

John 19:1-27
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 22

“Behold the Man!”

November 1, 2020

When Jesus was growing up, this passage would have been read in the synagogue.
I can't help but wonder sometimes –
what was it like for Jesus to realize that this would be *him*.

It's impossible to get inside his head – beyond what Scripture has revealed!

But it is *very clear* that as Jesus approached Pontius Pilate,
he understood “*I am* the suffering servant.”

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.”

When you *know* that you are doing exactly what you are supposed to be doing,
it gives you great confidence in the face of any circumstances.

It's also in this way that we start to understand how Jesus sang Psalm 22 from the cross,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”!

Jesus had learned that song growing up.
He probably had a pretty good idea that one day, this would be him.
And then that day came.

I don't think that we will ever truly comprehend what it is
to be fully God and fully man.
I'm not even sure that we will truly comprehend what it is
to be fully human.

I trust that we will experience it in the new creation –
but as for comprehending... I'm not so sure.

It's not that we understand so that we can believe –
rather, we believe in order that we might understand.

And it is in that spirit that we sing Psalm 22 with Jesus.

Sing Psalm 22
Read John 19:1-27

Just a week earlier, Jesus had ascended up from Jericho to Jerusalem.
Praised by the crowds as the son of David–
the promised Messiah who would rule over the nations with a rod of iron–

he had come to his own.
But his own did not receive him.

Now, a week later he has been betrayed by one of his own disciples,
condemned by his own high priest,
and now stands before the Roman governor as an outlaw—
having been cast outside of the law of both God and man.

And yet as he reaches the depths of his humiliation,
he is also lifted up to reach the pinnacle of his exaltation.
As he had said, “If I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself.”
It is only through the joint action of Jew and Gentile alike
that he can be offered as the final sacrifice that will atone for the sin of the world.

1. “Behold the Man!” (v1-7)

a. The Flogging of the King of the Jews (v1-3)

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.³ They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands.

Pilate has heard Jesus declare that his kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate is convinced that Jesus is not a threat to Roman authority.
He would like to free this man,
but he must first placate the Jews.

The last thing he needs is for them to write another letter to Caesar complaining about him.
So he has his soldiers flog Jesus.

This is not a judicial flogging, but a political one.
He does not believe that Jesus deserves this beating,
but he must pacify the Jews.

This is the first time that Jesus’ blood is shed by the hand of man.
He had sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane at the hand of his Father (Lk 22:44),
but only now does man require his blood.

They give him fitting garments for his task:
a crown of thorns and a purple robe—
oddly matched to his calling as the suffering servant of the LORD.
“Hail, King of the Jews!” they cry,
as they strike his battered body with their hands.

But he is silent.

This is Judgment Day, and he must bear these blows.
“Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

b. Pilate Presents Jesus (v4-5)

⁴ *Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know*

that I find no guilt in him.” ⁵ *So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!”*

Then, with Jesus covered in blood, with a crown of thorns and a purple robe,

Pilate presents him to the Jews.

“See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.”

And he calls out with a voice ringing across the ages,

“Behold the man!”

Whether in pity or in mockery, Pilate asks the Jews,

Isn’t this enough?

Behold this ridiculous specimen of humanity!

He is no threat to Rome—or to you.

After being mocked and beaten, who will ever listen to him again!

But Pilate’s voice says more than he knows!

“Behold the man!”

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And God formed *the man* of dust from the ground.

And God named him “Man” – *Adam*.

Now Pilate unwittingly names him – *the Man* –

the one who will repair man’s fault.

c. “Crucify Him!” The Condemnation of the Son of God (v6-7)

⁶ *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”* ⁷ *The Jews^[a] answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”*

It’s worth noting that only the chief priests and the officers respond.

The rest of the crowd is silent.

Throughout John’s gospel, the “Jews” refer to the leaders of the people,

together with all those who are under their influence.

And here the Jews are silent.

Perhaps they wavered—as Nicodemus had.

Only the chief priests and officers hold firm to their conspiracy:

“Crucify him! Crucify him!”

This may explain Pilate’s maneuver here.

Thinking that perhaps he has succeeded in his little game, Pilate replies,

“Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”

But at the mention of guilt, now the Jews close ranks.

They remember how Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God.
At first they had refrained from stating the details of their accusations,
fearing that Roman law would not care about their religious charges against Jesus.
They had focused their energies on the charge that Jesus was a political threat--
“the King of the Jews”
But now in their “holy anger” over Jesus alleged blasphemy,
they cry, “we have a law,”

Oh!

Yes...

Yes, they had a law.

They had a law that taught them to look for *this one* –
they had a law that showed them how to love God –
and love their neighbor as themselves!

“and according to that law he ought to die
because he has made himself the Son of God.”

...Israel is my son, my firstborn...

d. Jesus Speaks: True Authority Is from Above (v8-11)

⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

But for Pilate, this was new.

