

# Hanging Out with Jesus

Stories about Jesus from the Gospels

## A Man Struggling To Do The Right Thing

Unedited Transcript

*Luke 23:6-25, John 18:39-19:16, Matthew 27:15-25, Mark 15:6-15*

Good morning, men! If you would, please open your Bibles to Luke, chapter twenty-three, verse six. Luke 23. I guess I could have done it a little earlier myself. Let's begin our time together today by giving a shout out to some men down in South Africa. Men of Destiny at the Christian Family Church in Benoni Gauteng, South Africa. Fifteen guys meeting down there for the last six months on Wednesdays at seven pm at Nelson Narainsamy's house. These are all Google translate pronunciations, so I do apologize if I'm getting them wrong, but Nelson's leading these fifteen guys down in Benoni. I wonder if you would help me give a very rousing and warm welcome to these guys as they join us in the Man in the Mirror's Bible Study? Yeah! One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys! We're really glad to have you with us! By the way, hoorah, is like American military enthusiasm.

The title of today's message in this series, Hanging Out With Jesus, is A Man Struggling To Do The Right Thing. Some people will say anything to get what they want, and we despise those people. Some people will say anything to get what they want, but most of us will say some things to get what we want. The thing that we despise in others is really a mirror image of what we don't like in ourselves as well. We see a man in the scriptures today, Pilate. We looked at him last week, and talked about truth. We're going to look at Pilate again today, and we're going to look at his integrity, and we're going to look at our own integrity as well.

Our pastor asked a few weeks ago, actually he said that his grandson asked him, "What one word would you like to have next to your name?" Interesting question. You might just think about that. What one word would you like to have next to your name? There are lots of words I'd personally like to have next to my name, but if it could be one, it would be the word integrity. That would be the one word, because so much flows out of that. You might have said, "I want to be dependable." That's what my pastor said, but dependability flows out of integrity. You might be able to say all kinds of different things, but integrity is such an integral part of what it means to be an authentic follower of Jesus Christ. Integrity is the word. In fact, Senator Allan Simpson once said, "If you have integrity, nothing else matters." He said, "If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters." Augustine and William Penn said something like this. This is a paraphrase, but they both said something like this, right is right, even if everyone else thinks it's wrong, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone else thinks it's right. Integrity is the key thing. Integrity is so foundational to our lives.

### **What can we learn today that we would otherwise never know?**

Today, as we look at Pilate, we're going to look into this theme, and we're going to begin by looking at the passage, and we're going to answer this question, what can we learn today that we would otherwise

never know? I'm always asking a question when I'm preparing a message. What do we learn from this text that we would otherwise never know?

There are a couple of things we learn today. Number one, this is the only place in the scriptures that I could find, where we understand that Jesus is flogged. We, also, know from other scriptures that Jesus was crucified, but this is the only text that we understand how the crucifixion of this innocent man came to pass. In fact, Jesus was a Jew. Why isn't it the stoning of Jesus? Do you remember that the woman who committed adultery, they picked up stones and they were getting ready to stone her, and Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Stoning is the way that Jews administered their justice, so why isn't it the stoning of Jesus? We learn the answer to that question in today's text.

Let's take a look at it, Luke, chapter twenty-three. We're starting at verse six. Just in the previous couple verses, Pilate has said, "He finds no basis for a charge against this man," and then he was told that Jesus was a Galilean. At verse six, and on hearing that, verse seven, when he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod. Herod was looking for basically a magician. He was looking for Jesus to do a miracle, Jesus to do a trick, and Jesus said nothing. When he didn't, then they began to mock him and to ridicule him, and sent him back to Pilate.

Down in verse thirteen, Herod and Pilate, by the way, became friends that day. They had been enemies before that in verse twelve. Verse thirteen. "Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people." There are five parties that we're going to see in this text. There is Jesus. There is Pilate. There is Herod. There are the religious leaders, the rulers of the people, and then there's the mob. There's the crowd of people, and noticeably absent, by the way, are the disciples, noticeably absent. This is what happens, because we have in this text a breakdown in justice. When there is a breakdown in justice, righteous people often have to flee. Righteous people often have to flee.

