

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

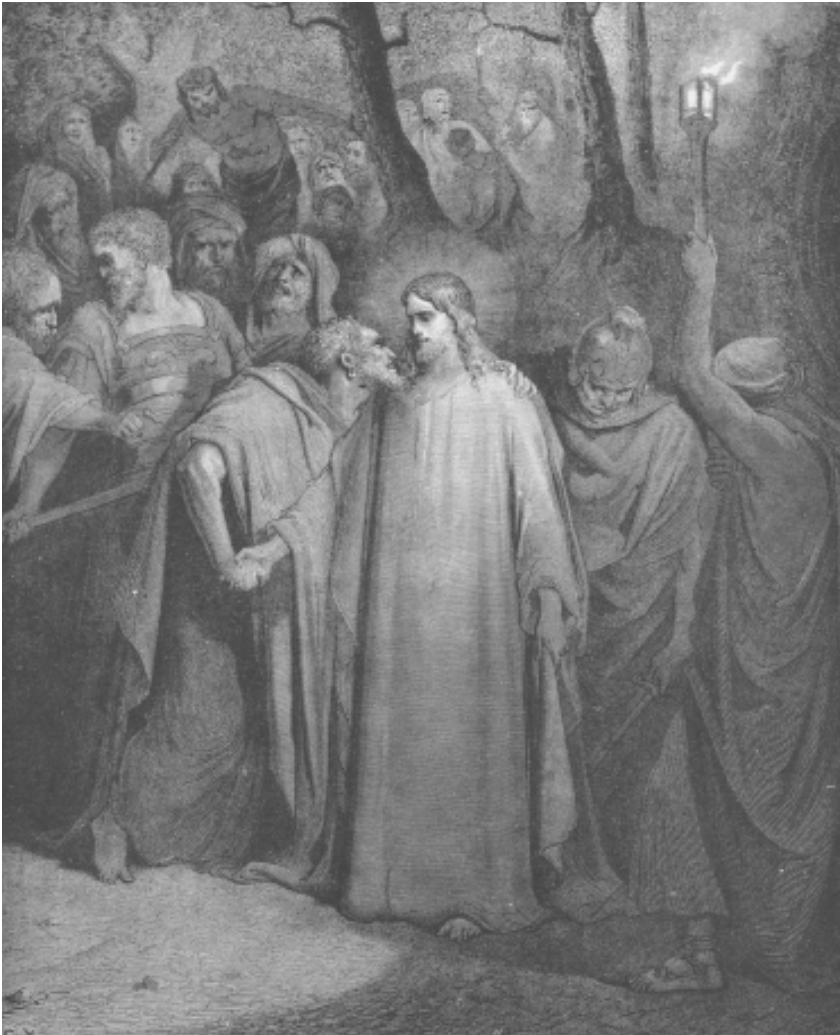


Illustration: The Betrayal

A Devotional for the Week of the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

SUNDAY.

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. – Ephesians 6:11.

About the dawn of Friday morning the Chief Council convened again to devise some concerted action in bringing this matter concerning Jesus before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; for their verdict had to be confirmed by him, and he must order the execution to take place. And then Jesus was bound and taken to Pontius Pilate, into the Hall of Judgment. – When Judas, who had betrayed his Master, saw that He was condemned, he repented of his evil deed, took the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, from whom he had received them, and said: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," whereupon they said: "What is that to us? See thou to that." And he cast the pieces of silver in the Temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. – And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said: "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Therefore that field was called, the Field of Blood. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me," Zechariah 1:12-13. Such was the frightful end of Christ's betrayer. In desperation he "went to his own place."

Guard your soul, O Christian, against consenting to do any sin whatsoever. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For how does the devil go about it? First he makes sin appear sweet, small, trifling, and easy. He then leads man from one sin into another, blinding him and hardening his conscience. And finally, when he has reached the utmost stage, he bawls at him: "You are lost!" and drives him to utter despair. Do withstand the first temptation, O Christian! Arm yourself with the Word of God! And if ever you have fallen, flee to Jesus at once. He

receives you and forgives your iniquity and helps you, according to the firm assurances of His Word.

PRAYER. – Keep me from the devil's wiles, O my Lord and Savior! I cannot keep myself. Put on me Your whole armor. Arm me with Your Word and the Holy Spirit, and give me Your strength. When I have sinned, draw me to You in penitence and faith, and forgive my sin, and satisfy me with the comfort of Your salvation. And when my last hour comes, grant me a blessed end. Amen.

Hymn 206, 4. 5.

O Christ, turn not away from me,
Receive and hide me all in Thee,
Within Thy holy wounds inclose,
And keep me safe from all my foes.

In death's dark hour with me abide,
And place me, Savior, at Thy side,
Where with Thy saints I shall adore
And praise Thee, Lord, forevermore.

MONDAY.

I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness of the truth. Every one that is of the truth hearest my voice. – John 18:37.

