

# Saturday Communion Service

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- [ 0 : 00 ] The title for the events that I've read before you could be given as, Why Should They Have Bothered? This was, after all, one more case brought before those three tribunals. But that case was the one that was to determine not the destiny of the accused, but the one that was to determine the destiny of the judges. Now, we've seen in the reading, especially in the dealings of Pilate with Jesus, how hard Pilate tried to remain neutral, but he could not. The reality is that Jesus had already said that it was impossible to remain neutral before him. He said it very clearly, Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to say a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and so on. You see, Jesus has said the sort of things and did do the sort of things that would not allow us actually to remain neutral before him.
- [ 1 : 18 ] It's interesting because the different accounts that the Gospels give us of the trial of Jesus are difficult to reconcile. What I've read to you is just an attempt. I'm not saying it's the final word. It's an attempt because some details, some of the Gospel writers emphasize more some details than others. Even the sequence of the events is not absolutely certain how things went. And so, some things are highlighted. For example, only John has the account of the trial before Annas, the high priest, and virtually no detail regarding the trial before Caiaphas. Luke provides great detail regarding the trial before the whole Sanhedrin. And only Luke gives us the information concerning the trial before Herod.
- [ 2 : 15 ] For example, only John gives us some details about the reaction of Pilate's wife. And it's quite interesting that this reaction of Pilate's wife is connected with such an experience, such an unusual experience as we would normally think, as a dream leading her to think in a certain way. Lange, in his commentary, tells us, As formerly, according to Matthew, the Spirit of Truth had invasions of the night-born witness to the newborn Jesus. And as the testimony of the heathen magi had in the day season confirmed this witness, on this occasion is the solemn political testimony of Pilate, in behalf of the suffering Jesus, strengthened by a witness speaking out of the dream life of his wife. So, details are different. But one thing is made very, very clear, is that these three tribunals, as we could call them, all responded in a certain way to Jesus. Now, we've been thinking, we started thinking about responses to Christ, to the cross of Christ, to the Christ of the cross. And we consider this evening the responses of these three tribunals.

[ 3 : 42 ] But the fact is that we do not just consider the responses that sometime, 2,000 years ago, these tribunals had concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

For I believe that these three tribunals give a sort of a type, of three types of reactions to Jesus Christ.

I think that when we look at how events went, we could see how the Sanhedrin represents those who are not willing to examine the evidence.

Herod may represent those who are not willing to see beyond religious activity. And finally, Pilate may represent those who are not willing to pay the price, although knowing the truth.

And I wonder if somehow we are represented by any of these three groups. I wonder if very specifically this evening, there is someone who is represented by any of these three groups.

[ 4 : 52 ] You are there, and you are confronted with the reality, the words, and the works of Jesus Christ. And you look at it, and you are happy knowing the things and knowing about Him, but you really don't want to consider the evidence.

Because maybe considering the evidence could put you between a rock and a hard place. Or maybe you are here, and you are quite pleased with religion, but you really don't want to go beyond that.

Or maybe you are simply not willing to pay the price. Maybe you are here, and you know in your heart, you should take a very decisive and public stand by Jesus Christ.

But you think, well, no, I know what the truth is, but I'm quite comfortable as I am right now. Well, let us examine briefly all these events.

The first one in connection with the Sanhedrin. There we find those that reject Him without being willing to examine the evidence. Now, we don't need to have a detailed description of what we have read, of the events as we have read them there.

[ 6 : 09 ] You know what happened. Witnesses were brought. The Sanhedrin arranged things in a way that somehow they could justify what they were doing.

The whole thing was a shambles. The whole trial before the Jewish authorities. Was a disaster. Everything that they should have followed was forgotten.

The fact is that the outcome of the trial had been decided beforehand. In John chapter 10, we read, So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, How long will you keep us in suspense?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of them are you going to stone me?

[ 7 : 11 ] The Jews answered him, It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself God. The fact is that when they meet now, eventually as Jesus has been examined by Annas, but by Caiaphas, as the Sanhedrin meets, they in a way have already decided what his faith is to be.

He must die. Now they have failed at an earlier occasion. They have already wanted to arrest Jesus and to bring Him to trial, as we read in John chapter 7.

But the officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, What did you not bring him? The officers answered, No one ever spoke like this man. And the Pharisees answered them, Have you also been deceived?

Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is a curse. Nicodemus, who had gone to Him before and who was one of them, said to them, Does our law just a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?

They replied, Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. And so the whole procedure that the Sanhedrin should have followed for that trial was ignored.

[ 8 : 35 ] Under rabbinical law, the accused had the right to employ counsel, somebody that would come by his side. Under Mosaic law, an accused could not be required to testify against himself.

A voluntary confession was not competent for conviction. No circumstantial evidence was admissible to condemn one to death.

Here say evidence, of course, was not admitted. And there was the presumption of innocence that had to be maintained. The accused, in a capital case, as it was the case with Jesus, was required to be tried in the daytime.

