

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Who are you?

- That is the question they asked Jesus.
- That is a good question for us to ask ourselves as we do self-reflection and self-examination.

We are making our way through the Places of the Passion in these evening Lenten sermons.

- Recall we began on Ash Wednesday in the Upper Room where Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.
- We then went to the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Last week Jesus was arrested and taken to the high priest.

But on the way we stopped in the courtyard where we focused in on testing.....

- Peter a central figure to this testing, temptation, and denial.

Tonight we pick up on Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. The question will often be asked of Jesus, who are You?

- Regarding this being a trial, I use that word trial here loosely.
- A kangaroo court may be more appropriate.
- There was a pretense of justice but the outcome was a foregone conclusion.

Clearly Jesus is on trial.

- But His actions without doubt show His truth and innocence.
- And He is who He said He is.

But I will argue, man who thinks he is in control, is really also on trial.

- And, as you will see, we will fail miserably.
- We will see our sinfulness, our craftiness, our selfishness, our guilt, our cover-up, our hypocrisy and our deceit.
- It will all be clearly on display.

The one who is innocent will be found guilty and the one who is guilty will put up a front to look to be innocent.

- Our brokenness will show our desperate need for this Jesus who is without sin.

- And so again I will ask, who are you?

Caiaphas as the high priest would have been presiding over the Sanhedrin.

- The Sanhedrin would have been the governing body of the church.
- In the middle of the night the Sanhedrin assembled.

The first place of meeting was the palace of the high priest.

- The regular place of meeting in the Temple was closed at night.
- The trial convened at an illegal hour. Never mind the rules pertaining to this being the Jewish festival of the Passover.

As unscrupulous as the council was, they did cling to a show of legal formality.

- If they were going to have a sentence of death, they needed 2 witnesses.
- At this time there would have been many witnesses in Jerusalem who had heard Jesus speak and would have gladly given testimony, but that would not have served their evil purpose.
- Jesus' teaching had been public. He had nothing to hide.
- It is false prophets who like to surround their teachings with an aura of mystery to make them attractive and appealing to their followers.

Many false witnesses came forward.

- Where evildoers rule, unscrupulous people can always be found to carry their favor and do their bidding for some kind of personal gain or advantage.
- But there was a problem.
- These witnesses that came forward could not agree.
- Fulfillment of Psalm 109:2 clearly seen, "For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against Me, they have spoken against Me with a lying tongue."

Jesus stood before them.

- His hands may have been bound but His tongue and His spirit were not bound.
- The Word of God cannot be bound.

By this time it was becoming obvious that they were getting no where by this procedure.

- They demanded that Jesus defend Himself against all the accusations which were brought against Him.
- Jesus held His peace and said nothing.
- There was no need to speak.

- His silence was more eloquent than words would have been.

It took many attempts until approximate agreement was finally reached by 2 witnesses.

- They referred to a statement which Jesus had made almost 3 years before in answer to a demand that He furnish a sign of His authority for the first cleansing of the Temple.
- Jesus had said, “Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it again.
- A clear reference to His death and resurrection.

Caiaphas then put Jesus under oath.

- Under oath, Jesus was to stand in the presence of the most high God and present His testimony with God as a witness.

Under oath, Jesus was to declare who He is, if He is the Son of the most high God.

- Caiaphas was cunning.
- If Jesus said no, He would stand as an imposter before the people.
- If Jesus answered yes, in their view they would have cause to convict Him of blasphemy which has a penalty of death.

Jesus made a clear statement in 2 words, “I AM.”

- Back at the time of Moses, Jesus identified Himself as, “I Am.”

To the question of “Who are you?” Jesus gave a very clear and compelling answer is His 7 I am statements. You recall them well I’m sure. I give them to you in the order He gave them during His earthly ministry.

- I am the Bread of Life.
- I am the Light of the World.
- I am the Gate.
- I am the Good Shepherd.
- I am the Resurrection and the Life.
- I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- And the 7<sup>th</sup> one, I am the Vine.

This testimony of Jesus caused the storm to break.

- Caiaphas called out, “Blasphemy.”
- He then tore his clothes. Another inconsistency.
- The priest was not permitted to tear his clothes in mourning.

- Not even for the death of a family member. His attention was to be constantly fixed upon the living God.

