

Day 43

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. 15.1-15

Unlike Peter, Pilate has neither affection for, nor allegiance to Jesus. His concern is purely political: does Jesus pose any threat to Roman rule? If the answer is yes, then Pilate will have no qualms about having him crucified. Hence Pilate's only question of Jesus: "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Pilate does though have a responsibility to execute justice. He has no mandate to execute an innocent man. Yet Mark leaves us in no doubt that Pilate fully understands the situation: no guilt has been proven (v.14), rather the chief priests want Jesus executed because he poses a threat to *their* rule (v.10) – which is not a criminal offence.



Peter had denied Jesus because he harboured a well-founded fear for his own life. Pilate, on the other hand, acquiesces to a crowd with whom he has no sympathy merely because he prefers to satisfy their perverted will rather than his own conscience. He did not need any excuse to release an innocent man; nevertheless, the custom of releasing a prisoner at the feast offered him one. 'Lame' is too kind a word to describe his attempt to use it.

Historically there have been contexts in which being a disciple of Jesus has been the acceptable, respectable thing to be. Currently, with the passing of so-called Christendom, those contexts are relatively few. For the most part, therefore, declaring allegiance to Jesus Christ takes a degree of courage. In an increasing number of places (i.e. where Christians are persecuted), it takes the same courage that Peter lacked: courage unto death. This should not surprise us, given Jesus' words in Mark 13:13 "You will be hated by all for my name's sake." The command of both the incarnate and the risen Lord is to be faithful to the end (13.14; Rev 2.10).

? What makes you most fearful of what others think about your faith in Christ?



Lord Jesus, I acknowledge my weaknesses and fears before you. Strengthen my faith in you I that I may never be ashamed of you before men. I pray in your mighty name. Amen.