

Lent 5 Worldly Eyes Mark 15:1–20 Psalm 2; Isaiah 13:9–11; 1 John 2:15–17; John 18:33–38a

**WE USE THE ADJECTIVE 'WORLDLY' TO DESCRIBE TWO GROUPS: THOSE WITH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ABOUT LIVING THIS LIFE AND THOSE MORE ATTACHED TO THIS WORLD THAN TO LIVING IN GOD'S KINGDOM.**

**PONTIUS PILATE, THE CHIEF PRIESTS, AS WELL AS MANY IN THE CROWD AND ROMAN GUARD WERE WORLDLY WISE, AND THEY ALSO LOOKED AT JESUS THROUGH WORLDLY RATHER THAN SPIRITUAL EYES.**

**IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, YOU DIDN'T RISE TO THE LEVEL OF POWER THAT PILATE ENJOYED WITHOUT BEING WORLDLY- ADEPT. AS A GOVERNOR, EVERYTHING BOILED DOWN TO CONVINCING THE EMPEROR OF YOUR WORTH. SO, ABOVE ALL, YOU HAD TO LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE.**

**PILATE WAS A MAN WITH WORLDLY DESIRES AND AMBITIONS. HE ALSO WAS WORLDLY IN THE SENSE OF NOT BEING BOUND BY GODLY TRUTH. AS GOVERNOR OF JUDEA, THE POPULATION OF HIGHLY RELIGIOUS JEWS WAS A THORN IN HIS SIDE.**

**PILATE PURSECUTED AND PROVOKED THE JEWS, PARTIALLY TO KEEP ORDER, BUT ALSO DUE TO A DISDAIN FOR THEIR FAITH. THE IDEA OF ONLY ONE GOD FLEW IN THE FACE OF PILATE, WHO, AS A GOOD ROMAN, WORSHIPPED MANY GODS.**

**FOR PILATE, THE IDEA OF A GOD ACTUALLY DICTATING YOUR LIFE WAS LAUGHABLE. YOU SIMPLY NEEDED TO APPEASE THE GODS ONCE IN AWHILE. EVEN IF HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THEM, IT MADE FOR A GOOD REPUTATION.**

**GIVEN ALL THAT, IT'S A BIT SURPRISING TO SEE PILATE COOPERATING WITH THE JEWISH LEADERS IN THE TRIAL OF JESUS. THOUGH HE KNEW THAT JESUS WAS INNOCENT, BASED ON HIS OWN INVESTIGATION AND A WARNING FROM HIS WIFE'S MYSTERIOUS DREAM; HIS WORLDLINESS WON OUT IN THE END.**

**HIS RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM WAS ON FULL DISPLAY WHEN HE ASKED JESUS, *WHAT IS TRUTH?* HE REJECTED THE BEATEN AND BLOODIED TRUTH STANDING RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF HIM. HIS PRAGMATISM TOWARD WORLDLY AFFAIRS WAS EVIDENT BY GRANTING THE WISH OF THE JEALOUS JEWS.**

**THINK OF IT; INNOCENT JESUS WAS EXECUTED WHILE GUILTY BARABBAS GOES FREE. IT WAS BETTER TO PACIFY THE JEWS THAN TO PLACE HIS POSITION AS GOVERNOR IN JEOPARDY. IF THEY MADE A FUSS WITH CEASAR – HE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN TROUBLE. THIS SMALL TIME PRETEND KING WASN'T WORTH ALL THAT.**

**THE JEWISH LEADERS HAD WORLDLY EYES, TOO. THE LAWYER-SADDUCEES, SAW THE POPULARITY OF JESUS AS A THREAT TO THEIR COURT. THE PHARISEES, AS RELIGIOUS GUIDES, SAW JESUS AS A COMPETITOR TO THEIR OWN INFLUENCE. THE PRIESTS SAW JESUS AS AN END TO THEIR AUTHORITY. TOGETHER, THEY LIED TO PILATE, TESTIFYING THAT JESUS WANTED TO BE CAESAR'S KING!**