Caiaphas now had what he wanted.

- He wanted the case brought to a quick conclusion.
- A second session of the Sanhedrin was held in the temple to confirm the verdict.
- But even here he disregarded the legal procedure in capital cases which said that a verdict could be passed only after a second session of the court which was never to be convened on the same day.

And they all condemned Him—He was guilty of death.

- There was no protest.
- The verdict had been determined before the trial began.
- The excuse for the verdict was blasphemy.

Yet another problem existed for the Jewish leaders.

- The Jews would have been more than happy to carry out the death sentence themselves, but they were prohibited from doing so.
- The Romans had reserved the right of inflicting the death penalty only to themselves.
- It was necessary, therefore to turn Jesus over to Pilate, the representative of the Roman government.
- That is what will be covered next Wednesday night at our next Lenten Service.

God the Father's plan was being carried out as had been put in place.

- The Father had determined how Jesus was to die.
- And here is brought to mind for us Mark chapter 10 verse 13. "And they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles."

So as I begin to bring this to conclusion tonight I again ask the question, Who are you?

- Surely in this account you have seen the many shortfalls, deceit and sinfulness of man. Including our rebellion against God.
- Surely in this account there are many times that we can relate these evil deeds to our own actions, perhaps even today or before you came here tonight.

Let me give you some examples to make sure it is clear what I am trying to show and say.

- The Sanhedrin met at night. Do we ever ignore the laws or twist them to fit our needs?

- Caiaphas had to work to find false witnesses against Jesus. Even in that there were inconsistencies and false testimony. Do we ever bend the truth or look for what we want to hear to justify our means?
- They used Jesus' words prophesying His death and resurrection against Him. Do we ever reject God's Word? Do we ever reject what He has to offer us. Do we ever choose our own ideas and ways as the creature over the Creator?
- Caiaphas tore his clothes. He was out of control. His focus was on himself. Do we ever take our eyes off of Jesus, look to ourselves and spin out of control?
- The Jewish leaders maneuvered things so that Jesus would be put to death. And have we not put Jesus to death with our sins?

Who are You?

- This Jesus is the Son of God.
- But in our rejection of Him, we cry out "Blasphemy."

All of these travesties of man and yet there are more.

- I highlighted only these examples to make my point.
- Yet man, covering all these sins up, and putting on the false front to justify our actions and ourselves.
- Who are you? The truth is a poor miserable sinner. The truth be told, each of us could be members of the Sanhedrin.

Man wanting to be in control, took the place of judge.

- But there will be a day when the tables will be turned.
- Hear these words that Jesus spoke before the Sanhedrin.
- "Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Looking at this account this evening, surely we can say with the centurion at the foot of the cross of Jesus, "Truly this was the Son of God." Mark chapter 15 verse 17.

- The verdict of the Sanhedrin was blasphemy. Yes, it would be blasphemy if Jesus were not the Son of God. Their problem was they could not believe, they could not accept that this was the long-foretold Christ.
- This Jesus is the Messiah. Our Savior.

Man declared Jesus guilty.

- God the Father also declared Jesus to be guilty of death, not because of blasphemy but because He had taken upon Himself the guilt of all people.
- All our sins. The ones I have just mentioned but even more than that. ALL OF THEM.
- The truth be told, man is the one guilty of sin and so desperately in need a Savior.
- Yet in our sinfulness, it is man who rejects the Savior.

Which now causes us to turn and focus on that question, Who are You one more time.

- But this time not of Jesus.
- This time not even of ourselves.
- But rather, Jesus with us.

Jesus is innocent and as the perfect sacrifice does take on all our sins.

- The one who is innocent was found guilty because of our sins and the one who is guilty is found innocent because of the innocence of Christ.
- And praise be to God that Jesus, our Savior, in love exchanged for us our sins for His righteousness.
- And He defeated sin, death, and the devil.
- And His victory is our victory. We can live with Him in innocence and blessedness for all eternity.

As I now bring this message to a close, I cannot help but think of the Luther's meaning to the second article of the apostles' creed.

- They fit so perfectly with everything we have discussed.
- I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

Who are you?

- A redeemed child of God who has been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
- All praise, honor and glory be to Jesus who is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Savior, Lord and King.
- Amen. And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.