"Pilate called together the chief priests, rulers, and the people," the people who would have become a mob surely, and he said to them, "You brought me this man as one who is inciting the people to rebellion." There were many insurrections going on at this time against Roman rule. Pilate said, "I have examined him in your presence, and have found no basis for your charges against him." In other words, he's innocent. I find him innocent. When you compromise your integrity, compromising your integrity is going against what you actually believe to be true. If Pilate had found him guilty under Roman law for something, and had allowed him to be crucified, then that would not have been a compromise of his integrity. It might have been a compromise of the truth. It might have been a compromise of someone else's set of values, but in order for there to be a compromised integrity, you have to go against what you believe you see, what you believe. There's a whole other discussion about going against the laws of the land, which we're not going to get into this morning.

Reading on. He finds no basis for your charges against him. Verse fifteen, "Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us, as you can see. He has done nothing to deserve death." This is Pilate. He said, "He's done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him," but with one voice, they cried, "Away with this man. Release Barabbas to us," because, in another text, there was a custom for the governor to release one prisoner of the people's choice each year. The rulers incited the people to call for the release of Barabbas.

Verse twenty. "Wanting to release Jesus," now Pilate, he wants to release Jesus. "Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again, but they kept shouting, 'Crucify him. Crucify him.'" This is the place where we now understand how it came about that Jesus, an innocent man, was condemned to be

crucified, to die by death on a cross. They were the mob, the mob. There are many characteristics of mobs, but one big characteristic of a mob is they often have a very limited understanding of what it is they're in protest about. It was the rulers that had incited this mob, and then in verse twenty-two, "For the third time, Pilate spoke to them. 'Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have him punished, and then release him.'" The flogging is in John, chapter nineteen, at verse one. That's where the type of punishment is mentioned.

"But with loud shouts, they insistently demanded," this is the mob rule. You see it on CNN. You see it on the TV news. You see mobs, and you see how they move on emotion. They move on anger. They move on being incited. "With loud shouts, they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed." That's how it came about. That's how it came about.

What did Pilate do? He's got this crisis of conscious now, right? He had done everything he could do to save Jesus. He had done everything he could do to do the right thing. He had been struggling to do the right thing, and you and I, we are all in situations all the time where we want to do the right thing. We're trying to do the right thing. We're struggling to do the right thing, and there are forces pushing back against us. He was struggling to do the right thing, but then he didn't. But then he didn't. Verse twenty-four. "So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will." Why didn't he do it? Why didn't he stand fast? Why didn't he do the right thing?

He did it because he compromised his integrity, and that's the big idea today is that **once a man is willing to compromise his integrity, anything can happen**. When you are dealing with a man of integrity, he is predictable. You can predict what's going to happen, but when a man is willing to compromise his integrity, anything can happen. Anything is possible. That's what happened to Pilate. He was a man who was willing to compromise his integrity.

These compromises, they can be in areas of justice, like this, but we can compromise our integrity in relationships, with our wives. We can compromise our integrity and our relationships with friends. Can sit at our tables this morning and tell lies, and it happens. Or it could be a compromise, neighbor love. The Bible makes it very clear if you keep this one law, neighbor love, you'll find you're keeping all the others. Compromising neighbor love, just not doing what neighbor love would make obvious that needs to be done. Any kind of lie. Any kind of lie. I'm sorry, sir, we have no record of that. Any kind of lie. Once a man's willing to do this to compromise his integrity, then anything goes, anything can happen. It just becomes unpredictable, and so the chaos in relationships. When there's chaos in relationships, usually it's because somebody is compromising their integrity. They're making false accusations. They're not doing what they said they would do.

### **What factors contributed to Pilate doing the wrong thing?**

What factors contributed to Pilate doing the wrong thing? A few. You may find others. These are a few. We do see a man who is struggling to do the right thing, but then didn't do it. It was a compromise on justice. Why did it happen? Why did it happen? The first reason is that he valued the approval of men more than doing the right thing. He valued the approval of men more than doing the right thing. We see this. We see this in different ways. In John, chapter nineteen, verse eight, it says that, "Pilate was afraid of what they might do to him." Pilate was afraid. There was this approval of men, this fear of what might happen to him.

