

Luke 23

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Luke 23.¹⁻⁷

¹And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. ²And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.”

³And Pilate asked him, saying, “Art thou the King of the Jews?”

And he answered him and said, “Thou sayest it.”

⁴Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, “I find no fault in this man.”

⁵And they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

⁶When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. ⁷And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

This is our 22nd reading for Lent 2025, and the next in our continuing series of passion narratives from Luke’s Gospel.

1. In presenting Jesus to Pilate and offering their first accusations against him (vs. 2), Jewish leaders brought three charges.
 - ? What are those three charges?
 - ? What is the nature of those charges?
 - ? Why do you think that their first charges against Jesus were political in nature?
 - ? How do you feel about the political nature of the charges?
 - ? How much of a threat to Rome were Jesus’ teachings and actions?
 - ? How much of a threat are Jesus’ teachings and actions to any unjust empire, country, or nation?

2. When, after hearing their initial accusations and conducting a brief interrogation of Jesus, Pilate announced that he found Jesus innocent of the charges, the Jewish Leaders offered a variation of the first three charges in verse 5.
 - ? What is the latest charge?
 - ? What is the nature of this charge?
 - ? How do you feel about this later charge and the people who brought it?
 - ? What do you learn from the Jewish leaders’ behavior about the habits and conduct of individuals and groups in conflict?

3. Learning that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate sent Jesus’ case “back down to a lower court,” that of Herod’s.
 - ? Why, do you think, did he do this?
 - ? How do you feel about Pilate as a leader when you observe him try to shirk a difficult responsibility by passing the buck to another, inferior, less politically secure individual?
 - ? What lessons about leadership do you glean from Pilate’s actions?

Luke 23.⁸⁻¹²

⁸And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. ⁹Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. ¹⁰And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. ¹¹And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. ¹²And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

This is our 25th reading for Lent 2025, and represents a return to Luke's passion narrative.

1. During Herod's interrogation of Jesus, Jesus refused to say a word.
 - ? Why, do you suppose, was Jesus unwilling to engage with Herod when he had responded to both the Jewish leaders and Pilate?
 - ? How do you feel about Jesus' refusal to talk with Herod?
2. Jewish leaders hated Herod and the Romans. Herod hated the Jewish leaders and the Romans. The Romans disrespected Herod and Jews. Yet, all three groups could agree on the need for Jesus to die. Luke tells us that although they had been enemies before Jesus, Herod and Pilate became friendly after his trials and death.
 - ? What, do you think, accounts for their sudden friendship?
 - ? How do you feel about the two men coming to agreement through their unity against Jesus?

This is a classic example of the human phenomenon known as scapegoating, in which parties feeling antipathy toward one another develop a sense of unity, however short-lived, through attacking individuals or groups that they consider somehow threatening and undesirable.

- ? To what modern day examples, perhaps even from your own experiences, can you point in which people found concord and a feeling of unity through joining in hating, persecuting, and otherwise abusing some individual or group?
- ? What makes this phenomenon so despicable?
- ? How stable is a unity between two individuals or groups based on mutual hatred of a third?

Given that this phenomenon played such a key role in Jesus' death, when we seek and acquire concord with others through attacking another, we are guilty of joining Herod, Pilate, and Jewish leaders in killing Jesus—"when you do it unto the least of these... ye have done it unto me."

- ? How do you feel about this observation?
- ? What makes scapegoating so contrary to the character of God?
- ? How does God seek unity with others?

Luke 23.¹³⁻²⁵

¹³And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴said unto them, “Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: ¹⁵no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. ¹⁶I will therefore chastise him, and release him.” ¹⁷(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

¹⁸And they cried out all at once, saying, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:”
¹⁹(Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

²⁰Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. ²¹But they cried, saying, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

²²And he said unto them the third time, “Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.”

²³And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. ²⁴And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. ²⁵And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

In this reading, we return to Luke’s passion narrative for our 28th Lent 2025 reading.

