

## **TFTD 25.38 Maundy Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>**

### **Herod and Pilate: Luke 22.63-23.25**

On Maundy Thursday we gather to share Jesus' Last Supper with his friends, in preparation for the events of Good Friday. Join us if you can tonight for Holy Communion in church at 7.30 pm, with foot-washing and the stripping of the altars.



#### **Herod and Pilate**

There's an astonishing amount of casual violence in this passage, even before we get to the cross. Jesus is a prisoner on remand, waiting for his case to be heard — but already he's become an object, a non-person, hanging around in corridors, shuffled from place to place, the butt of everyone's jokes.

Last night, he was active, in control of his own actions, celebrating Passover with his friends, walking down to the garden of Gethsemane to spend the night in prayer. But from the moment of his arrest, he's no longer in control, not doing but being done-to, an "it" not a "he" — arrested in the garden, frog-marched down the valley and up the worn

steps to Caiaphas' house, beaten and interrogated, questioned and abused. All the actions in this part of the story come from "them" — They seized him and led him away,  
They mocked and beat him,  
They led him off to Pilate,  
Pilate handed him over to Herod,  
Herod and his men mocked him and sent him back.  
They demanded the death penalty — and Pilate (in a chilling phrase) 'handed him over to their will' (v.25).

But the soldiers are only doing their job, taking their tone from "them upstairs." There's a Kafka-esque complexity in this story, a bureaucratic labyrinth of complicity as if designed to spread the blame as widely as possible. Whose fault was it? Pilate, who signed the death warrant? Herod, who couldn't care less? The chief priests? What about Jesus' disciples? Judas, who betrayed him? ... Peter, who denied him? ... the rest, who simply ran away? Father, forgive them, says Jesus — whoever "they" are.

Who am I?

I am encircled,

There are tanks all around me.

Machine-gunners have me in their sights.

There is barbed wire about me, electrified wire.

I am on a list.

I am called all day.

They have tattooed me, and marked me with a number.

They have photographed me behind the barbed wire —

They have stripped me of my identity.

[Ernesto Cardenal, in a paraphrase of Psalm 22]

**So who is Jesus, trapped in this alienating environment? As the Son of Man, he is every one of us, every human being who struggles to resist the anonymous forces of de-humanisation. Look at me, he says: I am not an object, I am not your plaything, I am not the butt of your jokes. I am your brother, your son, your daughter — I am a son of Adam, the son of God (Luke 3.38). Take a second look, and see who I really am. As you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to Me (Matthew 25.40).**

**As the Son of Man, he offers his presence, his standing-with, to all those who feel themselves forgotten, de-person'ed by their surroundings, imprisoned in the void of meaninglessness or the depths of despair. And as Son of God, he offers a word that opens up new horizons, that pierces the clouds: From now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God. Beaten, mocked, dishevelled: this is still the one to whom the Father said at his baptism, You are my Son, the beloved: with you I am well pleased.**

**We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:**

**Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

God bless,

Loveday



## **Luke 22.63-23.12**

### **The Mocking and Beating of Jesus**

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, ‘Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?’ They kept heaping many other insults on him.

### **Jesus before the Council**

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, ‘If you are the Messiah, tell us.’ He replied, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ All of them asked, ‘Are you, then, the Son of God?’ He said to them, ‘You say that I am.’ Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!’

### **Jesus before Pilate**

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’ Then Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ He answered, ‘You say so.’ Then Pilate said to the chief

priests and the crowds, 'I find no basis for an accusation against this man.' But they were insistent and said, 'He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.'

### **Jesus before Herod**

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

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**Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**