

The Lord's Message: Am I Guilty? Not Standing Up

Date: March 20, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Matthew 27:20-26

I am not proud of this. The only time that I was ever sent to the Principal's Office was for fighting. I was in the sixth grade. My best friend and I got into a fight during recess. It started as we were arguing about something that at this time I can not even remember. A crowd gathered around us and started shouting, "Fight! Fight!" I got very mad and I threw the first punch. I completely missed him. He moved back to avoid the punch and, in the process, tripped over a trash can. The bell rang for recess was over. I did not even help him up. I just turned and head into school and went to class. As I am sitting in class, I hear over the intercom, David Kelley, come to the principal's office. So, I got up and went to the principal's office. The principal at the time was Clarence Hawkins. An African American man who stood 6'3" weigh about 230lbs. A very well respect principal and a pastor. I knocked on the principal's door and he invited me to sit down. There was my best friend sitting in another chair. The principal asked each one of us their version of what happened. As I am telling my side of the story, I realize how dumb this all is. Mr. Hawkins told us how disappointed that he was in both of us, but since this was the first time we had been in trouble. He told us to tell each other that we were sorry and to shake hands. This we did, but we were never best friends after that. I have thought long and hard about that day. I lost my best friend, because I gave into the urgings of a mob. I did not stand up and stop it. The message that we are going to be thinking about today is Am I Guilty? Not Standing Up.

Let us pray.

This morning we find ourselves in the events of Good Friday. During this day, Jesus will be tried during an unlawful trial on trump up charges. Jesus will be sentence to death. Jesus will die on a Roman cross. Jesus' body will be place in a borrowed tomb.

Let us start with the unlawful trial. Jesus is arrested in the beautiful garden of Gethsemane. In **Matthew 26:47-50**, Jesus is betrayed by one of his own disciples, Judas. Jesus is taken to the high priest, Caiaphas's house. An unlawful trial is called. Let us look at **Matthew 26:57**. In **verse 59**, the reason for this trial is to find evidence to put Jesus to death. According to the Jewish law at the time, there had to be two witnesses that would confirm evidence against the accused. This is found in **Deuteronomy 19:15-19**. In the next verse, we find that they could not even get the false witnesses to agree. So, the chief priest changes his tactics and asked Jesus directly, which is against the Jewish law. The results are found in **verses 62-66**.

Now, the Jewish courts could not carry out the sentence of death. This had to be done by the Romans. So, the next step is to take Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. In **John 18: 28-38**, Pontius Pilate questioned Jesus to get to the bottom of this sentence of death. Pilate can not find any reason to carry out the sentence of death. So, Pilate to release Jesus. In **Matthew 27:15**, he uses a custom that has been established. Pilate decides to have the crowds choose who to release Jesus, a Galilean carpenter or Barabbas, a known criminal. The results are found in **verses 17-18**.

Now at the inciting of the chief priest and elders, the crowd turns into a mob. In **verses 20-23**, the mob shouts to have Jesus crucified. No one is standing up for Jesus. This mob is taking over the release of Jesus and forcing Pilate's hand. Mobs can do this.

Pilate is caught in a difficult situation. He bows to the pressure. In **verses 24-26**, the results are that Jesus is led away to be crucified.

Everyone turns on Jesus. The chief priests and elders want Jesus dead. The crowd influenced by the chief priests and elders becomes a mob and turns on Jesus. Even the disciples deserted Jesus. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. No one stood up for Christ.

We have witnessed our share of mobs. During the tragic death of George Floyd, there were many protests that turned into mobs across the country. People breaking into stores and looting. Fires being set. Cars overturned. Property being destroyed. People being hurt. The tragic events that led to a mob storming of the capital on January 6. Most of the times, these mobs are made up of ordinary people that get caught up and motivated to acts of violence. The crowd that became a mob that shout to Jesus, "Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!" This mob was made up of ordinary people. Mostly likely the same people that just a week before were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Now are shouting, "Crucify! Crucify!"

What caused these people to changed? I believe that they lost focus on who was their Leader. Jesus once remarked in **Matthew 9:36** that people needed a leader. Without a leader, people will lose focus on what is important, on their morals, and on their actions. They will forget on what they are standing up for. This is when a false leader can come in and sway them to follow what the leader thinks is important, alter their morals, and cause them to destructive actions.

Now, I know that this was all part of God's plan that Jesus should be crucify on a cross for your sins and mine. We still need to keep our focus on our leader, Jesus Christ. We need to stand up for what Jesus tells us is right. When we do what Jesus wants us to do, we must keep our focus on Him and not be swayed by false leaders or the mob.

Am I guilty of not standing up? Am I guilty of losing focus on my leader, Christ? Only you and God can answer those questions. Amen.