

INTRODUCTION

“Injustice!” The public cried out when David Dao was dragged out by force from a United Airlines flight. Dao was waiting to fly back home to Kentucky. The flight was overbooked. The airline urgently looked for 4 volunteers to give up their seats so that some airline employees can board the plane to their destination for their work the next day. The incentive was later doubled but no one showed any interest. Then Dao and 3 other passengers were randomly selected, but Dao refused to leave his seat. A few airport security officers showed up and pulled Dao out. Within minutes, video clips and pictures of scenes were flying all over the social media. People called for boycott of the airline. Dao hired an attorney to prepare for a lawsuit. That is how people deal with injustice nowadays. In the first century the biggest incident of injustice in the human history happened in Israel. Jesus Christ was sentenced to death penalty on the cross. Christian churches called today “Good Friday” to remember Jesus’ death. But what is so “good” about Good Friday when a sinless man was allowed to suffer and die in the most horrible way? Good Friday is good because it is the highpoint of God’s salvation plan for the mankind. As we revisit the suffering of Jesus Christ this evening let us remember that Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly endured injustice and died for you and me.

We will study a passage in the gospel of John. We will put our focus on three groups of people. I call them The Indecisive Pilate, The Indignant Jews and The Innocent Christ. Let us hear the reading of God’s Word from John 18:28 to 19:16. Let us pray:

“Lord Jesus, tonight as we gather here to remember your death for us may our hearts be filled with thanks. When we study this record of your suffering may the Holy Spirit gives us a fresh meaning. Take away our pride and help us see ourselves in the characters of the story. Give us a will and strength to change so that we can be more like you. In your holy name I pray, amen.”

EXPLANATION

1. 猶豫的彼拉多 The Indecisive Pilate

Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly endured injustice and died for you and me. The indecisive Pilate played a key role in sentencing Jesus to death. At that time Pilate was a Roman Governor. After Jesus was arrested by the Jews, He was sent to Pilate for questioning. Pilate did not want to handle the matter. In **John 18:31** Pilate told the Jews: ...“Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” Pilate clearly understood that Jesus was arrested simply because He had a huge conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. Continue to read on from **verse 33 to 35**: 33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” 34 “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” 35 “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” Pilate knew that Jesus was condemned by the religious leaders because He claimed to be “the king of the Jews.” Since Jesus did not break any Roman law Pilate told the Jews his initial decision in **verse 38 to 39**: 38 ... “I find no basis for a

charge against him. 39 But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” Pilate repeated the same verdict of “I find no basis for a charge against him” three times in this passage to emphasize that Jesus was indeed not guilty. Pilate intended to release Jesus. But to please the Jews, Pilate ordered the soldiers to beat Jesus anyway. But the Jews were not satisfied. Listen to their argument in **John 19:12** - From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” The Jews pointed out that if Jesus was considered as a threat to Caesar’s throne and Pilate did not get rid of Jesus then his seat as a Governor would be in jeopardy. Eventually, Pilate succumbed to the pressure of the crowd. **19:15-16** tell us the result: 15 But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. 16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

Pilate was indecisive throughout the trial of Jesus. Pilate could have stood up for justice and defended Jesus, but he did not. Pilate could have used his authority to condemn the evil scheme of the Jews, but he did not. Pilate preserved his own interest at the expense of an innocent man’s blood. Pilate chose to please the majority, instead of choosing to do the right things. Don’t we have a trace of Pilate in us? Perhaps you know a classmate cheated in her exam or plagiarized in her paper. For the sake of not affecting friendship you did not to speak up. Perhaps your supervisor asks you to exaggerate some sales number to make the manager happier. You know if you tell the truth it will cause your supervisor his job. What would you do? A few of your best friends are non-believers, and they make fun of Christians all the time. You recently accepted Christ. Will you say grace before meal in front of them? How would you choose if standing up for Jesus means that you may lose people’s acceptance, your friends or your job? Don’t be an indecisive Pilate. Ask the Lord to give you boldness and strength to witness for Him.

2. 氣憤的猶太人 The Indignant Jews

Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly endured injustice and died for you and me. If the indecisive Pilate was the facilitator of Jesus’ crucifixion the indignant Jews were the main culprits behind the conspiracy. These religious leaders reasoned that Jesus was guilty. Let us hear the discussion between the Jews and Pilate in **18:29-30** - 29 So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?” 30 “If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.” The Jews described Jesus as a criminal, but they could not specify the crime Jesus committed. Then following in **verse 31**: Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” “But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews objected. Even though Jesus did not break any Roman law the Jews made it clear that they wanted Pilate to execute Jesus. The Jews added in **19:7** – ... “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.” To the Jews Jesus deserved to die because He violated their religious law. **Mark 15:9-10** spell out the real reason behind the hatred of the Jews: 9 “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. The religious leaders were indignant because they were jealous of Jesus’ popularity among the people. Also, Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. They had religious acts but they lacked a genuine heart for God. Pilate offered the Jews an opportunity to let Jesus go. What did they choose? Listen to **John 18:39-40** – 39 “But it is your custom for me to release