It was very early in the morning when the councilors appeared with Jesus before the Hall of Judgment. But Pilate was there. The Jews themselves did not go into the Judgment Hall, lest they should be defiled, but might eat the Passover, or the meals connected with the sacrifices at the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" They answered insolently: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him unto Thee" Then Pilate said to them: "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him It is not

lawful for us to put any man to death." For the saying of Jesus must needs he fulfilled that He would be delivered to the Gentiles and crucified. So the Jews began to accuse Him, saying: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." Then Pilate entered the Judgment Hall again, and called for Jesus, and said to Him: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Pilate answered: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" Jesus answered: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." Pilate therefore said to Him: " Art Thou a King, then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness of the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate said, disdainfully: "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them: "I find no fault in this man." He took Jesus to be a religious fanatic, but not a rebel.

Most assuredly, Jesus is a King. But His kingdom is not of this world, is not of the nature of the kingdoms of this world. He founds, sustains, and spreads His kingdom only through His Word, the Word of Truth, the truth of grace, which was conceived in God's eternal counsel, revealed and made manifest in Christ, and is proclaimed through His Word: the truth that He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And every one that is of the truth, every one that is born of God, drawn by God to receive this Word of Truth, hears the voice and Word of Jesus with a spiritual ear, and enters His kingdom and remains therein, here in time and thereafter in eternity. Are you of the truth?

PRAYER. – Most merciful God, I implore You that You would, at all times, make my ear and my heart quick to know and hear and receive the voice and gracious Word of my Savior as the only saving truth, that thus I may be and remain in His kingdom,

believing here and blissfully beholding hereafter. This I ask, O God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Hymn 201, 5.

My Shepherd, now receive me! | My Guardian, own me Thine!
Great blessings Thou didst give me, | O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me | With milk and sweetest food;
Thy Spirit oft has led me | To stores of heavenly good.

TUESDAY.

The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves. – Luke 23:12.

When Pilate declared Jesus innocent, the members of the Chief Council still persisted in bringing serious charges of sedition against Him. Pilate, it seems, had taken Jesus with him before the Jews. And when Jesus said nothing to all these accusations, Pilate asked Him: "Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? Answerest Thou nothing?" But Jesus answered to never a word, insomuch that the Governor marveled greatly. At last the Jews said: "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And when he knew that Jesus was of Galilee, and that, therefore, he belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, he sent Him to Herod, who was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. And he questioned Him in many words; but Jesus answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod, with his men of war, set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe of white to show that he, too, considered Jesus harmless, and sent Him again to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day: for before they were at enmity between

themselves. For so it is with the unbelieving world: when Jesus is the target, the bitterest enemies become friends and join hands against Him. In a case like this they fully understand each other and fully agree with one another. Be on Jesus' side, O Christian, though all the world is against Him. For with Jesus there is eternal salvation.

PRAYER. – Alas, Lord Jesus, how the world does despise You! How do enemies join hands against You! But as for me, my Lord and Savior, draw me to You by Your Word and the Holy Spirit, so that I may side with You against all the scorn and contempt of the world; for one day You will let me see, and partake of – Your glory. Amen.

Hymn 201, 6.

Here I will stand beside Thee, | From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me! | When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish | In death's last fatal grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish, | Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.

WEDNESDAY.

Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!
– Luke 23:18.

Pilate now called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said unto them: "Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you unto him, and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him." But they would not be satisfied.

Then something happened. Pilate had the custom to release to the people at the Passover one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And he had then a notable prisoner, a malefactor and a murderer,

called Barabbas, who had committed a murder in an insurrection that had occurred in the city. And just now a deputation of the people appeared before him, asking Pilate to observe the usual custom. This was a welcome opportunity for Pilate, and he said unto the multitude: "Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover: whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?" For he knew that for envy the high priests had delivered Jesus up, and he felt certain that the people would ask for Jesus.

And as he was sitting on the judgment-seat, waiting for the answer of the people, there came a messenger delivering this message from his wife: "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." – But the chief priests and elders persuaded and moved the multitude that they should ask that Barabbas should be released and Jesus be condemned to die. – And now Pilate asked: "Whether of the two will ye that I release unto you?" Then they all cried out: "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!" O the people, the blind, mad, fickle people! But – do you again see the ruling hand of God amidst all this sin? For Jesus was to be delivered unto death that we, the malefactors, might be released.

PRAYER. – At Your Word, O merciful God, I seek salvation in this, that Your dear Son, the Righteous, was delivered to death, and that for His sake we, the malefactors, are acquitted. Let me remain steadfast in this faith, and nevermore be frightened nor despair, for You, even You, do promise to me, O God, that by faith in Your beloved Son I shall be righteous in Your sight and have life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn 202, 1. 4.

ENSLAVED by sin, and bound in chains,
Beneath its dreadful tyrant sway,
And doomed to everlasting pains,
We wretched, guilty captives lay.

Jesus the sacrifice became
To rescue guilty souls from hell;

The spotless, bleeding, dying Lamb,
Beneath avenging justice fell.

THURSDAY.

Behold the man! – John 19:5.

