

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifth Sunday In Lent, March 17, 2024**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 149, 178:1-3, 152, 156, 179.

Lessons: Psalm 2, Acts 13:16-31, John 18:28-38.

Sermon Text: Luke 23:1-12.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Pontius Pilate found no fault in Jesus and did not want to give in to the leaders of the Jews. He was looking for a way to get off the hook and set Jesus free. After he had questioned Jesus, ***“Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, ‘I find no basis for a charge against this man.’”***

But that didn’t satisfy the leaders of the Jews because they insisted that Jesus had to die. Pilate then thought he had found a way to have someone else deal with this problem and condemn Jesus to death. And so today we see

**JESUS BEFORE HEROD**

- 1. Pilate was looking for a solution.**
- 2. Herod was glad to see Jesus, but**
- 3. Jesus didn’t even talk to him!**

The leaders of the Jews informed Pilate that Jesus was an agitator and that he had stirred up people in Galilee, in Judea, and even up to the capital city of Jerusalem. Even though Pilate found no reason to execute Jesus, ***“They insisted, ‘He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.’ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.”***

When Pilate heard that Jesus came from Galilee, he thought that was good news for him. If Jesus were a Galilean, he belongs under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who was the son of Herod the Great, king at the time of Jesus’ birth, and then Herod would be the one who should deal with these accusations from the leaders of the Jews.

After Jesus was captured in the Garden of Gethsemane, the chief priests had made false accusations against Jesus. After the religious leaders of the Jews falsely judged Jesus guilty and deserving death, we read ***“Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, ‘We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king.’”*** (Luke 23:1–2, NIV84)

So Pilate had heard their false accusation about subverting and misleading the nation. He had heard their false accusation about opposing payment of taxes to Caesar. He had heard their accusation that Jesus claimed to be a king. Of course, when Jesus talked to Pilate about what kind of king he really was, Pilate didn’t really hear what Jesus was saying, but as we look at Pilate’s reaction to the accusations against Jesus, we see that Pilate wasn’t concerned about Jesus being some kind of king.

Pilate had found no reason to punish Jesus, much less to put him to death and he was looking for any way out. And when he heard that Jesus had stirred up people in Galilee, and then thought that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate hoped and thought he could find another ally to help him set Jesus free. Here was a chance to get rid of the entire unpleasant matter.

Pilate did not have the moral courage to acquit Jesus and let him go free, although he was convinced that he was not guilty of the accusations made against him. Pilate feared an uprising of the Jews, which might have become a serious matter with the city full of pilgrims. He was concerned about his position as the Roman governor. His political position was his concern right up until the time he finally gave in and sent Jesus to his crucifixion. But he kept trying ***“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.’”*** (John 19:6–12, NIV84)

Those words make it clear that the leaders of the Jews were threatening Pilate’s position as a Roman governor.

It is an act of despicable cowardice when a person, for fear of a shifting popular opinion, lacks the necessary fearlessness to abide by that which is just and right. It is also a case of misplaced justice when Pilate tried to give another man, Herod, the responsibility to condemn Jesus when he himself refused to accept it.

So Pilate sent Jesus to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. Luke is the only writer who reports this. We don’t know why Herod was in Jerusalem because he was not even a Jew, and especially not religious. As a figurehead leader in Galilee, he had no voice in the affairs of government in Jerusalem.

In addition, Herod was the man who had beheaded John the Baptist. Luke tells us previously that Herod had wanted to see Jesus. Jesus had been driving out demons, healing the sick and preaching about the kingdom of God and performing many miracles.

Luke wrote in chapter 9: ***“Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, ‘I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?’ And he tried to see him.”*** (Luke 9:7–9, NIV84)

Perhaps Herod thought that Jesus might have been John the Baptist whom he beheaded come back to life to haunt him.

Not only was Pilate trying to find a solution to the accusations against Jesus, but he could have been trying to gain some favor with Herod. Herod was likely flattered that Pilate would send this prisoner to him, seeking his advice and opinions.