1. Today’s reading contains a very well know narrative.
 - ? If you were asked to identify one or two things that you think Luke most wants to stress with this passage, what would they be?
2. Pilate reminds the Jewish religious leaders that they have accused Jesus of “perverting the people.”
 - ? What do they mean by the charge that Jesus “perverteth the people”?
 - ? What is the nature of his alleged perversion?
 - ? How does Luke 23.2 help in establishing the nature of the Jewish accusation against Jesus as a perverter of the people?
 - ? What was the charge for which Barabbas was arrested and jailed?
 - ? Why was it important to Luke that his readers know that when Rome applied its own rules of evidence for political insurrection, it could find no reason to convict Jesus?
 - ? What is the significance of the guilty, Barabbas, going free while Jesus, the innocent, was sentenced to death?
3. Pilate resisted, and that repeatedly, the Jewish charge of sedition that they made against Jesus.
 - ? How do you feel about Pilate?
 - ? How would you characterize his eventual succumbing to the Jewish leader’s demands?
4. Luke reports that Pilate “delivered Jesus to their [Jews] will.”
 - ? How do you feel when you consider Pilate, an official of the world’s most powerful empire, handing Jesus, whom he knows to be innocent, over to the cruel desires of an unruly and illegal mob?

luke 23.²⁶⁻³¹

²⁶And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. ²⁷And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. ²⁸But Jesus turning unto them said,

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me,
but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

²⁹For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say,

‘Blessed are the barren,
and the wombs that never bare,
and the paps which never gave suck.’

³⁰Then shall they begin to say to the mountains,

‘Fall on us;’
and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’

³¹For if they do these things in a green tree,
what shall be done in the dry?”

In this reading, our 31st for Lent 2025, we return to Luke’s passion narrative.

1. As Jesus was walking the Via Dolorosa, or the “Way of Suffering” between the Roman fort of Antonia and Golgotha, Jesus addressed women who were accompanying him and lamenting his treatment.
 - ? As you consider his response to their weeping, what do you imagine the mood and tone of his words to be—stern and threatening, sorrowful and compassionate, something else? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How would you summarize his words?
2. Jesus warns that in the tragic days that are soon to arrive two laments will be heard.
 - ? What is the nature of these two laments?
 - ? What does it suggest about the coming days that people would think it a good thing to have not had children?
3. Jesus’ final words to the lamenting women are: “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”
 - ? What, do you think, did Jesus mean by this?

While it is a bit obscure and several meanings are possible, this much seems clear: Jesus is warning them that they will see worse things done to them than what they are seeing done to him.

- ? How do you feel about the fact that after a ministry of service and love, this dire warning would effectively be Jesus’ final prophetic utterance—the words he spoke from the cross are all short, breathless utterances little more than a whisper that express his suffering..
- ? How appropriate does it feel to you that such a magnificent ministry as his should end with such gloomy words?

Luke 23.³²⁻³⁸

³²And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. ³³And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. ³⁴Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. ³⁵And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with hem derided him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."

³⁶And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, ³⁷and saying, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself."

³⁸And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

For our 33rd reading during Lent 2025, we return to Luke's passion narrative. This reading is the first of three covering Jesus' crucifixion as recorded by Luke.

1. In the four Gospels, Jesus is reported to have spoken seven times from the cross. Luke records three. This reading contains Jesus' first utterance as recorded by Luke: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
 - ? How do you feel about Jesus when you witness the generous way in which he forgives and pleads for forgiveness for the very people who kill him?
 - ? There is a "cosmic" aspect to forgiveness and then there is a "psychological" aspect. How do you feel about Jesus's hope that those who kill him will both be forgiven by God and experience no psychological wounds from the contribution they made to his death that will negatively impact the rest of their mortal lives?
2. Jesus was crucified with criminals on either side of him.
 - ? What is the significance of Jesus' companions in death being criminals?
3. To begin his ministry, the Devil invited/challenged/tempted Jesus to use his power to serve himself. Now, while on the cross, Jesus is again tempted to use his power to deliver himself from discomfort and death.
 - ? How difficult, do you think, was it for Jesus to resist these calls to serve his own needs?
 - ? What made it possible for him to resist the temptation to serve himself and his needs?
 - ? What can you do to follow Jesus' example even in the minutest way?

