

18 When Jesus finished praying, He began a brief journey with His disciples to the other side of the Kidron Valley, a deep ravine that floods in the winter rains, then farther on to a garden where He gathered His disciples.

²⁻³Judas Iscariot (who had already set his betrayal in motion and knew that Jesus often met with the disciples in this olive grove) entered the garden with an entourage of Roman soldiers and officials sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. They brandished their weapons under the light of torches and lamps. ⁴Jesus stepped forward. It was clear He was not surprised because He knew all things.

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?
Judas's Entourage: ⁵Jesus the Nazarene.
Jesus: I am the One.

Judas, the betrayer, stood with the military force. ⁶As Jesus spoke "I am the One," the forces fell back on the ground. ⁷Jesus asked them a second time:

Jesus: Whom are you searching for?
Judas's Entourage: Jesus the Nazarene.

Jesus: ⁸I have already said that I am the One. If it is I, you are looking for, then let these men go free.

⁹This happened to fulfill the promise He made that none of those entrusted to Him will be lost. ¹⁰Suddenly Peter lunged toward Malchus, one of the high priest's servants, and, with his sword, severed the man's right ear.

Jesus (to Peter): ¹¹Put down your sword and return it to the sheath. Am I to turn away from the cup the Father has given Me to drink?

¹²So the Roman commander, soldiers, and Jewish officials arrested Jesus, cuffed His hands and feet, ¹³and brought Him to Annas (the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest). ¹⁴You may remember that Caiaphas counseled to the Jews that one should die for all people. ¹⁵⁻¹⁶Simon Peter

and another disciple followed behind Jesus. When they arrived, Peter waited in the doorway while the other disciple was granted access because of his relationship with the high priest. That disciple spoke to the woman at the door, and Peter was allowed inside.

Servant Girl (to Peter): ¹⁷You are one of this man's disciples, aren't you?
Peter: I am not.

¹⁸All the servants and officers gathered around a charcoal fire to keep warm. It was a cold day, and Peter made his way into the circle to warm himself.

Annas (to Jesus): ¹⁹Who are Your disciples, and what do You teach?

Jesus: ²⁰I have spoken in public where the world can hear, always teaching in the synagogue and in the temple where the Jewish people gather. I have never spoken in secret. ²¹So why would you need to interrogate Me? Many have heard Me teach. Why don't you question them? They know what I have taught.

²²While Jesus offered His response, an officer standing nearby struck Jesus with his hand.

Officer: Is that how You speak to the high priest?

Jesus: ²³If I have spoken incorrectly, why don't you point out the untruths that I speak? Why do you hit Me if what I have said is correct?

²⁴Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas bound as a prisoner. ²⁵As this was happening, Peter was still warming himself by the fire.

Servants and Officers: You too are one of His disciples, aren't you?
Peter: No, I am not.

²⁶One of the high priest's servants was related to the one assaulted by Peter.

* 18:9 John 6:39

Initially, Pilate told the Jewish leaders to take Jesus and try Him according to our own laws, but when they hinted at capital charges, Pilate agreed to interrogate Jesus. Rome reserved the right to decide who lived and died in the provinces. They didn't delegate that to the Jewish high council. The charge of blasphemy carried no weight in Roman jurisprudence for it was a matter of our Jewish religious law. Rome had no opinion on such matters. So a new charge must be concocted, a charge that Rome did care about. Rome did care about taxes, of course, and took a dim view of anyone making royal claims under their noses. Pilate agreed to hear the charge, not wasting a Roman minute. He took Jesus inside and began asking Him about these charges.

Pilate: Are You the King of the Jews?

Jesus: ³⁴Are you asking Me because you believe this is true, or have others said this about Me?

Pilate: ³⁵I'm not a Jew, am I? Your people, including the chief priests, have arrested You and placed You in my custody. What have You done?

Jesus: ³⁶My kingdom is not recognized in this world. If this were My kingdom, My servants would be fighting for My freedom. But My kingdom is not in this physical realm.

Pilate: ³⁷So You are a king?

Jesus: You say that I am king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the cosmos, to demonstrate the power of truth. Everyone who seeks truth hears My voice.

Pilate (to Jesus): ³⁸What is truth?

Pilate left Jesus to go and speak to the Jewish people.

Pilate (to the Jews): I have not found any cause for charges to be brought against this man. ³⁹Your custom is that I should release a prisoner to you each year in

Servant of the High Priest, a relative of Malchus: Didn't I see you in the garden with Him?

²⁷Peter denied it again, and instantly a rooster crowed.

²⁸Before the sun had risen, Jesus was taken from Caiaphas to the governor's palace. The Jewish leaders would not enter the palace because their presence in a Roman office would defile them and cause them to miss the Passover feast. Pilate, the governor, met them outside.

Now Caiaphas was high priest at this time. The sacred office he occupied had been corrupted for more than a century by Jewish collaboration with Greeks and Romans. Reformers were few, and they had been unable to cleanse the high office from its pollutants. Because of this, many Jews had stopped coming to the temple. How could God's holy habitation on earth be pure if its primary representative was coddling the enemies of Israel? Caiaphas knew he needed friends in high places to put an end to Jesus. So he turned to Pilate, the Roman governor. It was his job to look out for Roman interests in Judea. History records that he was an irritable man, unnecessarily cruel and intentionally provocative. Many Jews died on his watch. For Pilate, Jesus would be just one more.

Pilate: ²⁹What charges do you bring against this man?

Priests and Officials: ³⁰If He weren't a lawbreaker, we wouldn't have brought Him to you.

Pilate: ³¹Then judge Him yourselves, by your own law.

Jesus: Our authority does not allow us to give Him the death penalty.