**THEY STIRRED UP THE JEWISH CROWD TO DEMAND THE CRUCIFIXION. THE CROWD KNEW THAT NO MATTER HOW IMPRESSIVE JESUS WAS, ISRAEL'S LEADERS WERE THE ONES TO FEAR. THE PEOPLE HAD ENOUGH EXPERIENCE IN THE WORLD TO SEE THAT; BUT, SPIRITUALLY, THEY WERE BLIND.**

2 THE ROMAN SOLDIERS HAD WORLDLY EYES AS WELL. THEY KNEW A KING WHEN THEY SAW ONE, AND JESUS WAS NOT EXACTLY ROYAL. THEY HAD SEEN CAESAR AND OTHER KINGS DURING MILITARY CAMPAIGNS. IN THEIR EYES, JESUS HAD NO KINGLY POMP OR CIRCUMSTANCE.

THIS JEWISH CARPENTER, BEATEN AND BLOODIED AND WEARING A CROWN OF THORNS WAS A JOKE. THEY GAVE HIM A REED SCEPTER, BOWED DOWN AND PRAISED JESUS IN MOCKERY: *HAIL, KING OF THE JEWS!*

IRONICALLY, ALL THESE ROMANS AND JEWS GET IT RIGHT. REGARDLESS OF WHAT'S IN THEIR HEARTS, THEY CORRECTLY CALL JESUS 'KING OF THE JEWS'. HE IS THE DIVINE MESSIAH PROMISED TO ADAM AND EVE, TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, MOSES, DAVID, AND ALL HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE, JEW AND GENTILE!

*JESUS TELLS PILATE: MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. I CAME FROM HEAVEN TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.* HERE'S THE TRUTH: JESUS IS THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS! HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH! HE IS THE ONLY SAVIOR FOR THE WORLD! YOU SEE HIM, KNOW HIM AND TRUST IN HIM.

THOSE WHO ARE WORLDLY WISE, OR JUST PLAIN WORLDLY, LOOK FOR POWER AND GLORY IN RULERS. GOD SEES HIS KING SUFFER AND DIE TO MANIFEST REAL GLORY – THE GLORY OF LOVE! ALL THESE BLIND ACTORS IGNORANTLY PLAY THEIR PART IN THE CROSS –THE SLIVERED THRONE THAT ATONES FOR THE WORLD.

THE CROWD CRIES: *CRUCIFY HIM!* THE FATHER, FROM HIS SAPPHIRE THRONE, CRIES: *CRUCIFY HIM!* THE OBEDIENT SON CRIES: *CRUCIFY ME!* YOU CAN'T OUTDO GOD, NO MATTER HOW WORLDLY YOU ARE. YOU NEED TO TRUST HIS UNWORLDLY WAYS. JOHN SAYS: *WHOEVER DOES GOD'S WILL ABIDES FOREVER.*

THIS DOESN'T MEAN THOSE WHO DO HIS WILL, WHILE ACTUALLY TRYING TO DEFY IT, WILL GET TO LIVE IN HIS GLORIOUS NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH! JESUS DOES THE WILL OF HIS FATHER, AND IT MEANS EVERYTHING, EVEN IN THIS WORLD.

HE CAME FROM HEAVEN TO DRAW ALL MEN TO HIMSELF ON THE CROSS. HE BEARS THE SIN OF EVERY SOUL IN EVERY CROWD. HE DIES FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD. ALL WHO SEE HIM AS THE KING OF LOVE, ARE TRANSFERRED FROM ETERNAL DEATH TO EVERLASTING LIFE.

IN BAPTISM, THE HOLY SPIRIT NAILS YOU WITH JESUS ON THE CROSS AND BURIES YOU IN HIS GRAVE. YOUR SIN IS PAID FOR. YOU ARE ABSOLVED DAILY THROUGH FAITH IN THIS KING THAT CARRIED YOU WITH HIM TO THE WOODEN THRONE OF GRACE AND THEN, RAISED YOU OUT OF THE GRAVE!