Luke 23.³⁹⁻⁴³

³⁹And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

⁴⁰But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." ⁴²And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

⁴³And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

This reading is our 35th for Lent 2025, represents a return to Luke's passion narrative, and is our second of three readings on Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion.

1. One of the criminals executed with Jesus challenged him with, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."
 - ? What do you think of when you read this?
 - ? On what other occasion/s has Jesus been tempted to use his power for his own comfort, selfjustification, and deliverance?

Satan presented this temptation to Jesus at the beginning of his ministry.

- ? What, does it suggest about this temptation that it was present at the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry?
 - ? How much of a "real and continual temptation" do you suppose it was for Jesus to use his power for his own benefit?
 - ? How do you feel about his repeated refusal to use his power for his own benefit?
 - ? What can we learn in our own life and in our own temptations from Jesus' stubborn refusal to yield to this most natural temptation to use power to preserve oneself?
2. Traditionally, Christians have identified seven utterances made by Jesus from the cross. Luke records three of them. This reading contains the second recorded by Luke: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."
 - ? What do you take from this statement?
 - ? What was Jesus conveying to the criminal?
 - ? As you contemplate your answers to the preceding questions, do your responses focus on Jesus as a "theologian" or on Jesus as a "caring human being"?
 - ? How does Jesus' statement bring comfort to the suffering man?
 - ? How do you feel when you witness Jesus' attempt to comfort a sufferer when he himself is experiencing intense suffering?
 - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you contemplate the fact the Jesus' first two utterances as recorded by Luke are focused on other people's needs?
 - ? How can you take Jesus' example and apply it in your life?
 3. If you find time during the Easter season, read John 13-17. Rather than looking at these chapters through the lens of Jesus as "theology instructor," look for all the ways and instances in which Jesus seeks to comfort his disciples in the face of his eminent departure.
 - ? How do you feel about Jesus when you consider these chapters from this perspective—as manifesting Jesus' desire to comfort his disciples?
 - ? How has Jesus comforted you?

Luke 23.⁴⁴⁻⁴⁹

⁴⁴And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

⁴⁵And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. ⁴⁶And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:” and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man.”

⁴⁸And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. ⁴⁹And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

As we approach Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week, in today’s reading, our 37th for the Lent and Easter 2025 Season, we will examine the last of our three readings from Luke’s account of Jesus’ crucifixion. We will return to this event as recorded in a different Gospel on Good Friday.

1. Luke mentions that darkness descended over Jerusalem and that “the veil of the temple was rent.”
 - ? In addition to the “historical fact” of these two events, what symbolism might they hold?
 - ? According to the following passage, what symbolic meaning did Book of Mormon writers find in the darkness?

“And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers’ (1 Ne. 19.12).
 - ? Imagine the veil torn. Imagine that thereby individuals who had previously been denied such a sight were allowed a view of the Holiest Place—or the place of the presence of God. Now, what symbolic meaning might be behind Luke’s record that at Jesus’ death, the veil was ripped open?
2. Luke records three of Jesus’ traditional seven utterances made from the cross. Today’s reading contains Luke’s third recorded utterance: “Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.”
 - ? What do you feel when you read these words?
 - ? When you close your eyes and try to imagine the moment, what is the mood and tone of Jesus’ utterance?
 - ? What is the mood and tone of the final two verses in today’s reading?
3. Luke records that at Jesus’ death one of the Roman soldiers present at the scene exclaimed, “Certainly this was a righteous man.”
 - ? Again, try to think beyond the “historical/ literally meaning of this notice. What, do you think, is the broader significance of this exclamation for Luke and his message?