

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 23:13-25

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We continue to read Luke chapter 23. Today we read verses 13 to 25.

In this final section of the events of Jesus, Luke's record is very concise and is somewhat different from the other three Gospels. We know that each Gospel writer has his own theme and his own particular audience. Therefore, if we want to restore the full picture of the whole event, we need to read the four Gospels together. But since we are now reading the Gospel of Luke, let us try to enter into the spirit in which Luke was writing at that time.

In this passage about Pilate's trial of Jesus, Luke does not record much about Jesus, but instead records more about Pilate. This is because the Jesus described by Luke is a completely and perfectly human being. On the human level, Luke wants to highlight for us what it means to become a perfect man, and to make a contrast with those in positions of power under the Roman political system at that time, those who had authority over life and death. Luke seems intentionally to highlight how weak Pilate, a member of the ruling class and a man with political authority, was in handling the matter of Jesus.

At first, what he thought of was how to shift responsibility. As soon as he heard that Jesus was from Galilee, and that King Herod, who governed Galilee, happened to be in Jerusalem, he immediately threw Jesus over to Herod. Through what we read yesterday, we know that originally there had been some grievances between Herod and him. By handing this case of Jesus over to Herod, he could just happen to resolve some of their previous grievances. For him, it brought many benefits and no harm. Therefore, every politician, in whatever he does, first considers his own interests; he does not consider whether something is righteous or whether it is just. Sure enough, in this matter, he obtained the benefit he had expected to obtain. In

verse 12 it says that previously Herod and Pilate had been enemies with each other, but on that day they became friends. Jesus became a favorable bargaining chip for him and helped him obtain friendship with Herod.

Of course, he also further hoped that Herod could help him deal with this difficult problem, because at that time, Herod was publicly recognized as an expert on the Jews. Although he himself was an Edomite, he was very familiar with the customs, social conditions, and law of the Jews. Therefore, Pilate more or less hoped that through Herod he could resolve this troublesome case. But before Herod, Jesus had once called him a fox, and He also knew that Herod only wanted to see Him perform some miracles. Therefore, from beginning to end, Jesus did not say a word. It seemed that Herod also had no way to obtain what he wanted to obtain. Therefore, he humiliated Jesus and then sent Him back into Pilate's hands. Therefore, Pilate still had to face and handle this case.

Verse 13: "Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people,"

Notice that here one more group is added: the people. Originally, it was the chief priests and the temple officers at that time who brought Him to Pilate. And when they were trying this matter, if Jesus was the defendant and they were the plaintiffs, then a judgment could be reached between them. But in the first round, Pilate had already said to them, I find no fault in this Man. Yet these people strongly accused Jesus, seemingly wanting to put Jesus to death.

Therefore, Pilate thought, this time I will call not only these chief priests and rulers, but also the people. Perhaps by using the power of the people, together with the fact that he was the Roman governor, he might be able to influence the opinions of the crowd and ultimately achieve what he wanted to obtain. This is another mindset that politicians often use. He does not care about the rights and wrongs of the matter, or about justice and righteousness, but judges entirely from the surrounding situation: how to manage the people, events, and things around him

so that he can achieve the result he wants. Therefore, he also called the people together.

Verse 14: “said to them, ‘You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him;’”

According to Roman law, when a judge, someone like Herod, or a governor like Pilate, finished trying a case and found the person innocent, the only thing he could do was immediately release that person. But for a politician, what he wants is not righteousness, not justice, but the hope that through everything he does, everyone will come over to his side. So although he saw that He was not guilty, he still did not dare to release Him. He sent Him to Herod, and at this time he had the opportunity to use this chance once again to testify on his own behalf.

Verse 15: “no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.”

He seemed to be saying to the people, although I am a Roman and may not understand the people, customs, social conditions, and law of Israel, that King Herod is familiar to you, and he also understands your customs, social conditions, and law. I sent Him to him, and he also considered Him not guilty, so he sent Him back. Therefore, it can be seen that He has done nothing deserving of death.

Verse 16: “I will therefore chastise Him and release Him”

As we just said, according to Roman law, once you find someone innocent, you must immediately release him. But Pilate said, I will release Him, but before releasing Him I will first chastise Him. It seemed as if he was saying to them, since you hate this person so much, I will go along with you a little; I will chastise Him.

His purpose was still to release Him, because he truly could not find in Him any crime deserving death.

