

Who Has Redeemed Me a Lost and Condemned Person

The Passion Of Our Lord Jesus Christ: *The Praetorium*

Trinity Lutheran Church – Kearney, Missouri

March 14, 2018 – Wednesday of Lent IV



In the name of the Father, and † of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Guilty! Who? Jesus! Are you kidding? Guilty of what? Of criminality! If you don't believe me, just listen to the charges that were leveled against Him: "*We found this Preacher perverting the nation, and forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King. He believes He's the Son of God!*" Really? Those are some serious charges: radical, anarchist, insurgent, tax evader, a divine political messianic pretender dangerous to Rome and Roman authority? Those are no misdemeanors or even simple felonies. Those are death penalty crimes. There's really only one thing to do: "*Crucify Him.*"

And so they went for the jugular. Time after time Pilate objected, saying: "*I find no fault in this Man. He has done nothing worthy of death.*" But when the crowds pressed their charges, hired more and more folks to be street protestors, then threatened to ratchet up their Occupy Jerusalem tactics by looting, trashing, and rioting in the streets, Pilate finally relented. "*He took water and washed his hands before the Occupy Jerusalem crowd saying: 'I am innocent of the blood of this Man; see to it yourselves.' Then all the people responded, 'His blood be on us and our children!'*"

So there you have it. Who was really guilty, Jesus? Of course not. The governor's wife had been right when she told her husband that because of dreams she'd been having about this innocent Man she hadn't

been able to sleep. She warned him about getting involved at all, but the governor had no choice. Releasing the notorious terrorist, Barabbas, from death row while sentencing the innocent Preacher, Jesus, to crucifixion was a federal hate crime of the highest order. Where was the Israeli division of the omnipotent ACLU while Jesus was suffering this colossal miscarriage of justice? MIA, undoubtedly.

Then who is guilty in this sordid affair? Everyone is guilty, that's who. They, we, you and I, we're all guilty. No one can dodge this bullet, for we are all responsible and culpable. Even Judas' severe remorse, which caused him to give back the silver bribe and take his own life didn't clear him of guilt. Indeed, his tragic end is a terrifying warning to anyone who "*tramples under foot and profanes the blood*" of Jesus as the letter to the Hebrews clearly states. The people of Israel could not evade their responsibility, for it was they who handed Jesus over to Pilate. Their preference of Barabbas over Jesus was their unmistakable choice. Therefore, Pilate's verdict was also theirs.

But what about Pilate? Didn't he wash his hands of the entire affair? He did, but let's be honest, all the scrubbing in the world couldn't scour the blood of Jesus from his hands. It was, after all, Pilate who released Barabbas, scourged Jesus, and handed Him over to be crucified. The soldiers under Pilate's command completed the circle by mocking the King of the Jews just

as the Israelites had. In short, Jesus' trial was a miniature of the guilt of all people – us included! But let's face it, we'd like to be rid of Jesus, too. He's just too much of an inconvenience, too embarrassing and scandalous. He acts like He's God and wants to stake a claim on your life. That's not good, because we want to be God and will eliminate anyone standing in our way – yes, that's right, even Jesus!

Consequently, we too, if offered the right price, might have been willing to cut a deal with His enemies to hand Him over for arrest, trial and cruel crucifixion. Despite all our many promises and boasting, we often fall asleep with boredom. And when Jesus really begins to suffer, we deny Him like Peter did. We certainly don't want to chance being associated with this Jesus when the beatings, mockery, and hanging shift into high gear. Yes, we too willingly join with the rest of the Occupy Jerusalem crowd as we hold up our “*Free Barabbas*” posters and burn Jesus in effigy.

It's time to confess. There's no need to put it off any longer. We've been caught in the act. We are the ones responsible. We did it all. The words of Jesus apply to us as well as to anyone else: “*The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him.*” And what do we deserve for all this? Hear the words of St. Paul. “*The wages of sin is death.*” Sin always leads to and results in death for the sinner, for God has promised that “*The soul who sins will surely die.*” It's true. We are lost and condemned sinners, and we need to believe it.

Once you have that under your belt, though, it's time to believe something else –

another Word from the Lord. You will **not** get what your sin has earned you. Rather it has pleased the Lord to give all your sin and everything it deserves to Jesus, who was “*Numbered with the transgressors,*” who “*took up our infirmities,*” “*carried our sorrows,*” and was “*stricken by God, smitten and afflicted.*” Why? Because Jesus, bearing all your sin in His own body was “*pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment for our sin was laid upon Him.*”

Jesus insists on taking it all – all your sin, all its punishment, all of it, on the cross. That was why He suffered so. That was why He allowed all this to happen. So name your sin. No matter how bad or evil, it's forgiven in the death of Jesus, so that He refuses to count any of it against you. He insists on covering you with His divine, sin-cleansing, sin-purifying blood. For His sake God declares you **not guilty**. You are absolved, released, set free, forever!

And Jesus bears witness to this truth concerning your pardon. Listen again to His promise: “*I forgive you,*” He says. “*Take and eat. Take and drink. This bread is My body. This cup of wine is My blood. They are given and shed for you, for your forgiveness.*” “*Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice,*” Jesus declares. So hear His voice, dear Christian as He comes to you in Word, water, bread and wine. Hear His voice, for His words are true. He cannot lie. You are forgiven. Believe it, and live. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.