Herod was very glad to see Jesus. ***“When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.”***

Herod had been anxious to see Jesus for a long time. He now had the opportunity to see Jesus face-to-face. But what Herod wanted to see didn’t happen. Jesus didn’t even answer any question Herod threw at him.

Herod was hoping to be entertained by seeing a miracle. But he was sadly disappointed. Jesus not only didn’t perform any miracle, but he didn’t even answer Herod’s questions. Jesus was resolute in doing what he had to do as the sinless Son of God. He knew he had to suffer and die for the sins of all mankind.

It was not faith in God that led Herod to see Jesus, recognizing him as the Savior, the Messiah. Herod only wanted to see a miracle. Perhaps Jesus would entertain him for a while by performing miraculous deeds or actions. There is no evidence that Herod thought Jesus was a threat to the state, and to his power as a ruler.

Herod ***“plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.*** Jesus knew that anything he said to Herod would not make any difference. Jesus was not about to “cast pearls before swine”. Jesus had previously told his followers: ***“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.”*** (Matthew 7:6, NIV84)

Jesus also knew the treachery of this Herod, for this is the man who had beheaded John the Baptist at the instigation of his wife, Herodias. From that incident, we see that not only was Herod a very wicked man, he was also morally weak, having married his brother’s wife and then given in to her daughter who took him up on his oath to give her anything she wanted, up to half of his kingdom. In Herod’s action at that time not only do we see the danger of swearing an oath in uncertain matters, we see the danger of trying to uphold a reputation among men, especially having taken a sinful oath.

Although Herod asked Jesus many questions, ***“Jesus gave him no answer.*** Herod was sadly disappointed, for Jesus did not answer him with so much as a word. Herod had had opportunity enough to hear God’s Word, for John the Baptist had preached God’s Law to Herod before Herod had John beheaded. Herod had hardened his

heart against the truth and had killed the preacher of righteousness. And even now it was not the desire to hear the preaching of salvation that was motivating him, but mere curiosity. That is a terrible punishment of God when he no longer proclaims his Gospel to a person who has hardened his heart, but ignores him entirely.

In addition, we see that ***“the chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing*** [in front of Herod], ***vehemently accusing*** [Jesus].” They had followed from the hall of the high priest to Pilate’s judgment hall and followed when Jesus was sent to Herod, and they weren’t going to let go of their false accusations. They didn’t give up.

Perhaps the chief priests and the teachers of the Law were afraid that they would lose their case before Herod. They had followed the soldiers with the prisoner to the palace of Herod and now repeated their false accusations vehemently. Herod seems not to have paid much attention to what they were accusing Jesus of. His hope of amusement had been spoiled by the unwillingness of the prisoner to respond to anything he said.

He and the soldiers treated Jesus with every sign of contempt. They mocked him, had Jesus clothed in a robe, probably an old robe of Herod’s, and then sent him back to Pilate.

Before this time Pilate and Herod had not been on the best of terms. In fact, scripture says that ***“before this they had been enemies.”*** But now their disagreement was history. Herod now sent Jesus back to Pilate, in this way recognizing Pilate as the proper judge. Jesus was, among other things, merely the plaything of unprincipled men. And where enmity toward Christ is concerned, former enemies become the best of friends. They are agreed in condemning to death a man in whom they find no fault. These two men of the world join hands in token of their friendship, which is frequently true of the enemies of the truth of God’s Word.

Someday Jesus will appear in truly royal robes, on his throne on Judgement Day. He will also be dressed in his royal robes in heaven. The Book of Revelation is especially great in picturing Jesus in all his glory.

So we see another step in the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus. As horrible as this is, please remember that this was all part of God’s plan, that we sinners should be set free from sin and eternal death.

Jesus was a prisoner and suffered so that we might be free from the suffering of hell. That message is the glorious Gospel, the good news of our salvation. Believe it and you shall be saved! Amen.