³²All these things were a fulfillment of the words Jesus had spoken indicating the way that He would die. ³³So Pilate reentered the governor's palace and called for Jesus to follow him.

honor of the Passover celebration; shall I release the King of the Jews to you?
Jews: ⁴⁰No, not this man! Give us Barabbas!

You should know that Barabbas was a terrorist.

Id like to have been a fly on the wall when Pilate had that private moment with Jesus. Pilate was interrogating Jesus like the man he was: an insecure and cruel power broker representing Roman interests in our land. Jesus, though, was doing His typical mustard seed bit, speaking right over the head of the man who later would show Him no mercy. Pilate couldn't handle the truth when he asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus was the King of the Jews. And that was the truth. Although Pilate wouldn't recognize it, He was his King too. But as Jesus knew, the world didn't recognize His kingdom. That's because it was sourced in heaven above, not in Rome. His authority came from God the Father, Creator, Sustainer—not from the Roman senate.

19 Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. ²The soldiers twisted thorny branches together as a crown and placed it onto His brow and wrapped Him in a purple cloth. ³They drew near to Him, shouting:

Soldiers (striking at Jesus): Bow down, everyone! This is the King of the Jews!
Pilate (going out to the crowd): ⁴Listen, I stand in front of you with this man to make myself clear: I find this man innocent of any crimes.

⁵Then Jesus was paraded out before the people, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

Pilate: Here is the man!
Chief Priests and Officers (shouting): ⁶Crucify, crucify!

Pilate: You take Him and crucify Him; I have declared Him not guilty of any punishable crime!

Jews: ⁷Our law says that He should die because He claims to be the Son of God.

⁸Pilate was terrified to hear the Jews making their claims for His execution, ⁹so he retired to his court, the Praetorium.

Pilate (to Jesus): Where are You from?

Jesus did not speak.

Pilate: ¹⁰How can You ignore me? Are You not aware that I have the authority to either free You or crucify You?

Jesus: ¹¹Any authority you have over Me comes from above, not from your political position. Because of this the one who handed Me to you is guilty of the greater sin.

¹²Pilate listened to Jesus' words; and, taking them to heart, he attempted to release Jesus, but the Jews opposed him, shouting:

Jews: If you release this man, you have betrayed Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king threatens Caesar's throne.

¹³After Pilate heard these accusations, he sent Jesus out and took his seat in the place where he rendered judgment. This place was called the Pavement, or Gabbatha in Hebrew. ¹⁴All this occurred at the sixth hour on the day everyone prepares for the Passover.

Pilate (to the Jews): Look, here is your King!
Jews: ¹⁵Put Him away; crucify Him!
Pilate: You want me to crucify your King?
Chief Priests: We have no king but Caesar!

¹⁶Pilate handed Him over to his soldiers knowing that He would be crucified.
¹⁷They sent Jesus out carrying His own instrument of execution, the cross, to a hill known as the place of the skull, or Golgotha in Hebrew. ¹⁸In that place they crucified Him along with two others. One

was on His right and the other on His left. ¹⁹Pilate ordered that a plaque be placed above Jesus' head. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." ²⁰Because the site was near an urban region, it was written in three languages (Greek, Latin, and Hebrew) so that all could understand.

Chief Priests (to Pilate): ²¹Don't write, "The King of the Jews." Write, "He said, 'I am King of the Jews!'"

Pilate: ²²I have written what I have written.

²³As Jesus was being crucified, the soldiers tore His outer garments into four pieces, one for each of them. They wanted to do the same with His tunic; but it was seamless, one piece of fabric woven from the top down. ²⁴So they said,

Soldier (to other soldiers): Don't tear it. Let's cast lots, and the winner will take the whole thing.

This happened in keeping with the Hebrew Scriptures, which said, "They divided My outer garments and cast lots for My clothes."²⁵ These soldiers did exactly what was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. ²⁵Jesus' mother was standing next to His cross along with her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶Jesus looked to see His mother, and the disciple He loved, standing nearby.

Jesus (to Mary, His mother): Dear woman, this is your son (*motioning to the beloved disciple*)! ²⁷This is now your mother (to His disciple)!

Now you know who "the beloved disciple" is, the last eyewitness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Mary became family to me, fulfilling the dying wish of Jesus, my Savior. For those of us who gathered at the foot of the cross, family was less about blood kinship than it was about covenant obedience.

Caring for her was never a burden, and the reality is that she has always been a simple and private woman. God made her the vessel to bring His Son into the world, and her love for Him was warm and beautiful. Part of me is protective of her, as a son naturally is of his mother. Still, I can see why those who didn't know her would want to learn more about this remarkable woman, especially those grieving over their own losses. Surely they are looking for answers to how to move forward in their own lives. The mother of our Lord served the redemptive purposes of her son and the Savior of us all until her last day on earth.

When I would feel sorry for myself, I just had to think about Jesus. He spent all this time before His death, and through His death, showing us how to love and how to serve. He was asking me to do no more in serving Mary than He did in serving us.

From that moment the disciple treated her like his own mother and welcomed her into his house. ²⁸Jesus knew now that His work had been accomplished, and the Hebrew Scriptures were being fulfilled.

Jesus: I am thirsty.

²⁹A jar of sour wine had been left there, so they took a hyssop branch with a sponge soaked in the vinegar and put it to His mouth. ³⁰When Jesus drank, He spoke:

Jesus: It is finished!

In that moment, His head fell, and He gave up the spirit. ³¹The Jews asked Pilate to have their legs broken so the bodies would not remain on the crosses on the Sabbath. It was the day of preparation for the Passover, and that year the Passover fell on the Sabbath. ³²The soldiers came and broke the legs of both the men crucified

* 19:24 Psalm 22:18