

The Hour has Come - Injustice

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[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 13th of March 2005.

The preacher is Rob Imberger. His sermon is entitled The Hour Has Come Injustice and is based on John chapter 19 verses 1 to 16.

A week is a long time in sport. 8th of March 2002, Wayne Carey is considered one of the top five players in AFL football.

15th of March 2002, after committing adultery with his best friend's wife, Wayne Carey's football career and marriage are in tatters. A week is a long time in television.

20th of November 1979, on the TV show Dallas, J.R. is alive. 27th of November 1979, and the question on everyone's lips is, who shot J.R.?

[1 : 13] A week is a long time in the world. Boxing Day 2004, the tsunamis hit Southeast Asia, claiming a few thousand lives.

January 1st 2005, the death toll climbs to 100,000. A week is a long time in Jesus' Jerusalem.

Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven. Crucify him.

Crucify him. A week is a long time in Jesus' Jerusalem. The Hosanna King Jesus is dead.

Bring on the pathetic, the beaten, the bleeding, bruised Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, carpenter, itinerant, zealous, blasphemer, and supposed Messiah.

[2 : 20] The same crowd that earlier in the week heaped praise upon him, now heaps scorn. Sorry, Jesus.

Your novelty's worn out. You're no longer flavor of the month. Everyone came for your party tricks, but as soon as you started calling yourself the Son of God, well, what did you expect?

And now look at you. Broken. Bleeding. You are no king. Crucify him. It all seems so unjust, doesn't it?

Where did it go wrong, we want to say? How can people be so fickle and have turned so quickly from adoration to aggression? From honoring to hating?

From welcoming to wishing his death? All of a sudden, this Jesus who pierced hearts with his words of truth is about to receive those words back as accusations.

[3 : 27] All of a sudden, this Jesus who shot down the Pharisee's arguments with a word now seems to have nothing to say when his abusers gloat over him.

All of a sudden, this Jesus who was the sinner's friend is now enemy of the state. A week is long enough in Jesus' Jerusalem.

A day would probably feel longer. So far, on this day, Jesus has had to endure betrayal and arrest, Peter's threefold denial, the high priest's examination, and the first stage in the trial before Pilate, where Barabbas, a convicted criminal, was set free, and Jesus, an innocent, remained bound.

How can this be? Where's the justice? All of the Gospels do a pretty lousy job in answering this question, where's the justice for Jesus?

And Matthew makes it pretty clear that it was out of the chief priest's jealousy that Jesus was brought before Pilate in the first place. And worse, that the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd that Barabbas should be released and Jesus killed.

[4 : 42] Matthew also records in chapter 27 Pilate's bewilderment and disownership of the decision. All of them said, let him be crucified. Then Pilate asked, why?

What evil has he done? I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. What's more, Luke's Gospel exposes the political expedience in having Jesus crucified.

As Pilate gave his verdict that the crowd's demands should be granted. So he handed Jesus over as they wished. The Gospels all record the same events.

It's a shocking development. It's a terrible turn of events. It's an upsetting turn for the worst. It's an unbelievable change in allegiance. It's a seemingly insurmountable hurdle of injustice.

As we cry, how can this be? Where's the justice for Jesus? John 19 doesn't seem to help in answering this question.

[5 : 49] However, what this passage does offer are three perspectives, three attempts at that very issue of justice. And this morning we're going to work through the verses and discover what justice means for each of these people.

Well, firstly, there's no justice quite like angry mob justice. It begins with the soldiers beating and mocking their prisoner, who has been accused of being king of the Jews.

So a king, they will make him. The crown of thorns. The purple robe. If the soldiers had it their way, justice would continue as a bad joke.

But the angry mob justice of the crowd is something fiercer, isn't it? From the outset, nothing less than the death of Christ will satisfy their desires or justify their accusations.

The chief priests and other prominent Jews are the main players here. To every one of Pilate's excuses, they throw up a protest of their own. But in verses 6 and 7, you'll notice they get desperate.

