

Matt 27.11-31 – The King we want, the King we Need

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Jesus is the “weak” King who really saves, trust him and his strength

When you think of the world leaders you want in power, I wonder what people, or what sort of people come to mind?---- **(SLIDE)**-----

Maybe you want leaders who will listen and give the majority what they want; or give you what you want?-----

Maybe you want a strong leader, who will take on their enemies and win?-----

If you think of strong leaders, I wonder which of these you'd turn to?-----

Or maybe you'd prefer these as world leaders?-----**(SLIDE)**-----

Someone who will fight those intellectual, social, verbal and military battles, wherever they are needed.-----

Who can save us from financial ruin, from unchecked lawlessness, or from foreign invasion?-----

More importantly though, Who can rescue us from eternal danger?-----

Who is the Saviour-King we really need?-----

We're in the series through the last few chapters of Matthew's Gospel in the lead up to Easter.**(SLIDE)**

But when we cover 10-20 verses at a time we can lose sight of the bigger picture.

Let's remember where we've come since ch26.-----

Jesus had predicted his death at least 3 times. A woman anointed him with perfume to prepare him for burial, and Judas began arranging to betray him.

Christ ate his final meal with the disciples, explaining that shedding his blood would establish a new and everlasting covenant-relationship with God.

His disciples would fail him that night but his death would atone for their failures.

After the meal Jesus went to the Garden to pray, where he submitted to the Father's will - that he drink the cup of judgement sinners deserve.

Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and interrogated before the high priest.

Jesus spoke the truth but was spat on, hit, and condemned to death for blasphemy.

Meanwhile Peter stayed close enough to get into trouble, and Judas went away and hanged himself.

Now the Jewish council has formally condemned Jesus and taken him to the Roman governor, Pilate, seeking the death penalty.-----

In **ch27v1** it's possibly 6am Good Friday morning – while I might struggle to get out of bed that early, the work day started early for Romans officials.

The narrative continues in **v11**, with Jesus under trial before Pilate.-----

Like in Mark, Luke and John, Jesus is asked, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'-----

I imagine Pilate being confused or unconvinced, for no doubt Jesus didn't look like a kingly figure.---- Nothing physically impressive about him Isa 53 says.----[v2-3]

This brings us to our **first point today, The Saviour-King who wont defend himself**.

(SLIDE) We're not told what Jesus' accusers said about him.

No doubt the priests said Jesus claimed to be a king.

This is made explicit in Luke 23, where it was suggested Jesus also opposed taxes and stirred up unrest (Lk23.2,5).

John's Gospel tells us the priests later admitted Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which he why they wanted him dead.------(Jn19.7)

Jesus' replies to the question, 'Are you the king of the Jews' with, 'You say so'.

It's not a direct answer.

But if he'd said Yes, Pilate would have misunderstood what sort of King he was.

Still, the Jewish leaders keep throwing questions and accusations at Jesus, and he won't defend himself; he doesn't answer – v12,v14.-----

Doesn't it remind you of the prophecy in **Isa 53v7**,**(SLIDE)**

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

Pilate was amazed that Jesus stayed silent and wouldn't defend himself.-----
I am sometimes far too quick to defend myself, justify my actions, or say what I think is right,
in my marriage, and in discussions.
I want to defend myself, and the truth to come to light, and justice to be done.-----
Maybe you're like me and are too quick to open your mouth?-----
But Jesus isn't; he isn't running from death, he's choosing this path.
He's choosing to suffer injustice, to save the unjust, to endure it in our place.-----

Point 2 is the Saviour King who people want.----- (SLIDE)

