising for some reason - then U go out for dinner & have 1 bad meal - but it’s only 1 bad meal, you’re still ok
* Then U go to a birthday party & have a piece of cake - but it’s a small piece of cake, so it’s ok - plus, every Cuban at the party is telling that it’s “un dia”
* Then U swing by Publix & pick up a cake b/c 1 of your kids learned to tie their shoes & 1 night U eat 1/2 the cake & it’s game over
* By the way, that story wasn’t me - it was a friend of mine - pray for him
* **Many times in our lives we think that God is judging us, when in reality all God is doing is allowing us to feel the weight on our own decisions**
* So if U decide to rob a bank & U get caught & as you’re being taken to jail, U say, “God forgive me” - He will forgive U
* But that isn’t going to stop U from going to jail - that the natural consequence of your actions - That works in every area of life - that we reap what we sow
* If U don’t do relationships God’s way, its’s going to be a disaster
* If U don’t manage your $ God’s way, it’s going to be tough
* If U don’t work w/ a godly work ethic, it’s not God’s fault U get fired
* We can’t say that’s God’s judgment - it’s the natural consequences of what happens when we see God’s commands as suggestions
* Listen, this is so important for us b/c when we feel out of control, these are the moments when we’ll try to take matters into our own hands
* And if we’re being honest, that’s usually when it’s a disaster
* **Listen - the plans of God for your life are greater than the plans U have for yourself - when you’re in the waiting room of life, it doesn’t feel like that**
* However, it doesn’t make it any less true - his plans are better
* **There’s was something about the process of asking, seeking & knocking that drew me to the place of knowing to ask for the right thing**
* **When I was in college, I was a deliver guy at night so I could go to school during the day**
* There were a few times where I’d get a delivery & I’d get to the house & I’d knock & no 1 would answer
* Then I’d take a 2nd look at the address & realize I was at the wrong house
* I’d hop in my car, get to the right place & the door would be opened
* **Here’s the point - sometimes we’re simply knocking on the wrong doors**
* And God is too good to give us anything less than what we really need
* But sometimes God does a work in us while we’re knocking on the wrong door & that’s what inspires us to move & start knocking on the right door
* B/c God is good & He does good - so if you're in the waiting room, don't give up
* God is working & He won't fail us - He hasn't failed us yet & He's not about to start now...