When the people had cried in wild disorder – "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!" – Pilate, willing to release Jesus, asked them: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" They cried out again: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" And he said unto them the third time: "Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him; I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go." But they cried out the more: "Crucify Him!" And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. Then Pilate had Jesus scourged. And when Jesus was scourged, the soldiers of the Governor took Him into the common hall and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And they plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, and began to salute Him, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him in the face, and spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head, and, bowing their knees, worshiped Him. – And Pilate went out again, and said to the Jews: "Behold, I bring Him forth unto you that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." Then Jesus came forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them: "Behold the man!"

Do you, too, behold Jesus in His misery and in His shame! Do not, however, merely behold Him with feelings of human sympathy in your heart, but let deep and serious thoughts occupy your mind. Consider that your Savior, the eternal Son of God, had to suffer these things to redeem you. Consider, furthermore, how holy, severe, firm, and unchanging is the righteousness of God which could not be satisfied in any other way. Consider what would be done to you, a sinner, if you would not have Jesus. And when thus beholding Jesus,

let also this saving truth take hold of your heart that you are redeemed, and that God will show you nothing but kindness and goodness in time and eternity.

PRAYER. – O Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I thank You that You did offer up Yourself in order to satisfy the righteous God in my place. In my stead You did suffer what I had deserved to suffer on account of my sin. You have fully satisfied the righteousness of God. You have merited for me the good will of my heavenly Father. Grant me grace, dear Savior, to take refuge in Your bloody merit, to enwrap myself in it, as it were, and never to be found without it. Ah, let me always look upon You in faith, that Your salvation may be my own. Amen.

Hymn 195, 5.

The blows and stripes that fell on Thee
Heal up the wounds of sin in me;
Thy crown of thorns, Thy foes' mad spite
Let be my glory and delight!

FRIDAY.

Crucify Him, crucify Him! – *John 19:6.*

Pilate was sadly mistaken to think that scourging Jesus would satisfy the people. When the chief priests and officers saw Jesus, they cried out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them: "Take ye Him and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him." The Jews answered him: "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard that, he dreaded all the more to order the execution of Jesus. Again he took Jesus with Him into the Judgment-Hall, and asked Him: "Whence art Thou?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him: "Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?" Jesus answered: "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee

from above; therefore, he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." Now Pilate most earnestly sought to release Jesus. But the Jews insisted on their demand that Jesus be crucified.

And the counsel of God also remained unchanged. Jesus must be crucified. And Jesus' prediction must be fulfilled: He must be crucified. And what the prophets had foretold must be done: Jesus must be crucified. Pilate, though shamefully guilty, was but God's instrument in this matter. And the Jews who delivered Jesus, though they were more guilty than this blind heathen, also were but tools in the hand of God. And the mad and howling mob, though their sin was inexpressibly great, nevertheless but echoed the cry of God's great and unfathomable mercy: "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite the Shepherd!" (Zech. 13:7.) For God so willed to give up His only-begotten Son into the shameful death upon the cross for our salvation.

PRAYER. – I give thanks to You, most merciful God and Father, that You did not spare Your own Son, but delivered Him up for us all to suffer the shameful death upon the cross in our stead and for our salvation. How merciful is Your counsel, and how graciously have You carried it into effect! How earnestly do You desire my salvation and that of the whole world! Endow me, I implore You, with the power of Your Holy Spirit, that in true faith I may comfort myself with Your wonderful mercy and rejoice in the same in all eternity. Amen.

Hymn 198, 4.

What strangest punishment is suffered yonder?
The Shepherd dies for sheep that love to wander,
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,
Who would not own Him.

SATURDAY.

His blood be on us and on our children! – *Matthew 27:25.*

Pilate, indeed, sought to release Jesus. But the Jews finally cried out: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called The Pavement; in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation of the Passover, the day before the great Passover-Sabbath, a little past six o'clock in the morning. And Pilate said to the Jews: "Behold your King!" But they cried out: "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him!" Pilate said to them: "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered: "We have no king but Caesar."

But when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, willing to content the people, he gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Then answered all the people and said: "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then released he Barabbas unto them, who for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they desired; but Jesus, scourged and mocked, he delivered unto their will to be crucified.

A terrible thing to say: "His blood be on us and on our children!" It has come upon them. The days of God's vengeance did come. Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews were dispersed among all nations, and they have ceased to be God's people, and bear upon their very countenances the mark of God's truth and earnestness. But faith gives a new interpretation to the blasphemy of the Jews and says: Ah yes, Lord Jesus, Your blood, the blood of atonement, be on us, and on our children! And God says Amen.

PRAYER. – I thank You, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that by Your blood and death You have made amends for the sin of the world and likewise for mine, and that You have brought about a full reconciliation with God, and thus did present all the world righteous and good in the sight of God. I pray You – true man and God, my Lord and Savior – kindle true faith within me to the end that I may appropriate to myself Your blood and death, and thus be saved. – I, a poor sinner. Amen.

Hymn 326, 4. 5.

Lord, I believe Thy precious blood
Which at the mercy-seat of God
Forever doth for sinners plead.
For me – e'en for my soul – was shed.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).

The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).

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