Pilate isn't convinced of Jesus' guilt. Pilate knew [v18] the Jews were jealous of Jesus' popularity and the crowds following him.---
And seeing it was the festival of Unleavened Bread and Passover, Pilate offered to keep the tradition and let a prisoner go who the people choose.
If Pilate hoped this would free Jesus, it backfired.-----
V16 tells us that a notorious prisoner called Barabbas was in custody.
Mark 15 tells us he'd committed murder during a rebellion.[v7]
So he was likely a Jewish zealot, a freedom fighter, a revolutionary hero.-----
Some Greek manuscripts call him Jesus Barabbas.
Jesus, or Joshua/ Yeshua was a common Jewish name back then.
Yeshua means, 'the Lord saves'.
Barabbas means 'son of a father'.
Barabbas' other first name was likely Jesus.-----
The crowd's choice between Jesus or Barabbas is a choice between two leaders, a choice between 2 saviours.
Do they want some Galilean who claimed to be the promised Saviour-King, or do they want one of their own people, who would fight for their nation?-----
Do the people want their tough freedom-fighter, or Jesus?-----
Do they want a man of violence or the man of love?(**SLIDE**)-----
And this reveals their hearts.-----
Do they want a leader who will free them from the Roman oppression, or do they want a Suffering King who will free them from their own sin?-----
People prefer Barabbas.-----
And the question is, what will God do?-----
Will the Lord save the son of a father, Barabbas?
Or will the Lord save, by giving up his one and only Son, Jesus?-----
We know it's the latter.
But who did the crowd want to save them?----- Barabbas.-----
And I suggest that's who people today would often choose too.
A tough-man, not a weak one.-----

The chief priests and elders persuade n' egg-the crowd on to ask for Barabbas, and Barabbas is who they want, **v21**.-----
A week ago the Jerusalem crowd praised Jesus as he entered the city on a donkey.
But it seems they have given up hope in him.
Now Pilate asks, What should I do with Jesus? and the crowd say, 'Crucify him!'-----
When asked what he has done wrong?' the crowd yell louder, 'Crucify him!'-----
Pilate didn't believe Jesus deserved death.
And his wife had had a scary dream, so she warned her husband to have nothing to do with this righteous man Jesus.----
For Greeks n' Romans, dreams mattered, and many thought were from the gods.

We would say this dream was from God, and was a warning to Pilate; but he refused to listen. And the crowd believed the propaganda of the priests, and keep shouting n' pressuring, 'Crucify him, Crucify him'.-----

And when Pilate wants to absolve himself of responsibility they say in **25**, 'his blood will be on us, and on our children'.-----**(SLIDE)**

Their children are not to blame for their sins.-----

Sadly this verse has been used to justify violence against Jewish people down through the centuries.

These thoughtless words from an unruly mob, are not God's instructions on how to treat Jews. The apostle Paul wished he could be cursed if it would save his Jewish people.

We are to love Jews and seek their salvation.-----[Rom9.1ff]

But as we think about Pilate's actions, some context is important here.----

Pilate was a weak, cruel and violent leader.

He had previously been reported to the Emperor by the Jews.

And when the riot starts from an unruly mob in **v24** he likely feared the Emperor hearing he cannot maintain order.-----

Pilate is a crooked & dodgy judge who is swayed by public opinion.

How many political leaders have been like that? Swayed by public opinion over doing what's right?-----

Pilate capitulates to the crowd.

He says he's innocent of this man's blood, and washes his hands to symbolize he's not responsible for the death the crowd seeks.-----

But those things can't remove his guilt, for in **v26**, he hands Jesus over to be flogged and then crucified.-----

That one word '**flogged**', is passed over without details.

But it was awful - the whip containing bits of metal and bone would tear your flesh open; and had killed people.

And the crucifixion which we'll consider on Friday, will end Jesus' life.-----

So really Pilate's choice is, Jesus' life or my career?-----

Career and political power is his god, and he'll sacrifice Jesus for that.-----

Whereas what does Jesus sacrifice?-----

Himself!----- To save others.-----

True story. A little boy went to the doctor with his mother one day, when it was time for his 1 year old sister to get her vaccination.

He watched the nurse prepare the needle. His sister was oblivious, but he was not. He looked at his mother – 'Is that going to hurt Mummy? Will she cry?'