[7 : 02] Their strategy of accusing Christ of political blasphemy, that is, his king of the Jews claim, it's no longer working.

It's failed. Pilate has virtually ignored this charge. So Jesus, the political king, is no longer what they seek his blood for. Instead, they hope that Jesus' religious blasphemy, that is, his son of God claim, will finally secure a death sentence.

Justice, justice, plan B. But their hopes are dashed once again. As Pilate, from then on, we read, tried to release Jesus.

Well, you get the sense in verse 12, don't you? That the crowd had had enough, well and truly enough, of their lily-livered, pathetic joke of a leader. And they threatened him.

If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. You are no friend of Caesar. The political pressure is too much for Pilate.

[8 : 05] He caves. But not before one last attempt. Shall I crucify your king? To which the chief priests answer, We have no king but the emperor.

We have no king but the emperor. We have no king but the emperor. See the problem with this?

With Jews saying, we have no king but the emperor? Here's the problem. Exodus 20. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. So thirsty were the Jews for blood. So determined were they to kill Jesus, that they commit a blasphemy of their own.

God himself is the only king of Israel. By claiming that they had no king but the emperor, the authorities were denying their very identity as God's people, God's holy people, his precious treasure, his priestly nation.

[9 : 14] If the angry mob had it their way, justice would be anything, go to any lengths, to crucify Christ. Pontius Pilate, on the other hand, seems to want the kind of justice that's most politically convenient.

There's lots of evidence that Pilate simply does not see why this Jesus should die. What is it with these Jews, these eccentric Jews and their archaic laws? They were so agitated about this man, who was, after all, a man, just a man, a broken man, in fact.

Verse 5 shows that Pilate publicly presents Jesus as a harmless, a pathetic figure. He is the man. More like, here is the man you find so dangerous and threatening.

Can't you see he's really nothing? You can understand Pilate's thinking. Surely, once the authorities had seen this sorry sight, they'd realise that they were wrong in thinking Jesus posed any real threat.

But the authorities persist in the most graphic of terms. Crucify him! Crucify him! Which leads Pilate to wash his bloody hands.

[10 : 35] Take him yourselves and crucify him. His strategies to spare Jesus had failed and he was growing tired of the chief priests and their zeal. You can even hear the sarcasm dripping from the words, almost saying, you bring him to me for trial and then you only set my verdict.

Deal with it yourselves. And then comes justice plan B from the crowd. Pilate, did we mention that Jesus claims he's the son of God?

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. The reason is possibly twofold. The bloodlust of the crowd had intensified at that moment of hearing the charge recited again.

And if Pilate did not soon appease their wrath, the uproar could well escalate. But perhaps more scary for Pilate is reason too. In the Greco-Roman world, son of God meant nothing religiously blasphemous, but rather the presence of a divine man, a spiritual being, a spiritually powerful and superior being.

If Jesus' divinity were true, Pilate would have every reason to fear. He'd just had a divine man flogged. Hence his reinvigorated questioning of Jesus.

[11 : 51] Where are you from? Who are you really? Tell me so I can get this crowd off my back and get rid of you. But silence. This irritates Pilate.

He explodes. Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know I have power to release you and power to crucify you? And Jesus' high heaven gibberish response only serves to reinforce that Pilate cannot convict him of anything.

But instead of using his political clout to ensure Jesus' release, Pilate arrogantly taunts the crowd, here is your king, before handing him over to them to be crucified.

If Pilate had it his way, justice would be capitulation to a threatening crowd, injustice to satisfy bloodlust, and an innocent dying for political convenience.

And Jesus, Saviour Jesus, what a cruel episode you had to endure. Stripped, flogged, accused, wronged, denied, handed over, and crucified.

[13 : 14] It's easy to see, isn't it, why some people look at this passage and say, where's the justice? What have they done to my Lord? How can this be?

Where is Jesus' justice? Here's an alternative thought. Praise you, Jesus, for you committed the most unjust act.