to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” 40 They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion. They would rather ask for the release of a convicted criminal to substitute an innocent man! Barabbas was a leader of the revolutionists who tried to overthrow the Roman government. Therefore, Barabbas was viewed as a hero among the Jews. The Jews rejected Jesus. Aren’t we all in some ways similar to them? Before we knew Christ we denied that He is the Son of God. We only see Jesus as a wonderful teacher and a person with good moral character. But we think He is just as an ordinary man. Though Jesus died because of the wicked scheme of the Jews, Jesus also died for all of our sins. Among the sins we have there is the sin of jealousy, just like the religious leaders in the story. We compare ourselves with the people around us. We compare our talents, education, career, salary and material possessions. When we realize that we are in some ways inferior our hearts will be filled with jealousy. A more serious sin than jealousy is hypocrisy. We act like we are spiritual, but only God knows the dirty secrets in our hearts. We may have some Biblical knowledge but we do not live by the truth. Rather, we use the Bible to condemn others. God never asks us to look like believers, but He wants us to be true followers.

3. 無辜的主耶穌 The Innocent Jesus

Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly endured injustice and died for you and me. The indecisive Pilate crucified Jesus by his order and the indignant Jews crucified Jesus in their hearts. Now we come to the victim of their joint-conspiracy – the innocent Jesus. A key question we need to ask is why Jesus turned Himself in. It was because Jesus clearly understood His purpose for coming to this earth. Let us look at **18:36-37**: 36 Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” 37 “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Jesus came to be the king of the spiritual Kingdom. However, the road to glory was through death and resurrection. By dying on the cross Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about Him, as written in **verse 32**: “But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. One example of Biblical prophecy about Jesus’ suffering is in **Isaiah 53. Verse 4 to 5** of the chapter read: 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. Our innocent Lord Jesus came as the sacrificial Lamb of God to bear the penalty for our sins. Jesus willingly submitted to the Father through the hands of Pilate. He told Pilate in **John 19:11** that: Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” Jesus submitted to the Father’s will, even to death. As followers of Christ we are to imitate His example. **1 Peter 2:20-21** remind us: 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. When we suffer injustice our natural reaction is to defend. We want a fair judgment for our pain. Jesus could have protested because of His innocence. However, He

silently suffered to accomplish God's salvation plan. Jesus endured all the pain and shame for you and me. The injustice we may endure is much lighter than what Jesus went through. The plans God wants to accomplish through our suffering are far insignificant than the salvation plan Jesus achieved. However, we have to trust God that none of our life experience is meaningless. If we have this conviction in our hearts, we will react differently in our hardship. Instead of asking God why this and why me, we can humbly ask the Lord what His plan in me is. We may not get the justice we hope for right away. But we entrust the final judgment to God. In doing so, we will have peace from God. However, when we try to comfort people who are hurting we should still show them compassion and recognize that the pain they suffer is real. We pray for them that God would give them His comfort and strength in unspeakable ways.

CONCLUSION

Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly endured injustice and died for you and me. If Jesus' death was the end of everything then it would be a sad story through and through. Non-believers may conclude that Jesus' death was only a model of love, that an innocent person was executed by a bunch of bad guys. However, Jesus' death is not the end. On the third day after Jesus' death He rose again! We will hear more about that when you come back on Easter Sunday. In closing, I would like to share with you a song titled "I Have This Hope" by Ten Avenue North. The song was written when a family member of the band was diagnosed with stage four cancer. It was a 32 year-old mother of three kids. The doctor arranged her to go to England for a year-long intensive chemotherapy treatment. Mike Donehey, the lead vocalist of the band had serious doubts in mind. He asked "God, how could you let this happen?" "How could you allow such a bad thing to happen to such a good person?" Mike felt as if God responded: "Mike, why do you call Good Friday, Good Friday?" God continued, "Good Friday was when the worst thing happened to the best person; Good Friday was the worst Friday before Easter morning." This song was written as an encouragement to the patient. On the day the song was recorded, this young mom had already endured three months' of treatment. She insisted that she had to drag her weak body to the studio. Five minutes prior to the "record" button was pressed she received a text from the hospital saying that her cancer was completely gone. Mike honestly stated that not every problem would end in a miracle like that. But the fact is that God is with us whether we are in triumph or in tragedy. This Son of God who willingly endured injustice and died for you and me is always with us. May we be encouraged by this song.

[After the song]

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for dying for us on the cross. We are so undeserved of your grace. We are condemned in our sins just like Pilate and the Jews in the story. But yet you love us so much that you offered your life to redeem us. Give us strength and wisdom to imitate after your example of self-sacrifice. No matter where we are we live for your glory. I pray for the seeker friends among us too. I hope that they can have a true understanding of who you are and your love for them. Please open their hearts so that they will be willing to accept You as their Savior and Lord. In Your most holy name I pray.