'Yes it will hurt a little, she may cry'

Can I get the shot for her Mummy?' he asked.-----

The boy's selfless offer is a remarkable expression of love and sacrifice.

More importantly it points to Jesus' great sacrifice, to his willingness to endure suffering for us.

To his willingness to endure the wrath of God upon sin, for us.-----[Rom3.25]

Jesus' courage motivates us and gives us hope.-----

But Pilate and the priests warn us.

They show that the strongest desires often contradict our deepest needs.----

And our desires can ruin us.

Our desires can enslave us, just as politics and power enslaved Pilate and the priests.

The desire for power and control can enslave us too.-----

In the **parenting** course at running, we've been challenged to ask ourselves, Do I want my children to obey me because of what I'm worshipping in my heart – my desire to be obeyed, or my desire for comfort and peace in the home?---

How much of your parenting is driven by your own heart idols?-----

Or **at work**, if you're a manager or lead others, what is driving you and the way you relate to people?-----

Is it about you making a name for yourself, or getting respect?-----

In your management or leadership, are you wanting people to look up to you, or do enjoy the power you have over them?----- Is it about you?-----

Are there sinful desires you need to turn from before they ruin you, or the reputation of Jesus at work.-----

So Pilate and the people are not innocent.

Sin prompts them to choose to free Barabbas and condemn Jesus.

They choose a violent murderer over the Son of God Saviour-King.

Now 3rd point, the Saviour-King Jesus seems weak.(SLIDE)

Jesus has been flogged and handed over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

But before they do that they play with him first, in their sick game for their amusement.

The soldiers strip him then give him a scarlet robe.

He doesn't get a crown of gold but of thorns. Not a sceptre but a staff.

The robe, the crown, the staff, the kneeling, the Hailing, 'King of the Jews', are all designed to mock and ridicule Christ.

It's fake, painful and cruel.

If the words & dress-ups weren't enough, they spit on him, and bash him until their cruel fun is finished.-----

He must have appeared so weak. So weak.

The soldiers and the crowd must have been thinking, 'What a loser!'-----

But Oh, how the appearance is different from the reality.-----

Remember **Philippians 2 (SLIDE)**

Though existing in the form of God, [Christ] did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.^[a]

⁷ Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

So Jesus appeared weak, and defeated and pathetic, but it was far from it.

Jesus is the King, his is still the King, the Suffering Servant-King.-----

He's a King in a much bigger way than the soldiers can even comprehend.-----

And can you imagine the **strength and self-control** that Jesus had to show here?---

When he was arrested in the Garden, and falsely accused and blasphemed by the Sanhedrin, when he was hit by the Jewish leaders, staying silent before Pilate, being mocked, struck, spat on by these Romans; can you imagine the humility, the patience and self-control it would have taken to not call on God's 70,000+ angels that could have been at Jesus' disposal?-----

Can you imagine how easy it would have been for him to shut their mouths, even destroy their lives?-----

The depth of the temptation for Jesus there must have been phenomenal – the temptation to speak back, hit back, or take revenge.-----

I would have given in.

We all would have given in.-----

Jesus' strength is seen in his apparent weakness here.

Jesus' humility shows his commitment to do the Father's will.

Jesus' enduring this pain, mocking, torture and injustice, just shows the love he has for us.---

And isn't it moving?-----

Which brings us to Point 4, Jesus is the Saviour-King who Saves.-----

Think about all the suffering Jesus experienced here; this punishment, shame, and pain leading up to and including the cross.

By enduring it he was bearing the judgment you deserved for your sins, and the judgment I deserved for mine.-----

He was willing to suffer and die to save sinners.-----

To serve and give his life as a ransom for many.---[Mat 20.28; Rom5.6ff]

He was taking the place of guilty people who deserved it.-----

We could say Barabbas was on death row, and Jesus took his place.