We can see that in a typical politician like Pilate, on the one hand, outwardly he assessed all kinds of situations, wanting to reach an outcome that would be most favorable to him. At the same time, inwardly, there was still the prompting of a conscience. Of course, in the other Gospels, we read that his wife had told him, have nothing to do with this just Man, because she had suffered many things that day in a dream because of Him. The words of Pilate's wife seemed to awaken some of his conscience. But although fallen human nature has some sense in the conscience, in handling matters, the conscience is weak; the conscience has no way to govern any of our decisions.

Verse 17: “ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast.) ”

Under the prompting of Pilate's conscience, he hoped to use the feast of the Passover to chastise Jesus, and then use this custom to release Jesus.

Verses 18-19: “And they all cried out at once, saying, ‘Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas’—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.”

Barabbas was probably a leader among the Zealots. He had once tried to make trouble and rebel, and as a result, in the whole process, he killed some people and had blood on his hands. Therefore, he was arrested and put in prison. One was Barabbas, whose rebellion had become a fact and who had already killed people and was imprisoned; as for Jesus, He was only accused of misleading the people to rebel, yet He had not caused any rebellion, nor had He committed any crime. To Pilate, according to Roman law, of course releasing Jesus was the more reasonable thing. He also did not expect that these chief priests, rulers, and the people would be unreasonable to this extent. One was a wicked criminal whose evidence was

conclusive, who had killed and committed violent crimes; yet they actually demanded the release of Barabbas and wanted Jesus to be put to death. This may have been something Pilate had not anticipated beforehand.

The word Barabbas is very interesting. Bar means son, and abba means father. In other words, Barabbas means the son of the father. In relation to every person in the world, basically we are all sons of the father. But in the whole history of mankind, there was only one person, Jesus, who is the seed of the woman. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary. On the earth, He had no father; Joseph was His nominal father. This seed of the woman was the One whom the crowds shouted to put to death, and because He was put to death, Barabbas, or the son of the father, was released. Perhaps this also speaks of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross, which saved all those who can be called sons of the father. Just like the wicked criminal Barabbas, who had killed, committed violent acts, and caused rebellion, he could still be released.

Verses 20-21: “Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’”

The cross was a very cruel form of punishment at that time. During the whole period of Roman rule, it was carried out only for a short period of time. It was precisely during that time that Jesus was nailed to the cross, in order to fulfill what was spoken by the Old Testament prophets: that He would be hung on a tree.

Verse 22: “Then he said to them the third time, ‘Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.’”

This passage records that this politician tried three times in a row to explain to this crowd, a crowd that had completely lost its reason, that he wanted to release Jesus. But we must know that mass movements, in the end, do not speak according to

reason. And this incompetent and cowardly politician, under a group of irrational rioters, had almost no way to do anything. Although he repeatedly declared that this man had done no evil, and that he could find nothing in Him deserving death, he still said, I will chastise Him and release Him. According to Roman law, he should have released Him immediately and should not even have chastised Him. It seemed that he wanted to comply with public sentiment, let Him suffer a little, and then be able, according to his conscience, to release Him. But under the irrational accusations of the mob in this mass movement, he did not even have such space.

Verse 23: “But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.”

Notice this sentence. For all politicians, the result is the same: their voices prevailed.

Verses 24-25: “So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

It was like this at that time, and it is the same today. Whether in authoritarian countries or democratic countries, the principle of politics is ultimately the same: when managing the affairs of people among the crowd, in the end, their voices prevail. But when their voices prevail, is it fair and righteous? Most of the time, it is not. This again reminds us that only God Himself can rule over the matters of the kingdom of God; and the people in the kingdom of God must all mature in life, and then naturally live out a life that conforms to God’s law. Any attempt to use political power to help God achieve the purpose of the kingdom of God will ultimately cause harm to the kingdom of God. Because politics is ultimately unrighteous; because politics is in the hands of a group of sinful people, it is impossible for it to uphold justice for God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Through Luke's description, let us truly recognize that You are the One who holds the authority of the kingdom of God, and the One who carries out the kingdom of God. Earthly politics only listens to the voices of the people, but does not listen to the voice of God. We also thank You for Your mercy. We all are like that Barabbas. We should have borne all responsibility for our own sins, yet because of the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have all been released. Thank You for Your grace, and may You also lead me this day to live a holy life. I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.