

Good Friday In Holy Week

Pontius Pilate: John 18:33-38

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Reflection by Ellie Tupper:

Who is this man?

The poor bugger's had a bad night. These Jews, if they don't like you, they certainly know how to show it. Seven years I've been governor of Judaea, and the riots and insurrections make back-alley Rome look like the gardens of Stabiae. It's even worse if they can pretend it's legal. Which they always do.

That old fox Caiaphas is lurking at my elbow, practically drooling. "Heresy!" he's hissing. "Blasphemy!" The whole troop of elders and priests froth and fulminate along with him. They're standing around outside because they think it'll defile them to set foot on Roman property. They don't mind making their guards drag the prisoner indoors, or demand that I come out to meet them. I wasn't even done with breakfast.

"Really?" I answer Caiaphas. "If he's a heretic, you're the priests, you deal with him."

I've actually heard about him already. My agents say he trotted into Jerusalem a few days ago and the whole population went crazy cheering. He did cause a ruckus in the Temple the next day but I told them to shut up, pick up their pennies and sacrificial doves and go home. Since then he's been hanging around just talking to people and debating obscure questions the way Jews always do.

Now the priests are all talking at me, and out of the jumble pops the word "crucify!"

"You, what?"

Caiaphas oozes, "My lord, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death. Only Rome can do that."

"Death? For talking to people? Are you serious?" He's serious. I turn my back and stamp back inside.

The guards are bristling around their wretched victim as if he'd insulted their sisters and set fire to the Temple. He doesn't look like he could harm a lizard. "All right," I say, "I've heard their side. So, are you the King of the Jews or not?"

And he looks up at me. This skinny, bloodied loser looks me in the face, and his eyes are as black and blazing as the night sky, and now I remember that my wife saw him teaching a few days ago, and has been having nightmares about dark eyes ever since. "You say it, so it must be so," he says.

This is child stuff, word games: *You're a goat! I know you are, but what am I?* "Your own leaders want you dead. They say you want to be king. Or is that an excuse to bring Rome into this so I'll kill you for them?"

Those eyes just look at me. "I was born to bear witness to the truth," he says. "Everyone who knows truth hears me."

I'd pull out my hair if it wasn't so short. "Bah. What is truth?" and I stamp back out to those bloodthirsty Jews. The riot's been getting louder while I was talking to that fiery-eyed lunatic. My guards have their pikes down, blocking against the shoving, screaming mass. These are the same people who fawned around him all week! My captain's looking wild-eyed, and Caiaphas and his cohort hover like vultures.

There's nothing I can do. I have an out: their Passover tradition calls for the pardon of some criminal for the holiday. I try to trade Yeshua for a known killer, Barabbas, but they refuse, going even crazier. So I'm forced to let them have him, even to send my soldiers to do the job. Jupiter give him a quick death.

I think I'll get a sign put up, "Yeshua the King of the Jews," and let them think what they want.

What is wrong with these people?