

41. The ultimate losers

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I heard that a good chess player would see five to six moves of the other person. Some people have such short sight that they have to revise their plan over and over. They don't think through. I guess they'd better not play chess game.

Many of us think that another short sighted people would be city planners. They start a road construction at one area to do something. In about a year later, they go back to do something more there. Why didn't they do all of that before? We, too, often do a lot of short sighted things that we regret later.

We are going to learn about two short sighted people in today's study. They both had ample opportunities to make things right. But they both failed miserably, because they were short sighted people and they were the ultimate losers.

A. TO PONTIUS PILATE

Matt 27:1-2 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

The Jewish council reconvened in the morning and delivered the official verdict against Jesus, so that people could not say that their hastily called night meeting was unlawful. But the Jews did not have the authority to exercise capital punishment they want for Jesus.

The Jewish leaders had reason to expect a favorable result when they went to Pilate. Secular history shows us that he was a cruel, ruthless man, almost completely insensitive to the moral feelings of others. Surely, they thought, Pilate will put this Jesus to death without even blinking an eye.

B. THE MISERABLE END OF THE ULTIMATE LOSER NO. 1

Matt 27:3-4 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!"

1) Remorseful, but not repenting

Judas was remorseful for what he has done to the innocent Man Jesus. Instead of turning to God with a repented heart, he turned to the religion and the religious leaders. Of course, the promptly rejected him, "You have served the purpose. Hit the road, Jack. Don't come no more, no more."

This is so typical of religion. Religion can not give us the fulfillment that only Jesus can give through the relationship with Him. Because religion is a man-made ceremony that is filled with rituals.

There is a tremendous difference between remorse and repentance. Remorse is that I am sorry that I got caught. But repentance requires more than being sorry. It requires turning away from what I have done and do what is right.

2Co 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2) A typical method of the devil

This is a typical method the devil use. He entices us to take the bait of temptation. After we fall into trap, the devil condemns us for it.

However, for those who came to God with repented heart must remember that God has forgiven you and He doesn't remember their sins any more.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

C. A PATHETIC PIETY

Matt 27:5-10 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

1) The difference between Peter and Judas

Peter truly repented and Jesus restored him. But Judas did not repent and this led him to suicide.

Peter and Judas both failed Jesus in the same evening. One went to hell, the other went on to great things. What was the difference? They each chose a tree. Judas chose a tree from which to hang himself. Peter chose a tree upon which to look. Truly, there is great power in seeing the Cross.

"I'm so poisoned," you say. So were the Israelites....

By the tens of thousands, they were bitten by snakes that sent poison coursing through their veins. The cure? God told Moses to put a brass serpent upon a brass pole in the middle of the camp - and whoever would look upon it by faith would be healed according to Numbers 21:8. Those who took this to be too simple and stupid died in the desert. Those who simply lifted up their eyes and looked upon the serpent in faith were completely healed. This served as a sneak preview of what would happen when the Son of God became a sinner, and hung on the Cross in our place.

John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.

So, too, there are people who say, "Guilt will not disappear simply by looking to the Cross. What you need is a lot of tranquilizing drugs followed by years of counseling." Peter says otherwise. Because he looked to the One hanging on the tree - even though he had been bitten by his own sin - Peter was forgiven immediately and went on to great ministry.

Judas hung himself on the tree and lost his eternal life, but Peter depended on the One on the tree and found his eternal life.

2) A pathetic piety

The hypocrisy of the chief priests is transparent. They don't want to "defile" themselves with the price of blood, even though it was a price that they themselves paid.

There has been much question about the quotation attributed to Jeremiah, because it is found in Zechariah 11:12-13. Why does Matthew say the word was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet when it is recorded in Zechariah?

- Some think it could be a copyist error. Perhaps Matthew wrote Zechariah, but an early copyist put Jeremiah instead.
- Some think that Jeremiah spoke this prophecy and Zechariah recorded it.
- Some think that Matthew refers to scroll of Jeremiah, which included the book of Zechariah. I believe this is the right explanation.