IN HIS SUPPER, THE VERY BODY AND BLOOD OF YOUR SALVATION IS GIVEN FOR YOU TO EAT AND DRINK. GOD DOESN'T WANT YOU TO DOUBT FOR ONE MINUTE THAT YOU BELONG TO HIM AS A BELOVED CHILD. YOU AND THE KING ARE UNITED IN THIS ETERNAL KINGDOM OF EVERLASTING LIFE!

SO, IT'S GOOD FOR YOU TO SEE HOW OFFENSIVE YOUR LOVE FOR THIS WORLD IS TO GOD. LET IT CAUSE YOU SHAME. BUT, THEN REJOICE THAT GOD REMOVES THE GUILT BY YOUR KING'S SACRIFICE AND VICTORY OVER DEATH!

3 THE WORLD'S HELL IS NOT YOUR 'PRESENT' AND IT IS NOT YOUR 'FUTURE.' YOU LOOK FORWARD TO ETERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, EVERLASTING GLORY, AND RESURRECTION INTO GOD'S 'FOREVER AND ALWAYS' WONDERFUL KINGDOM!

JESUS SAYS HIS KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. PAUL WRITES TO THE CHURCH IN COLOSSAE: *IF THEN, YOU'VE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST, SEEK THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE; NOT THE THINGS OF EARTH. YOU'VE DIED, AND YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH GOD. WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS YOUR LIFE, APPEARS, THEN YOU ALSO WILL APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY.* NICE, EH?

JESUS PRAYED TO HIS FATHER FOR YOU ON THE NIGHT WHEN HE WAS BETRAYED: *FATHER, I'VE GIVEN THEM YOUR WORD, AND THE WORLD HATES THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT OF THE WORLD. I DON'T ASK THAT YOU TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD, BUT THAT YOU KEEP THEM FROM THE EVIL ONE.*

SATAN, REALLY WANTS YOU TO HAVE A WORLDLY VIEW OF THINGS. HE WORKS OVERTIME TO GET YOUR ATTENTION OFF OF JESUS. HE WANTS YOU TO JOIN THE INSANITY AROUND YOU THAT ASKS WITH PILATE: *WHAT IS TRUTH?*

RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM LEADS PEOPLE TO DESPAIR. WITHOUT A FOUNDATION OF TRUTH, ONE FALLS FOR ANYTHING. PEOPLE ARE DRIVEN INTO THEMSELVES AND LIVE IN MISERY. OTHERS ARE PUSHED INTO EXTREME WORLDLINESS; THEY EAT, DRINK, AND PARTY, HOPING FOR HAPPINESS.

REPENT OF YOUR WORLDLY EYES. YOU KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE WORLD. JOHN WRITES, *ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD - THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AND THE DESIRES OF THE EYES AND PRIDE OF LIFE - IS NOT FROM THE FATHER BUT FROM THE WORLD. AND THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY ALONG WITH ITS DESIRES. BUT, WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER.*

THE WILL OF GOD IS FOR YOU TO ENTRUST YOUR SOUL TO JESUS. GOD'S SPIRIT OPENS YOUR EYES TO SEE THAT SUFFERING DISGRACE AT THE HANDS OF THE CROWD OR THE GOVERNMENT IS ONLY TEMPORARY; GOD'S LOVE IS ETERNAL!

THE SPIRIT OPENS YOUR EYES TO SEE THAT ACCUMULATING WEALTH AND PLEASURE AND HONOR IN THIS WORLD LEAVES YOU SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND DESTITUTE ON YOUR DEATH BED.

THE SPIRIT SHOWS YOU JESUS, WITH HIS WORDS AND DEEDS OF LOVE; WITH HIS SUFFERING AND HIS BITTER DEATH; WITH HIS RESURRECTION AND PROMISE OF REAL LIFE. YOUR EYES EMBRACE THE TRUTH OF THE CROSS, BY WHICH THE WORLD HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED TO YOU, AND YOU TO THE WORLD.

JESUS HAS SAVED YOU AND NOW; HE LEADS YOU IN HIS KINGDOM. YOU ARE NOT LOST IN THE FULTILITY OF THIS FALLEN CREATION. YOU ARE ALIVE IN CHRIST! HE GIVES YOU HEAVENLY PURPOSE IN THIS WORLD ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS. AMEN