You dispensed the greatest injustice to make us justified before the Father. Your injustice is our justification.

What we deserve is death. What we deserve is God's wrath. What we deserve is eternal separation from the Father.

What we deserve is punishment for sin. What we deserve is getting caught for our wrongdoing. What we deserve is paying back what we've broken.

[14 : 16] What we deserve is bearing our sin upon our shoulders. What we deserve is justice. But Jesus pours out injustice.

What we get is life. What we get is God's open arms. What we get is eternity with the Father. What we get is a sin-free slate.

What we get is pardon from wrong. What we get is a ransom already paid. What we get is sin born on another's shoulders.

What we get is Jesus. Unjust, unmerited, undeserved grace. Friends, in light of this, my prayer and challenge is this.

We need to watch ourselves that we don't ever think or despair that Jesus had to go through all of this. That we don't wonder if it could have been done another way.

[15 : 21] That we don't think it was somehow by human will that all of this came to pass. See, brothers and sisters, the truth is it's all too easy to treat this passage with a lot of solemnity, with a lot of it was a tragedy type of language.

We're familiar with the story. I know it, you know it, it's in every gospel, it's taken for granted. This was part of Jesus' walk to the cross. And let's be honest, if we were pushed, some of us sometimes want to spare Jesus all of this, all this stuff he had to endure.

We point the finger at the nasty soldiers, we point the finger at the trumped up charges, the pathetic pilot, the unfairness of it all. We'd accuse the disciples of not trying hard enough to stop the capture of Jesus.

We'd want the crowd to stop yelling, crucify, crucify. We'd want someone, just someone, to go into bat for Jesus, to defend him, to yell at the mob of abusers, to stop telling him to get off his cross.

In one word, we'd want justice, justice for Jesus. But Jesus, he'd point us to himself in verse 11.

[16 : 38] You, Pilate, would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above. Behind whatever power Pilate thought he had, the hand of God was working.

Even the worst evil cannot escape the boundaries of God's sovereignty. sovereignty. There's no doubt the secondary causes to carry out his will are often vile.

But Jesus was beaten, flogged, and nailed to the cross to bring all things to their purpose. So we see all pursuits for justice in our passage, all attempts to get it, and all attempts to appease it, none of them trump.

God's sovereign plan of working his purpose out. Jesus' injustice is our justification. You might have heard of that phrase justified, and how it's been explained.

Just if I'd never sinned. Justified. When I'm justified, it's just if I'd never sinned. It's catchy, isn't it? It's snappy. It's easy to remember. It's also wrong.

[17 : 52] Here's why. Think about it. What would we have to be justified from if we didn't sin? Being justified relies on being sinful.

In other words, when we say we're justified, it's not like I've never sinned. It's because I've sinned that I need to be justified. It's despite my sin that I can claim the justification that comes from Christ.

The love of God is this. Whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And if you haven't done so already, claim this justification.

Claim your sinful state and praise God that despite your sinfulness, just because of your sin and in the fullest sense of your sin, you claim Christ's injustice as your own.

Friends, I hope this morning we've been able to see how the unjust act of Jesus, the undeserved, unmerited love and grace poured out at the cross is our justice.

[18 : 56] It's our justification. It's our righteousness. It's how we can stand before the throne of God on the last day and say, not by works, not by power, not by might, but by the blood of the Lamb.

Surely he has borne our affirmities and carried our diseases. Yet we have counted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted.

He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the punishment that made us whole. By his bruises we are healed.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that your unjust act of love and mercy means that we can be right with you and be right before the Father.

Lord, we thank you that when we claim your injustice, we are justified. Lord, we know we do not deserve your love and mercy.

[20 : 13] So we praise you for it's overflowing into each of our lives. Grant us, Lord God, that we look at people and want to share that unjust act of love and mercy with them.

That our lives would be characterized by living with a total moral and ethical inadequacy. Help us to know time and again we're justified by your son's blood alone.

amen. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.