D. THE ULTIMATE LOSER NO. 2 - PILATE ON TRIAL

Matt 27:11-14 Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" So Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

1) Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman governor to serve in Judea. He was at this point in big trouble politically. He was not liked by the Jews because he did things that deliberately violated their law and provoked them. To make the matter worse, he had been warned by Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar that if he made one more trouble to Rome, he would be removed from his post.

2) No defense by Jesus

The Jewish leaders knew that the original charge, blasphemy would not stick to Jesus, since Rome had multi gods. So the Jewish leaders changed their charge against Jesus to insurrection, preventing the tax to Caesar and assuming the title of king. These were definitely political charges, the kind that a Roman governor could handle.

Pilate focused on the third charge - that Jesus claimed to be a king - because this was a definite threat to Rome. If he could deal with this "revolutionary" properly, Pilate could please the Jews and impress the Emperor at the same time.

However, Jesus didn't come up with no majestic defense, no instant miracle to save His own skin. Jesus gave Pilate the same simple reply He gave to the high priest. This amazed Pilate. Pilate couldn't believe that such a strong, dignified man - as beaten and bloody as He was - would stand silent at these accusations.

When we think we need defense, we would usually be better off staying silent and trusting God to defend us.

3) The voice of the crowd is not always the voice of God

Matt 27:15-18 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

The name “Barabbas” or “Bar Abba” means “son of the father.” From other Gospel accounts, we know Barabbas was an insurrectionist and a murderer. He was despicable, brutal, and hated by the people. As Pilate brought out Barabbas, he must have been certain that the crowd wouldn’t want a man like him back on the streets. Pilate must have thought that surely the Jews would want Jesus instead—the true Son of the Father.

If anyone knew what it meant that Jesus died in their place, it was Barabbas. He was a terrorist and a murderer, yet he was set free while Jesus was crucified on behalf of him.

I wonder if he ever took it to his heart.

Matt 27:19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”

Claudia Procula, the daughter of Augustus, had married Pontius Pilate. History not only tells us she had converted to Judaism while they were in Israel, but also that, following this event, she became a follower of Jesus Christ.

Matt 27:20-23 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They said, “Barabbas!” Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!” Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!”

“What shall I do with Jesus?” That’s the key question for every person throughout history. Pilate had a choice to make right then. He could either stand up for what he knew was right, or he could follow the crowd and save his political skin.

As a Roman governor, he was pledged to uphold the law. But as a politician, he knew he had to get along with the people. Every decision Pilate made forced him to make another decision, until he was the prisoner of his own evasions.

Matt 27:24-25 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.” And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children.”

Pilate could never wash his hands of this. It was a responsibility that could not be avoided, and his guilt is echoed throughout the centuries. Hidden in Pilate’s attempt at self-justification is a declaration of Jesus’ innocence. Yet, he didn’t do what is right.

The Jewish leaders said, “His blood be on us and on our children.” They were so blinded to kill Jesus, they were calling down God’s wrath on themselves.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We cannot fool God.

Judas thought he was fooling everyone including Jesus. Jesus saw right through him. Someone said, “You can fool a person for a long time. Or you can fool many

people for a short time. But you cannot fool God any of the time." Whatever we did in secret, it will be revealed in public. Our sin will find us out.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

2) Ask yourself this question: What do you do with Jesus?

Judas and Pilate, both refused to know the truth. They both refused to do what is right. Is He your Savior and Lord and do you do what He say? Or do you pretend you didn't hear Him? Whichever you choose, you choose the consequence to follow.

3) Do what is right in the sight of God. Do not be concerned about other people's opinions.

Yes, that means you are not going to be popular. Yes, that means you are going to be ridiculed. Yes, that means you are going to be called weird. But God smiles at you, if you do all that in love.