Pressure, number two, pressure. The threats being made against him, we didn't go over all this, but it's in the text. The threats that were made against Pilate, that it wouldn't go well with him if he didn't do what they said. There are leaders in our country today who are under threats. We have the Supreme Court of the United States of America. We have five justices, for example, who have just ... And I'm not getting into the merits of the case, but we have five justices who have decided that they have the duty to redefine marriage, what constitutes marriage. There's so much pressure. There's been so much pressure on that court from a growing groundswell of people who apparently want to see marriage redefined.

But it's other kinds of threats as well. We have had a number of table leaders, who over the years have been threatened, been pressured to compromise their integrity. One man, I may not have all of the particulars exactly right, but the way I recall the story is that he was working for a company in sales. His boss was rewriting the invoices. He'd bring an order in for a thousand dollars, and the boss would rewrite the order for a different amount of money, and then would take the money. When our table leader figured out what was going on, he said, "I can't do that anymore." His boss said, "You have to do it, because that's the way we do things around here." He said, "You don't understand. I'm a Christian, and I'm not going to do that." You know what? He lost his job. He lost his job, but he didn't compromise his integrity.

Yeah. We have wanting the approval of man more than doing the right thing. We have pressure. We have vested interests. We all have vested interests that we want to ... Things we want to hold onto. It could be a job. It could be an account. We want to hold onto that, and so we have these vested interests. Pilate had these vested interests in his position. He didn't want to give that up, so he was willing to compromise his integrity in order to protect his vested interests. It's like the parents of the man born blind in John, chapter nine. This young man was born blind, and the parents, when they were brought in and questioned, they said, "We don't know how he was healed." He was healed by Jesus. "We don't know anything about it. Ask him," and the Bible says that they were afraid they would be put out of the synagogue. They had a vested interest.

Then when these things happen, pressures, vested interests, valuing the approval of men more than doing the right thing, then what happens is there's a tendency to become double minded in our ways. Wavering between two opinions, to become double minded, and that's when compromise takes place. These are some of the factors that contributed to, of course, Pilate and our pressures on us as well. Once a man is willing to succumb to these different factors and compromise his integrity, then anything can happen, anything could happen. It does.

### **How can you get it right when others are getting it wrong?**

Finally up here, how can you get it right when others are getting it wrong? How can you and I get this right when others are doing it wrong? A few ideas. First of all, let's acknowledge that we all get caught up in situations where we are under pressure to do the wrong thing. We all have these conflicts. Isn't that like step one is just, hey, admit you have a problem. Let's all admit that we are put in situations where we're tempted to compromise our integrity, and then let's ask this question. Where does the power come from to do the right thing? Where does the power come from to do the right thing? A few thoughts.

Number one, first and foremost, a personal transformation of the heart, a personal transformation of the heart. If we are in Christ, then we are new creations. We have appropriated the power of God in a

way that mere mortals, if you'll allow that, do not have. Personal transformation of the heart. What it does is it changes our intentions. In other words, we go into these situations that are compromising, where we're under pressure, where we have these vested interests. We go into these situations with a different set of intentions. We go into that situation with a transformed heart, and the intention, at least, that we are going to do the right thing. That's a big step. That's a big turning point. I don't think that anybody in this room or online is maybe that early in the process. Hopefully, you already have had this personal transformation of the heart, and you have this intention to do the right thing, but is that enough? Is that enough? Does that give you the power, wanting to do the right thing, having the right intentions? I don't think so.

It's necessary, but not sufficient, so what else? You have to have the right information. Where does a Christian get the right information? What is the authority of a Christian? Where do we go to find out what is the right thing to do? You and I, where do we go? We go to the word of God. We look at the Bible. It is our authority, and if we don't look at the word of God, then the Bible tells us that it's like the line that has you moored to the dock. It gets severed. Now you have nothing mooring you to the dock, so every wave, every crafty, cunning wave that laps over you, because you're not moored to the dock, it begins to take you out to sea, so stay moored to this word, this Bible.

