



Sermon Reflection Guide; John 19:1-11

1. In verses 1-3 we read the gruesome details of how Jesus was beaten and mocked by Pilate's soldiers. When reading this we may be asking ourselves how could anyone do this? Read John 3:19, how does this help explain the brutal treatment that Jesus received?
2. Read John 19:4-5. What strikes you about the humility and nobility of Jesus in this moment?
3. If someone asked you how a good God could allow this kind of violence against his Son what would you say? What does it mean that Jesus is our "substitutionary atonement"?
4. Read John 19:6-8. What prompts the Jewish leaders to change their charge against Jesus? Why do you think this new accusation scared Pilate?
5. When Pilate goes back in and asks Jesus where he is from what do you think he is really getting at? What do you make of Jesus's response? What does Jesus mean in verse 11 when Jesus says, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin?"
6. Read Zechariah 6:11-13. How does this passage foreshadow this moment? What is different about how Zechariah must have imagined this moment compared to what actually happened?

Sermon Summary

As we turn to chapter nineteen, we come to Jesus' last moments before he is crucified on Calvary's cross. Leading up to these events Jesus has been betrayed and arrested, interrogated by Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod and now awaits his final judgement as he stands before Pilate a second time. As we read this passage and encounter the gruesome details firsthand our first response is to want to "look away" but the longer we look at Christ and the more we understand this passage we see that it truly is a beautiful display of God's love for his people.

We read in verse 1 that after Jesus and Pilate had spoken Pilate had Jesus flogged. We know how this story ends, we know that Jesus ultimately dies on the cross, however if we didn't know the end of the story, we might think

that this is the last of the mistreatment Jesus would suffer. Pilate is clearly flogging Jesus hoping that doing so would appease the Jewish leaders and avoid executing Jesus on the cross. Flogging was brutal torture administered by a whip with multiple tails often containing fragments of bone and sharp metal. History tells us there were three kinds of floggings administered by the Romans. The least severe could be described as a “mild beating” and the most severe was the fatal scourging. Eusebius, ancient Christian historian described the scourging this way, “Prisoners were torn by floggings down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs were exposed to sight.” When we put together the Gospel accounts it makes sense to assume that the flogging spoken of in John 19:1 would have been the “mild beating”. Jesus would later in the day undergo the most severe form of flogging just before the cross but here Pilate wanted to punish Jesus, appease the mob and have him released.

As we keep reading, we see that not only was Jesus flogged but he was mocked and humiliated as the Roman soldiers continued their violence against him. John 19:2, “And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.” We read further in verse 3 that during this mock coronation ceremony the soldiers struck Jesus with their hands, beat him with a reed and feigned allegiance by shouting “Hail, King of the Jews.” This scene is hard to imagine. The sinless, perfectly righteous Son of God being beaten, mocked and spat upon in this manner. Perhaps we see this scene we wonder how they could do this to Jesus, how could anyone do this to any person, much less the Son of God? John answered this question back in John 3:19, “And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.” How could Jesus be treated this way? The answer is that apart from Christ’s work sinful humanity will always love and choose the darkness over the light.

All throughout the Old Testament there are prophecies and foreshadowing that tell us that Jesus would suffer this kind of mistreatment and violence on his way to the cross. One of the clearest chapters in the Old Testament that predicts this is Isaiah 53. Reflecting on this scene verse 5 of Isaiah 53 rings out, “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Our story continues in verses 4 and 5, “Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.”⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” One commentator observes that this may be the greatest display of humility, self-control, patience, restraint and nobility in human history. After allowing himself to be beaten and mocked, Jesus now covered in bruises, blood and spit, wearing a mock robe and crown allows himself to be paraded out before the mob and further humiliated. When Pilate says, “behold the man” he is essentially saying, ‘Look at this pathetic, defeated and humiliated man’ he is no threat to me or Creaser.’ Pilate is continuing to try to appease the mob and release Jesus. But Pilate’s attempts fail, and the mob responds in John 19:6, “When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” They see Jesus and in their hatred for him they cry for his death, though he was innocent and had done no wrong to them. Pilate responds to the mob in frustration, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.” This is the third time in the Gospel of John that Pilate has declared Jesus to be innocent. It is clear to Pilate as it should be to the mob that Jesus was a righteous man in whom no guilt could be found. We may ask ourselves again, how could this happen to Jesus? How could a good and perfect God allow this to happen to his righteous Son? The answer is found in the Gospel. Jesus had to be treated this way in order to serve as our perfect substitute to atone for sin. Jesus is our substitute with his life in that he lived in perfect obedience to God’s Word where we have all failed, and Jesus is our substitute with his death in that he died the death we all deserve. Jesus’ death atones for all our sin. The prophet Isaiah points us to this reality in verse 6 of chapter 53, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned-every one- to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

