

“ They shouted “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” “We have no king but Caesar!” The chief priests answered. Then he handed him over to be crucified.” John 19:15-16 (CSB)

This is a very powerful part of the Easter story, a powerful part of our individual stories as Christians too. The moment Jesus is condemned to death. Pilate gives in to the pressure of the crowds and sends someone to an excruciating and very public death who is innocent. Regardless of whether you are a Christian or just a historian, this is a terrible thing. But the pain and torture is not what I want to focus on. This happened historically and we know Jesus rose again, even though it's still sad to think that as a species we humans could be so evil as to do such a thing. Historically if we look into the fates of those involved in Jesus' unfair treatment, we also see that they got their own punishments (pers comm).

Our focus for today is on the rather chilling remark of the chief priests “We have no king but Caesar!”. At the time they were probably just making any type of comment that would help their cause - the removal of Jesus and his teachings that threatened the priests' earthly power - and this was a good one to use. Playing to Pilate's fear of Caesar and his wish to remain in power in a ruthless world where there was little to no room for mistakes when in authority. It makes sense at a basic level, but this comment goes so deep I almost want to cry thinking about it. The protests were those that the Jewish nation looked up to. They were meant to have the ear of God and be the bridge between man and God, standing in the divide. It was an honour reserved for only a comparative few. That makes this comment worse. These priests are declaring that they fear man above God. They fear the removal of their earthly power over the God they profess to serve. These priests are in such a high place of authority that they lead the people astray with ease.

But we aren't without blame, and we can look back on what happened and see with the 20/20 vision of hindsight how wrong it all is. This doesn't excuse us though. Have we learned from what we read and hear in services all year through the Church or are they just stories that we go ‘sit that nice?’ or ‘how terrible!’ and put it out of our minds. How often do we really look deeper into God's word and realise that we can, each and every one of us, see ourselves in each character in each story we read/listen to? Here the priests enjoy their authority and declare Caesar as their king. What or who do we declare as our king when we should be claiming Jesus as King? I'll leave this question with you but be open and admit some of the things that get in my way and I probably declare ‘king’ in my life without even realising it....gaming, crafting, working on my website, people pleasing - I have a long way to go!

Pray

Lord Jesus, you came to us to point us back to God. You became our sacrificial lamb and gave up everything for your love of us. We can never deserve even the tiniest bit of what you did for us and yet you give us permission to boldly approach the throne of God cleansed by your blood and speak as if we deserved it. We give you thanks for this privilege and ask your forgiveness for putting so many things above you as the ‘kings’ of our lives. You know for each of us what they are and we ask you to help us to work on learning to put you above all these temporary things. We know that in our own strength we will fail, but with your strength we can overcome everything the world throws at us. Amen.