

## MIDWEEK OF LENT 5: LEADER

Week 6: Week of April 7

## THE TRIAL

Luke 22:63–23:25

## OPENING

O dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken  
 That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?  
 Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession,  
 What dark transgression?

What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!  
 The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;  
 The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,  
 Who would not know Him.

—“O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken” (*LSB* 439, vv. 1, 4)

## INTRODUCTION

In this section of the Passion Narrative (Luke 22:63–23:25), Luke relates the trial and condemnation of Jesus. At the heart of this scene is the contrast between the changing will of humans, seen in the condemnation of Jesus, and God’s eternal will, seen in the fulfillment of prophecy.

As we meditate on this section of the Passion Narrative, Luke reveals how, in the midst of our changing, sinful human will, God’s eternal saving will is done.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**1. Luke’s account of the trial directly follows Peter’s denial of Jesus. In Peter, we see the sinful power of a changing will. Peter desired to follow Jesus “to prison and to death” (22:33), and yet he ended up denying Jesus to save his own life.**

**This theme of the sinful changing human will continues throughout the trial. Identify the ways in which different people manifest a sinful changing human will.**

At the start of the trial, one sees how the charges of the religious leaders change. As they gather together, they condemn Jesus for claiming to be the “Son of God” (22:70). When they come before Pilate, however, they do not speak of this claim. Instead, they charge Jesus with misleading the people, forbidding taxes, and claiming to be a king (23:2). The irony, of course, is that the religious leaders were not ardent supporters of the Roman government, but now they found the government useful if it could be persuaded to kill Jesus. Religious leaders, concerned

about truth and the ways of God that bring life, were using lies and the ways of the world to bring death.

As the trial continues, one sees how the wills of political leaders change in relationship to Jesus. Pilate repeatedly resists the will of the people by declaring Jesus innocent and attempting to release Him (23:4, 14–16, 22). In the end, however, Pilate hands Jesus over to their will and condemns Him to crucifixion (23:24–25). Herod also manifests a changing will as he desires to see Jesus (23:8) and yet ends up treating Him with contempt and mocking Him (23:11).

Finally, as the trial concludes, Luke highlights the changing will of the people by having a threefold denial of Jesus that parallels the threefold denial by Peter. Three times Pilate declares Jesus innocent and worthy to be set free (23:13–16, 20, 22) and three times the people deny that judgment and call for His death (23:18, 21, 23). Ironically, in this denial, the people who claim to be concerned about peaceful governance (23:2, 14) call for the release of an insurrectionist (23:18).

**2. In this midst of such changing human wills, God’s eternal will is done. Luke opens with the guards mocking Jesus as a prophet. How is this theme of Jesus as a prophet significant to discerning God’s eternal will in these events?**

Luke records how Jesus is mocked by being blindfolded and told to prophesy who hit Him (22:64). This event mocks Jesus in two ways. First, it seeks to demonstrate that Jesus was not a prophet because He could not identify His attacker. Second, it ridicules the whole act of prophecy by reducing God’s prophetic Word to simple declarations of who hit whom. Ironically, however, Jesus has already revealed Himself to be a prophet by prophesying Peter’s denial, which just occurred (22:61), and He has also already identified who hit Him, by prophesying this very mocking (18:31–33).

In recalling Jesus’ prophecy of this mocking, the reader is drawn into the Passion predictions of Jesus (9:21–22, 43–45; 18:31–33) and the way in which this one event is part of God’s greater story of salvation revealed there.

Israel has always persecuted the prophets whom God sends her (Luke 13:31–35; 20:9–18) and yet, in patient love, God continues to reach out to His people. Now, God has sent the promised Prophet who will be greater than Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18; 34:10–12; Acts 3:22–26). As foretold by the prophets (Luke 24:25–27; Acts 3:17–18), Jesus will be rejected and yet, in that rejection, fulfill God’s will for the salvation of all people.

For this reason, Jesus utters a prophecy in this very text. He reveals to the religious leaders (and the reader) that God will raise His Suffering Servant and enthrone Him at His right hand (22:69; cf. Acts 2:32–33; 3:13–16). With this prophecy, Luke invites the reader to see and to trust in God’s greater story.

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By opening the trial with this small glance at Jesus being mocked as a prophet, Luke opens for his reader the greater saving work of God. Jesus, the promised Prophet, greater than Moses, will be rejected by all people and yet be raised by God for the salvation of all nations (Luke 24:44–47; Acts 2:22–24).

**3. To all of the changing wills in this text, Luke gives us a hint of one more change that will occur—the repentance of God’s people. How does the threefold denial that occurs at the end of this section (Luke 23:13–23), when read in light of Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial (22:31–34), offer hope for the repentance of God’s people and offer hope for us today?**

Luke frames the trial of Jesus with pictures of denial, both individual at the beginning (Peter) and corporate at the end (the people). All people are caught in a changing, sinful human will.

Yet, Jesus has prophesied not only that Peter will be restored (22:32a) but also that Peter will be His servant to bring about the restoration of others (22:32b). This prophecy of Jesus comes true with the event of Pentecost.

When Jesus appears to His disciples at the end of Luke, He tells them that it is written that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47). Thus, after His resurrection, Jesus does not abandon the people who denied Him in Jerusalem but seeks to bring about their repentance, forgiveness, and growth in the faith. This prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost, as Peter preaches in Jerusalem and people repent and are saved (Acts 2:36–41).

Thus, the eternal will of God works through the death and resurrection of Jesus to bring salvation to sinners. The proclamation which began in Jerusalem continues in our midst today. When we are confronted by our changing human will, the ways in which we fail to follow Jesus as we should, God continues to come to us through His Word, calling us to repentance and bringing the message of salvation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

### CONCLUSION

Earlier in Luke, Jesus wept over Jerusalem (19:41–44). He lamented that they were blind to “the things that make for peace” and did not know “the time of your visitation.” The hopes of Israel were being fulfilled in Jesus, even though no one in Israel could see the reign and rule of God that had come in Him.

By grace, we now see the wonderful patience and mercy of God, working for the salvation of people who had turned away from Him. That patience is still present among us today, gathering us as His people around His Word, whereby He reveals His work of salvation until He comes again (2 Peter 3:1–9).

### CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, Your faithfulness endures throughout all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or the sea was formed or the earth was filled with Your creatures, from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

In grace, You sent Your Son to a people of changing wills that He might accomplish Your eternal will and bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Comfort us now with Your eternal love. Forgive us our sin and fill us with Your Holy Spirit that we might live in unchanging love of You and willing obedience to Your commands, bringing Your message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.