The innocent dying for the guilty.-----

And it was the same with the Jewish crowd who called for Christ's crucifixion.-----

Do you remember what Peter says to the crowds in Jerusalem 50 days later, at Pentecost?--

Acts 2.22(SLIDE)

"Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles...

And it was God's plan but, 'you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

And God raised him up... And from **v36(SLIDE)**

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷ When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"-----

Praise God that there were repentant hearts among the Jews that day.

Praise God that 3,000 Jews turned from their sin, and put their trust in Jesus the Messiah, the Saviour-King, and were saved.-----

And friends, that **can be you today.**

For Jesus died for rebels.-----

If you turn away from rebelling against God, and trust in Jesus, as your Saviour and your King, you will be saved.-----

You will be forgiven by God, find relationship with God, become a child of God; even promised a place in the new heaven n' earth.-----

Trusting in the apparently weak, but truly mighty King Jesus, saves.

He saves people from sin and hell, and brings us to heaven.-----

And Jesus the "weak" king who really saves he gives us the example to follow.

Two areas I mention briefly, by way of application.

First, instead of **thinking of leaders** as people who need to be aggressive, strong and tough, like 'the Rock' Dwayne Johnson,(**SLIDE**) or Arnie [Arnold Swarnegger]. We see true leadership as Christians is about servant leadership.-----

Christians who lead in the world and the church, are to be leaders to serve, seeking the good of those under them and around them.-----

We are to lead with humility, and a willingness to go out of our way, even sacrifice and suffer, for the good of others.----

Husbands and fathers are to be godly, servant-leaders who love in that way too.-----

And when looking for leaders in the church or the world, we do well to look for people who'll put the good of others before themselves.-----

Leaders who show humility, and a commitment to do what's right even when it costs them.

How are you going at showing this?-----

And Christians who lead, in your sacrifice and service, remember you follow the Lord who did it first for you.-----

Second, do you need to change **your view of weakness and suffering?(SLIDE)**

We too often and too quickly think weakness is bad, and suffering is to be avoided.

Whereas the passage today and the example of our King Jesus tells us something different.

In **2Cor 11-12**, in contrast to his enemies, Paul boasts in his sufferings & weaknesses. He speaks of being given the 40 lashes, being beaten, stoned, in danger; enduring toil, hardship, sleeplessness, hunger, pressure and more.----
 And shockingly, he says if I have to boast I'll boast about my weaknesses.-----
 And in 2Cor 12 he speaks of his suffering a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan which tormented him.
 He prayed repeatedly God would take it away, and what was the Lord's response(**SLIDE**):

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness."
 Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me... For when I am weak then I am strong.-----

If whatever hardship you are facing at the moment, in whatever weakness you might be experiencing, please remember this.
 It's an opportunity for Christ's strength to shine through, as you rely not on yourself, trust not in yourself, but in the Lord who raises the dead.-----[2Cor1.9]
 So remember and believe that God's power and grace is revealed and perfected in weakness – for Jesus, and for us.
 Kimm Crandle has written,(**SLIDE**) **Christ in the Chaos**: How the Gospel changes motherhood, and she writes:

If you were to read through my journal you would see my main struggle is against my own weakness. Instead of boasting in my weakness so that the power of God may rest on me, I often find myself despairing because I am not strong like I think I need to be. I struggle with feelings of unworthiness as a wife, a mother, and a child of God – the proof of my unworthiness being my weakness. But through the power of the Gospel I eventually make my way to the truth, and the Lord draws me closer to himself.----
 She says, 'my weakness precedes me. My weakness tears me down and leaves me as dust. I have no power to gather my own dust and put myself together. That takes an act of God. It's when I am weak that I see his strength. I see how I am nothing but dust without him. I cannot produce goodness, kindness, gentleness or anything else lovely'... But grace envelopes me in God's love
 He leads me to repent and soak in his love.-----
 I hope you too will Trust the Lord in your weakness.-----

Our Lord, the Saviour-King Jesus who seemed weak and was rejected, is the one who saves. Trust him. Follow him!-----
 Let's pray.