



7 Last Steps to the CROSS

Jesus' Path to the Crucifixion in the Gospel of LUKE

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Audio Text - Step 7

Step 7 - Luke 23:13-25 - The Crowd cried, "Crucify Him!"

This is our 7th message in this series on the 7 Last Steps that Jesus took to the Cross in the Gospel of Luke. This is not the last message as the 7 last steps of Jesus led to His crucifixion. Hence the climax and last message of this series is the Crucifixion of Christ. This message looks at Step 7, the last of the 7 steps, that Jesus took to the cross. This was when Pilate surrendered to the demand of the Jewish Council, and the crowd that they stirred up in their support, to send Jesus to the cross. By this time, Jesus had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, mocked by Roman soldiers, prosecuted by the Sanhedrin, sent to Pilate for trial, then to Herod, then back to Pilate for the final outcome.

This is what Luke 23:13-25 (ESV) tells us:

¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶I will therefore punish and release him." ¹⁸But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"— ¹⁹a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²²A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." ²³But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

Pilate succumbs to Crowd Demand

Jesus' trial before Pilate has finally reached its conclusion. Pilate knowingly sent Jesus to be crucified even though he himself insisted that Jesus was innocent! He even cited Herod in support of his claim. Pilate, thus, demonstrated by his action the height of human expediency. Truth and justice can be thrown out for an easy fix. To go against an aggressive Sanhedrin and a crowd that was on the verge of riot to set an innocent man free was not worth it. It was better for his own peace of mind and for social quiet to sacrifice Jesus to the wish of His lying persecutors.

The only supposed good thing that one can say of Pilate was that he tried. He offered to "punish and release" Jesus. This was, at best, the lesser of two evils. Why should an innocent man be punished at all? What is the point of such a punishment? Clearly it was only to please the crowd that demanded His death. This is neither affirming the truth nor upholding justice. It is expediency for the sake of resolving a personal and social crisis. Morality and righteousness give way to self-interest and simplicity. But the crowd went further. They rather that Barabbas, an insurrectionist and murderer, be released; and Pilate did so. So a guilty, violent, convicted, criminal was released for no reason other than to please the crowd. But the innocent Jesus was to be crucified, at the behest of the same crowd. Both Pilate and the crowd favoured a guilty murderous convict to an innocent Jesus who spoke only the truth.

The Cruel Crowd

Clearly, but sadly, the behaviour of the crowd, is a further profound indictment of our fallen human nature. Never mind truth, justice, morality, or righteousness, just do what we want, or else! This was a demonstration of sinful human willfulness in the face of God. We do not care what the truth is. We are not interested in justice or the law. Why consider morality or righteousness? Just make sure that what we want, or what I want, gets done. Otherwise, face our wrath, we will riot, we will destroy. In this very process, they did actually send Jesus, fully God, fully man, to death. This is the most direct demonstration of how sinful humanity will kill God and rule over Him, if it can! Absolutely shocking. Absolutely true. But lest we think that humanity has the power to do that, let me alert us to the next message that will show us that this is impossible. Thank God for that! Thank God that He is God, not us!

The Crucial Lesson

The very sobering lesson for us as listeners and hearers of this message is to realise that we are all quite capable of being just like Judas, Peter, the Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus, the Jewish Council, Pilate, Herod, or the crowd that called for Jesus' crucifixion, and do like they did against God in our fallenness. It may seem to us that Judas, Peter, the Roman soldiers, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and the crowd, were clearly wrong, clearly cruel, clearly evil, clearly weak. But what if we were actually in their shoes at that time? What if we face similar circumstances in our own times, in our own lives? When we disagree with someone, or lose faith in the person, we can betray the person like Judas did to Jesus. When we find it too hard to following someone we believe in, and find ourselves exposed to danger, we can deny the person, like Peter did to Jesus. When we are under instruction to supervise someone charged as a crook, we can mock and belittle the person like the Roman soldiers. When we are in-charge of adjudicating someone brought before us for judgement, when there is too much clamour and opposition, we can be a Pontius Pilate. When we are sent someone for our assessment whom we initially admire and would like to meet, when the person does not treat us like how we expect to be treated, we can be like a Herod to belittle and mock the person instead. Yes, we can be like Pilate and forgo truth, justice, morality and righteousness, for our own peace of mind and self-interest for a simple solution: Just give in to the demand of those who seek to hurt the innocent because we cannot pacify them. Yes, we can be like the crowd that wants only that our will be done, never mind any matter of principle or rectitude. The warning and lesson of the Gospel is that we will fare no better because we are sinners like they were! The critical point is that we need to utterly reject sin and surrender to God who alone can save us. We would entirely miss this crucial revelation if we assume that we are somehow better than them. It is precisely because sin in us would lead us to do likewise that we need to utterly reject it. Without realising and admitting this to ourselves, we will not see the evil of our sinful self, or the need to reject it. Without doing so, we will not submit to Christ so that we may be saved.

What the 7 Steps Reveal

The 7 last steps that Jesus took to the cross revealed to us the stark ugly wicked nature of our sinful humanity. It exposed the sins of all the parties who opposed Jesus or let Him down. This was the evil that Jesus had to face in order to walk to the cross. Yet His walk to the cross was to save us from the sin that is the very root of all these evil. Hence it is absolutely true that the love of God is so great that He will bear our worst in order to save us. It is an ineffable love, mysterious in its magnitude of mercy and grace to the utterly undeserving. Who among us would be prepared to pay such cost, to sacrifice so much, to save those who only seek our death and destruction? Who would face such unjust betrayal, cowardly denial, cruel mockery, expedient self-interest, arrogant belittling, and murderous intent, in order to save others? Jesus did! So He

alone is to be worshipped. He alone is to be praised. He alone can save. He alone has done all these so that we may be saved.

Let us Worship and Bow Down

So let us repent of our sins. Let us humble ourselves and bow down before Him who has paid this cost to save us. Let us affirm Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God. Hallelujah! What other way is there to respond to what He has revealed to us and done for us in walking to the cross? Yet we have only come to the edge of the climax. The ultimate act was when Jesus was hung on the cross and died for us. That is the next message, the final word, of our series.