Now Pilate is even more afraid.

Now he understands why the Jews are so determined to have this man put to death.

He is frightened of them,

but perhaps also he is frightened of Jesus.

He takes him back into his headquarters and demands,

“Where are you from?”

Initially he had asked “who are you?” and “what have you done?”

But now he asks the best and most important question of his life!

Where are you from, Jesus?

But Jesus is silent.

He had repeatedly declared that he had come from the Father,

he was “from above” –

but now he does not answer.

Pilate’s curiosity does not stem from faith, but from fear.

And in his fear he cries out, You will not speak to me?
Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?
Pilate waves his Roman credentials before the face of the Son of God.

“You would have no authority over me at all
unless it had been given you from above.
Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

These are Jesus’ final words at his trial.

He does nothing to escape his death.

“Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

Jesus acknowledges Pilate’s God-given authority as magistrate of Rome.

He will submit to the judgment of this mere mortal
because his Father has called him to this hour.

Indeed, Jesus suggests that Pilate is simply doing what any magistrate would do.
Any magistrate would fear the authority of the Son of God.
No earthly kingdom may tolerate the kingdom of heaven
without losing the ultimate allegiance of those who trust in Christ.

Pilate is merely the unfortunate magistrate who found himself
in the one moment in history that would get his name enshrined forever
in the Apostles’ Creed.

“He suffered under Pontius Pilate.”

The chief priests, on the other hand, should have known better.

Their sin is greater because they sin against knowledge.

They know that Jesus does not deserve death,

but they will use Pilate as their puppet to crucify the Lord of Glory.

2. “Behold Your King!” (v12-16a)

a. Caesar’s Friend – Pilate Sits in Judgment (v12)

¹² *From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”*

Pilate knows that they are trying to use him,

so he desperately tries to find a way out.

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out,

“If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend.

Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”

Now Pilate sees how he can get out of this.

He will use the Jews words against them.

—and Jesus is expendable

b. Pilate Presents Jesus (v13-14)

¹³ So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic^[b] Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour.^[c] He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

He is ready to pronounce judgment,
so he goes to the judgment seat called The Stone Pavement,
or Gabbatha, in Aramaic.

And he bring Jesus out and presents him once more before the Jews.

And John identifies the time very precisely:

it was about the sixth hour (noon) of the Day of Preparation of the Passover.

Mark also identifies the time, but he says it was the third hour (9 a.m.)
when Jesus was crucified.

The synoptic gospels all say that darkness fell
from the sixth hour to the ninth hour—from noon until three p.m.

But John identifies the sixth hour with the hour of Pilate’s judgment

John knows full well that the other gospels say
that the sixth hour was the hour of darkness.

That is *why* he says that it was “about the sixth hour.”

If it had been noon when Pilate’s judgment was rendered,
John would have said, “it was the sixth hour.”

But I believe that John wants you to associate Pilate’s judgment
with the falling of darkness.

There is another association that is also very plain from John’s gospel.

In John 4:6 Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well at “about the sixth hour”

It was “about the sixth hour” that he had promised to give living water to the nations.

That living water is about to be poured out.

But around the sixth hour of the Day of Preparation for the Passover,
the hour when the Passover lambs were being brought for slaughter,
Pilate presents Jesus to the Jews.

But Pilate brought out the Son of God before them and declared:

“Behold your king!”

The last time he had said, “behold the man!”

This pitiful specimen of humanity—this bedraggled king —
crowned with thorns.

But now he says, “behold your king!”
Now there is mockery in his voice.
Yes, some mockery for Jesus—but even more for the Jews.

This is the sort of King you deserve!
And this is how you treat *your King!*

And they play their part very nicely:
“Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!”

c. “Crucify Him!” – The Jews Confess Caesar as King (v15-16a)

¹⁵ They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

Pilate, now for the first time feels very much in control of the situation, and so he asks,
“Shall I crucify your King?”
And in a final betrayal of all that the priesthood stood for,
Caiaphas and Annas declare “We have no king but Caesar!”

They had declared only minutes before that they were the guardians of the law:
“We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die
because he has made himself the Son of God.”

They had appealed to Moses in order to condemn the one greater than Moses.
Now, they appeal to Caesar in order to condemn the one greater than Caesar.

They are good politicians!
They will play whatever card suits their fancy...

(Read v16b-18)

3. “Behold Your Mother” (v16b-27)

a. The Crucifixion (v16b-18)

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Judged by the law of Moses and the law of Rome,
Jesus must be put to death.
So he was handed over to be crucified.
But Pilate isn’t finished with the Jews yet.
Jesus will be crucified between two others.
Even in death he will be portrayed as the King of the Jews.

b. Pilate Presents Jesus (v19-22)

¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

Pilate wrote an inscription for all to see, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”
and wrote it in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek,
so that everyone should understand who this Jesus is.
Again, there is some mockery of Jesus—but even more of the Jews.
For Pilate identifies Jesus as the king of those who would put him to death.

