

Condemned by the Righteous

(If you are reading through the gospel of Luke, read Luke 22:7-73 this week.)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, many of the religious leaders expected to praise the Messiah when he came—because he had conquered their enemies. You came as promised. But you didn't value what they valued, and they didn't praise you. They offered you insults, mistreatment, false witnesses and condemnation. Now, 2000 years later, help me to value what you value, so that I can praise and honor you from the depths of my heart. Amen.

Blasphemy

Mark 14:61-65

Jesus ignored the false witnesses. He broke his silence when the High Priest asked him directly if he was the Messiah. His answer used images of the Messiah from three Old Testament passages, as Pastor Hamilton outlines on pp. 78-80 of his devotional book. Jesus was truth incarnate, and he would not deny that.

- In Exodus 3:14, God told Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me.'" In John 8:58 Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I AM!" and his hearers tried to stone him. How big was the claim when Jesus answered the high priest's question with "I AM"? Why do you think Jesus did not ignore this question, as he did the others?
- Verse 65 is sad: "Some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, 'Prophesy!'" These were religious leaders, not Roman soldiers. Have you ever wanted to hurt someone in the name of a cause you believe is holy? How can we stand up for good without giving in to evil actions (see Romans 12:17-21)?

Giving Peter Credit

TUESDAY

Luke 22:54-55

The soldiers took Jesus, not to a public court, but to the home of the wealthy, powerful high priest. It took courage for Peter, a simple fisherman, to be in that courtyard at all. (See a model of what Caiaphas' house may have been like at [link to model of house photo here](#).) Peter, uninvited, bravely followed Jesus into that courtyard. Would you have?

- Peter walked on water (Matthew 14:28-29). Peter came right out and said Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 8:27-29). Peter insisted that he would go with Jesus "to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33). How did Peter show his personal courage and boldness in the crisis of Jesus' arrest? What was he still missing that led him to fail?
- As Pastor Hamilton asks in his day 18 devotional reading, when has your faith ever required courage of you? What are some of the ways that faith can call for courage even when you aren't facing arrest or physical danger?

A Failure of Nerve

WEDNESDAY

Mark 14:66-72

Pastor Hamilton's devotional book asks why all four gospels would tell the story of Peter denying Jesus. We're used to a notable person's rivals telling negative stories to shame that person. But Peter was a leader among the early Christians, so this wasn't told with malice. No doubt he told this story himself, offering all of us the hope and renewal he'd found.

- In Luke 9:26, Jesus called us to take up our cross. He added, "If any of you are ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes." What are some ways in which you could be ashamed of Jesus in

your daily life? Do you see a difference between being ashamed of Jesus and being tactful or tolerant?

- When the rooster crowed, awakening Peter to what he had done, “he broke down and wept.” Have you learned and felt the difference between a) destructive guilt, shame and self-hatred, and b) the healing, cleansing power of God-given sorrow over a failure to be the person God is calling you to be?

If Judas Had Only Waited

THURSDAY Matthew 27:3-5

Judas left so many questions behind him. What made those 30 pieces of silver, so eagerly received just a day earlier, now so hateful to him that he flung them away? Peter found forgiveness. As Pastor Hamilton's reading suggests, it seems certain Judas would have, too—if only he'd waited.

- Judas and Peter—both failed Jesus. Judas ended his own life in despair, while forty days later, Peter boldly proclaimed the risen Jesus on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). What made the difference? How can you see your failures redeemed and your life empowered as Peter did?
- On Feb. 18, Joseph Stack flew his plane into a building in Austin, TX. He left a note saying his self-destructive act was “the only answer.” Judas seemed to reach the same conclusion. If you ever feel that suicide is the only answer, get help! You can call xxx-xxxx, or xxx-xxx-xxxx after 5 p.m. or on weekends, to reach a pastor anytime. (Please provide information specific for your congregation or community).

Where Were the Dissenters?

FRIDAY Mark 14:63-64

Every so often some nation holds an “election” in which the country’s ruler gets 98.4% of the votes. We know those are not open, free elections—humans just don’t agree to that extent! We don’t know the details of how the high priest got this unanimous condemnation of Jesus. We can be pretty sure it did not arise from thoughtful, open discussion.

- “Blasphemy” could mean a mortal claiming to be God, the charge against Jesus. It could also mean insulting or lying about God. When God in human flesh met religious leaders who insulted and condemned him, who was really committing blasphemy? How can you live a life that speaks the truth about God to those who know you?
- “They all condemned him as worthy of death.” Imagine yourself as a member of that council, knowing the high priest and his inner circle have made up their minds. Would you be the one voice that said, “Hold on—I don’t agree”? Are you willing to speak out about an injustice or cruelty, even if everyone else is silent?

On Trial Before Pontius Pilate

SATURDAY Mark 15:1-5

Pontius Pilate seemed important—Rome’s highest official in Jerusalem. Jesus seemed insignificant—a poor, traveling preacher despised and rejected by the leaders of his own faith community. Who could have guessed that today most of us wouldn’t know Pontius Pilate’s name except for his sad role in condemning Jesus?

- The religious leaders hated tax collectors for working with Rome. Now they pleaded with the Roman procurator to help them silence Jesus. Have you ever seen (or been) a person who was willing to use bad means to achieve a purpose that seemed good? From God’s perspective, who was really on trial—Jesus, or Pilate and the religious leaders, who refused to acknowledge Jesus as their king?

Family Activity: The chief priests accused Jesus of many wrongs. Jesus stayed faithful to God and himself through His many trials. Engage in a family conversation around this aspect of Jesus. What character traits did Jesus display as He was talked about and treated this way? How did Jesus respond to the accusations and assumptions directed at Him? Discuss a time when each of you has been wrongly accused—maybe by a classmate, co-worker or sibling. How did that feel? How did you respond? Have you ever found yourself to be an accuser like the chief priests? Brainstorm steps that can help each of you, when wrongly accused or feeling a desire to assume or accuse others of wrongdoing, to pause, take a deep breath, and remember Jesus.