And in public, no evidence could be produced except when the accused was present. Witnesses were not administered an oath. And the reason for not administering an oath to the witnesses is that it was felt that the commandment, thou shalt not bear false witness, was sufficient.

And so very great care was taken generally by witnesses because they knew that if they witnessed falsely against one that was tried with the death penalty as the consequence, they could lose their own lives.

[ 10 : 02 ] The fact is that the Lord Jesus Christ, in part of his words in Luke 22, and verse 67, shows to them that he is very aware that they simply will not listen.

In verse 67 of chapter 22 of Luke, we read, if you are the Christ, they said, tell us, Jesus answered, if I tell you, you will not believe me.

And if I asked you, you would not answer. You see, if I participated in any way in establishing whether what I say is right or wrong, you will just simply ignore it because your minds are made up.

your minds are made up. Now, the reality is that Jesus' response was not evasive. It was not indirect.

Jesus was very clear. You will see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Father. That is language of Daniel 7. And the Jews there, the Sanhedrin, could identify immediately that that man was not hiding who he claimed.

[ 11 : 11 ] to be. The fact is that did they examine the evidence? Jesus told them, I have been teaching in the synagogues and in the temple.

I have been teaching openly. Whatever I have done, I have done it in daylight. You have seen not just my words, because you not only have heard my teaching, but you have seen my works.

Now, do the works that I do, are the works that I have done a corroboration of my words? And the answer, they should have been, they should have given yes, because they only had to go to the prophet and realize that it is the prophet speaking of one like Jesus.

It is the prophet speaking of one that will do the things that Jesus has done in our midst. It is the prophet speaking of one that we have been waiting for for centuries.

And he is one who fits exactly the description of the prophet. And one who has said in one occasion very clearly, I told you and you do not believe.

[ 12 : 33 ] The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me. And again, in the Gospel according to John, the passage we read, I have shown you many good works.

I have shown you. Is there any evidence in the Gospels of the Pharisees and the leaders of the Jews coming to Jesus and saying, stop talking rubbish.

You haven't done anything of the things you said you have done. No, they couldn't. Because he had done them in their presence sometimes. They had been witnesses to the power of Christ.

They had been witnesses to deity working in their midst. The evidence was there. But did they examine it?

No. And they did not examine it because beforehand they had decided it's not in our interest. You see, it's not in our interest to examine this.

[ 13 : 46 ] It's not in our interest to examine evidence that may lead us to have to come to the conclusion that this man is actually who he says he is.

That this man is actually who he claims to be. if we give in to this and there is a demand on our lives.

We're not ready to go that road. Those who are not willing to examine the evidence. second is Herod.

One who was quite happy although it may not seem like that at first but one who was quite happy in a way with some aspect of religion.

That in religion seems to bring some kind of comfort or some kind of sense of well-being. You see, Pilate seemingly had little interest in Jesus and virtually no previous contact with him.

[ 14 : 50 ] But Herod, we are told, he was willing. He had a desire to meet with Jesus. Actually, we know that at least one of the women who followed Jesus and helped to support him was Joanna, the wife of Hosa who was one of Herod's stewards.

And remember that there was some relationship between Herod and John the Baptist and so he was aware of the life and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to a certain extent.

And we are told in the passages that we have read that he tried to see him. Even in Luke chapter 9, we are already told this.

Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was going on and he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead. Others that Elijah had appeared and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.

But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who then is this I hear such things about as news were coming to him of the things that Jesus was doing and the things that Jesus was teaching.

[ 16 : 09 ] Who is this man? And then Luke tells us, and he tried to see him. He tried to see him. He was eager. Herod was eager to see Jesus.

He had been hoping to see him for a long time. But of course his motives were all wrong. You see, he wanted to see Jesus work some wonder.

He wanted to see Jesus do some marvelous thing. Do something religious. Do some religious stuff. Something that comforts me.

Something that causes me to say, wow, this is impressive. The things that this fellow can do. Now there's a question.

The question has been raised as to whether Herod had some kind of aspirations of coming to some kind of alliance with this Messiah, this liberator of the Jews with such great powers.

[ 17 : 13 ] Certainly, Herod was an ambitious man. Maybe he had dreams of siding with Jesus and finding in him the source of power that he did not have on his own.

Maybe those thoughts were in his mind but this is what he wants. Maybe he'll do a miracle before me. Maybe he'll impress me with some miracle that I see from him.

You see, Herod is one who is ready to meet Jesus. He's ready to meet Jesus for the things for the things Jesus can do, for the signs with which Jesus can impress him, for the comfort maybe that knowing about Jesus' power can bring or the help that it could bring to his own aspirations.

But he's not ready to meet Jesus again for who Jesus claimed to be. Herod, those who are not willing to go beyond mere religion.

But then there's Pilate. Pilate, I think, gives us an example of those who are not willing to pay the price and although they know the truth.