And in this mockery we see the truth about ourselves.
Caiaphas had prophesied that it was better for one man to die for the people,
than that all should die,
so now Pilate prophesies that Jesus is indeed the King of the Jews.

Here Pilate again *presents* Jesus to the Jews.
This time he presents Jesus in writing.

And when the chief priests complain,
“No, do not write, “the King of the Jews,” but rather,
“this man said, I am King of the Jews,”
Pilate refuses.
He will kill an innocent man—but he will not lie about him.
For Jesus had never *said* that he was the King of the Jews.
Jesus had plainly insisted that his kingdom was not of this world.

He *is* the King of the Jews but only because he is *first* the King of kings and Lord of lords!
Behold *the man*.
Behold *your King!*

c. The Division of His Garments (v23-24)

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic.^[d] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,
“They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.”

The focus of the action has been on Pilate.
Since 18:29, Pilate is the one who has gone out and come in and spoken and questioned.

Pilate is the one who has feared and had flogged and written.

Jesus has been passive.

He has been the direct object of the action –
the one who has been led, questioned, flogged, and brought –
the one *of whom* Pilate has written –
and now he is the one who is crucified.

John does not encourage us to speculate on Jesus' mental or physical state.
He states very simply what happened to Jesus.

His focus is to show us how all that happened to Jesus
was to fulfill the Scripture.

No less than four times in the next fourteen verses
John will show that the scripture was being fulfilled.

We will conclude today by looking only at the first.

The soldiers took the garments of the Son of God and divided them among themselves.
We often think about the sign given to the shepherds:
you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

We do not often think about the sign given at the cross:

you shall find the king, robbed of his clothes, and hanging on the cross.

John tells us that when they divided his garments, and cast lots for his tunic,
this was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

“They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

This is quoted from Psalm 22:18.

We sang this earlier – My God, my God, O why have you forsaken me?
It is the cry of our Savior from the cross.

But Psalm 22 goes on to say that in the midst of his affliction,
as his mouth goes dry and his body wastes away,
they will divide up my clothing.

When Ham looked upon his naked father, Noah,
he came under God's curse.

We are called to look upon this naked Christ,
for if we would be clothed,
then we must behold the plundering of Christ's clothes.

This was the fitting end for the Second Adam.

The first Adam was created naked and unashamed.

He was clothed to cover the shame of his sin.

The second Adam walked through life clothed.

He was unclothed to uncover the shame of his sin-bearing.

The shame that Adam bore for his sin,
is now revealed openly in Jesus – the Man.

God himself gave clothing to Adam as a gift.
The first God-given clothing consisted of animal skins,
and through the shedding of blood, man was protected from his own sin.
But now the second Adam is left unprotected.
God's gift is stripped away.
God "put clothing upon the *first* Adam
only because he would one day take it off the *second* Adam." (Schilder 3.173)

Naked and exposed, there is no place for Jesus to hide.
Adam hid behind fig leaves,
but Jesus is nailed to the cross for all to see.

And his clothes are divided among the soldiers.
All of his worldly possessions are gone—even the clothes off his back.
He who was rich beyond all measure, now, for our sakes became poor.
David had expressed this same incongruity as the plundered King in Psalm 22.
He was the rightful king,
and yet he was plundered.
First, when he wandered in the wilderness, fleeing from Saul,
when Saul took from him his wife and his home.
And then his own son, Absalom, chased him from his home,
and plundered all his goods.

Now the Son of David is being plundered.
All that David had spoken figuratively is happening to Christ literally.
But Jesus is not only a man like David.
Jesus is also the living God who had clothed Adam in the beginning.

The one who *clothed* us is now stripped bare.
You don't want to look at him, do you?
But you must.
Because hanging naked on the cross, Jesus endured the agony that you deserved.
That *should have been you*.

It is here that the gates of hell open wide—
and as they do, you must continue to keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus.
Look to him in faith, because he is the Word made flesh.
Though he hangs naked on the cross,
this is what he came to do.
"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.”

Jesus is calling you.

I understand why you are reluctant.

You are thinking – he looks so helpless on the cross –
but *really* he *is the Son of God!*

There is a whole lot of power hidden there on the cross.
And I’m afraid of him.

Yes, Pilate was too...

But Pilate’s approach was to try to manipulate that power and use it for his own advantage...

That’s not going to work with Jesus.

It didn’t work for Pilate.

It won’t work for you.

Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world.

And this-worldly tactics will fail *every time*.

There is only one way to avoid failure.

Don’t be afraid of him!

Or better yet – *be afraid of him!*

But recognize that *he did this because he loves you!*

Humble yourself.

Confess that *he* is Lord – and you are not.

Jesus, you are the man.

Jesus, you are my king.

I am yours.

d. Jesus Speaks: And Protects His Mother (v25-27)

So the soldiers did these things, ²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.