How do you do that? You read it. You read it. There is substantial new research that shows that men, and women, too, but men who read the Bible four days a week or more have a substantially better result in this area of integrity than men who don't. Read the word of God for yourselves. Otherwise, you'll end up ... We all know this. When we're not in the word, we know what happens is that we tend to drift away, and we start doing what seems right in our own eyes. Yes, we start doing what seems right in our own eyes. The Bible talks about this a lot.

This personal transformation, we have the right intentions. Does that give us the power to do the right thing? No. We read the word of God. Now we have the right information. Is that enough? No. It's not. Because you know lots of people who read the Bible, and then they still do the wrong thing. It's necessary, but it's not sufficient. Personal transformation of the heart, word of God.

Number three. Reading the situation. Reading the situation. Understanding that when we are put in a situation where we're tempted to compromise our integrity, it's often because someone has created a hothouse environment. Someone has created a sense of urgency that is not there. First of all, there are very few things in life that can't wait two weeks. Very few things in life that can't wait two weeks, but more than that, good news is never as good as it seems, but bad news is never as bad as it seems either. You all know that if you will sleep on almost anything, it will not seem as urgent.

You're in the sales call, and you're feeling the pressure to compromise your integrity or you're going to lose the sale. If you lose the sale, you don't have the mortgage payment this month or the rent. You think there's so much riding on that sale. Read the situation. Based on the intentions of your heart and what you've read in the word of God, put your faith in God. Stand up and walk out of the meeting. God will take care of you. God will provide. You may lose the sale. You may not make the rent payment. You may not make the mortgage payment. She may not come back again, but God will take care of you. Read the situation the way that God would read the situation.

Then in Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, verse nine, it says, "Pilate's wife sent word to him," in fact, let's take a look at the verse together, Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, verse nine. Matthew 27:9. I guess it's not Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, verse nine. Nineteen. Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, verse

nineteen. "When Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message. Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Listen to your wife. How can you get it right when others are getting it wrong? Listen to that woman. That is your wife. Glory to God, all right?

Then, final thing I'll say is you might go ahead and pick your own word. It's the reflection question in today's handout, but what is your word? Pick your word, and then think about how does that word relate back to integrity, how important it is to have integrity, and just consider the linkage between your word and having integrity.

You're not the only one. Elijah went through a depression, a deep depression for doing the right thing. He said to God, he said in his depression, he said, "God, I did what you said and I'm the only one left." What did God say? He said, "No, you're not. I have seven thousand who have not bent their knee to Baal, so you are not alone." There are men at your table who are going through the exact same pressures that you're going through to compromise you. The same kinds of threats. We all have this in common. We all have this is common, and the big idea today is that you don't want to compromise your integrity, because once you do, anything can happen, so we have each other. We have each other. Once a man is willing to compromise his integrity, anything can happen. But if you hold onto your integrity, then life will be predictable. Life will be predictable. It doesn't mean without troubles. In this world you will have troubles, but, "Take heart, for I have overcome the world," Jesus says. Let us pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, Lord, we come humbly to you today, our great God. We worship you in the beauty of your holiness, in the majesty of your creation, in the generosity of your salvation. Lord, because of these gifts, these incredible gifts you've given us, we want to be men of integrity. We don't want to be men who would know the right thing to do, like Pilate did, but then go ahead and do the wrong thing. We want to do the right thing.

Father, we know that there are a number of things that are necessary, but not sufficient to give us the power to do this. Lord, we know, and this is part of the message, Lord, that it is only through the power of your Holy Spirit in us that we can live this life of integrity. Send your Holy Spirit now. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, you live within us. You're interceding for us with groans that words cannot express in accordance with God's will. Fill us with your power, so that we might be the men of integrity, and, Lord, at any moment, where we are feeling the pressure, feeling the threat, feeling the vested interest, feeling the desire for the approval of men more than doing the right thing, Lord, fill us with more of your spirit. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.