[ 18 : 42 ] Now, Pilate was quite a remarkable character. Let me read you a little bit about this man. Pontius Pilate was the Roman procurator from 26 to 36 AD.

He resided ordinarily in Caesarea but during the feasts was accustomed to be present in Jerusalem so as to quickly suppress any disorder.

He was born in Seville in Spain. Well, I don't like this so much but there you go. After a checkered political career, as procurator, he was banished by Caligula on account of his cruelty and inability to maintain order to Vienne, Gaul and at Mount Pilatus he ended his life by suicide.

He had not tactfully managed his government and soon became odious to the Jews but also to the Romans. He planted his standards on the citadel on his first entry into Jerusalem regardless of the religious feeling of the people prohibiting all images.

The people were greatly incensed at the standards bearing the emperor's image and requested the removal. Pilate at first condoned the request and threatened them later with violence but with extreme persistence the Jews won out and the governor submitted.

[ 20 : 10 ] It was a man who just wanted to achieve his ends but apparently he was not very tactful. Eventually there was confrontation and he even had a large number of Galileans killed even in the temple mingling mixing the blood their own blood with that of the sacrifices and creating a great outrage amongst the Jews.

But now he has become their ally. Their ally. Now Luke informs us that the Sanhedrin came to bring charges before Pilate and they brought three specific charges.

Any of those charges would have been sufficient for Pilate to condemn Jesus to death if the charges were true. You see the charges against Jesus were that he was stirring up unrest and rebellion subverting our nation.

That he was opposing taxation by Rome and that he was claiming to be a king. Any of this would be serious crimes against the state.

But remarkably Pilate overlooks these things and the gospel writer tells us that he knew that it was because of envy that they had brought Jesus before him.

[ 21 : 38 ] Again and again we find Pilate as he examines the Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again we find him at pains to release him, trying hard and hard to convince his accusers that this man is innocent, that there is absolutely no reason, no basis at all for his condemnation, passing over all the charges that they have brought.

You see his call to revolution, nobody has heard it apart from his accusers. His call not to pay taxes, well maybe he heard that he was the man who said give Caesar that which is Caesar's and God that which is God.

His teaching had been done in open, in public. His claim to a throne, the accused himself tells him my kingdom is not of this world.

You see my friends are not fighting to deliver me and this conclusion is so clear. This is not a Roman issue, this is a religious issue, this is something to do with the Jews, they should not have brought this man before me in the first instance.

He is as innocent as he could be. But you know the narrative, they insist and insist and insist and then in Luke 23 and verse 23 we find some of the most sad statements I think in the Gospels.

[ 23 : 22 ] But with loud shouts they, that is the Jews of course, insistently demanded that he be crucified. and their shouts prevailed.

So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

He decided to grant to grant their demand. Their demand was unjust. The demand was based on envy.

The demand was based on false accusations as far as Roman law is concerned. The demand had absolutely no ground.

not but he gave in. He knew the truth. I mean, he did not leave Jesus space to answer when he asked him what is truth.

[ 24 : 33 ] But he knew it. In his heart, he knew the truth. But he decided to give in to pressure. It was the pressure of the accused.

It was the pressure of the people that were shouting. It was the pressure of the Jewish religious authorities. But he decided to give in to the pressure.

He knew what he had to do. He knew that he had to release Jesus. And he had to determine even to protect him.

There is another case in the New Testament where we see what the Roman official should have done. And we have the case in connection with Galio and the apostle Paul.

In Acts 18, we read, in verse 12, we read, But when Galio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, This man is persuading people to worship God, contrary to the law.

[ 25 : 47 ] But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galio said to the Jews, If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint.

But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.

And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Galio paid no attention to any of these.

That was Roman law. And that is what Pilate should have done. He knew the truth. He knew that the accusations had no basis. He knew that as far as his authority was concerned, there was no threat.

But he gave in to pressure. does that represent us in any way? Do we give in to pressure when it comes to respond to the demands of Jesus Christ?

[ 26 : 54 ] Now it may be that you are here this evening and in your heart you know you're a follower of Jesus. In your heart you know who you have believed.

In your heart you know that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Lord, the Savior of the world. In your heart you know that the evidence is there and you have believed it and in your heart you know that you should be together with him and together with those that are his.

But maybe were colleagues, maybe members of the family, maybe peer pressure, I don't know. I don't know because pressure sometimes is so hard.

But in a way your reaction is like pilots. Now I know that I don't want to respond to what I know.

I prefer to let others take care of Jesus. Let others deal with him. I will not. three reactions, three responses to Jesus.

[ 28 : 13 ] Those who are not willing to examine the evidence, those who are not willing to see beyond mere religious activity, those who are not willing to pay the price.

Oh, may God by his grace give us that this may not be our experience. That we may be willing to examine what he has said and what he has done and respond coherently.

That we may be able to look beyond just religion. That we may be willing and ready to stand for what we know is the truth.

Let us close singing■■■