When the Jewish leaders see that Pilate will not sentence Jesus to death on the charge of insurrection they change their charge against Jesus in verse 7, “The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he

ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.” When Pilate heard this, we are told in verse 8 that he was even more afraid. What was Pilate afraid of? It is likely that he was afraid of the mob seeing their persistence to crucify Jesus. He was likely also afraid after hearing this given his encounter with Jesus. Pilate recognized that Jesus was unlike any other man he had ever met and this accusation against Jesus scared Pilate because Pilate realized, even with his limited interaction with Jesus, that it could be true that he was the Son of God.

As we continue to read, we see Pilate becoming more and more desperate. John 19:9 “He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.” Even in the midst of false charges and unimaginable mistreatment Jesus does not defend himself. In this we remember Isaiah 53:7, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” When Pilate tries to assert his authority over Jesus, Jesus finally opens his mouth and replies in verse 11, ““You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” Jesus reminds Pilate and us who is really in control. RC Sproul comments, “God had ordained Pontius Pilate to be the actor in this drama. Yes, Pilate had real authority, but it was delegated authority. God had placed Jesus at Pilate’s mercy so that His will might be done. It was as if Jesus were saying to Pilate: “Pilate, you’re like clay in my Father’s hands. It has been ordained from the foundation of the world that you would do what you are about to do.”

As our passage concludes Jesus says to Pilate, “Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.” Although Pilate’s actions and words against Jesus were sinful, they were not as sinful as the Jewish leaders who had handed him over to Pilate. Why is this? Simply put the answer is that the Jewish leaders had the scriptures. They had the word of God and should have known better. Not only that but they had real time evidence that Jesus was the Son of God through his teaching and miracles. The Jews had been looking and waiting for the Messiah for centuries and here he is, and this is how they treated him.

The most famous line from this passage is Pilate’s declaration in verse 5, “Behold the man.” This statement has been echoing throughout the background of all the Old Testament scriptures. Pilate presents to the mob that day the answer to the promise that God made to his people all the way back in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This man, Jesus is the long-awaited offspring of the woman come to crush the head of Satan and defeat him, sin and death once and for all. This promise is repeated all throughout the Old Testament in places like Genesis 12, Deuteronomy 18, 2nd Samuel 7 and Isaiah 53. There is another less well-known passage where we see this promise made and the person and work of Jesus is foreshadowed. We read in Zechariah 6:11-13, “Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹² And say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “**Behold, the man** whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. ¹³ It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Richard Phillips comments, “Zechariah knew that his act was symbolic of another yet to come. Even as he cried out, “Behold, the man,” he must have wondered when the Messiah would appear, his heart burning to see the day when the priestly King would be revealed before the watching eyes of God’s people. With what horror, then, would Zechariah have stared as Pilate stood before Jesus where the prophet had stood before his earlier namesake. The purple robe was there and the crown, but it was all so horribly different. Yet the voice cried out, “Behold the man!” and the Messiah was presented to the people of God who, led by their chief priests and officials, answered, “Crucify him, crucify him!”

In this passage we are called to behold the man, the man who came to as an atoning sacrifice to make reconciliation between a holy God and a sinful people. Behold the man who is the thorn-crowned king who loves us so much that he laid down his life as a substitutionary atonement on Calvary’s cross. Behold the man who is the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world.