

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
 Sermon: "Condemned by Sinners (Like Us)"  
 Scripture: John 19:1-16  
 Rev. Steve Filyk  
 March 29, 2026

Opener: Crown Him With Many Crowns  
 Choruses: "Above All" (LeBlanc, Baloché) & "Before The Throne Of God Above"  
 After sermon: The Power Of The Cross  
 Closer: When I Survey The Wondrous Cross

If you are ever tired of seeing goodness  
 Being dragged down by politics  
 Or by justice being subverted  
 You might get a boost from watching Judge Judy.

Judge Judy is a courtroom reality series  
 where real people bring small claims disputes—  
 like unpaid debts, property damage, or personal conflicts—  
 before retired judge Judith Sheindlin.

In a fast-paced, no-nonsense setting,  
 she listens to both sides, asks direct questions,  
 and delivers common-sense judgements on the spot.

Judge Judy is a far cry from most real courtrooms,  
 where outcomes can be shaped by money, public pressure,  
 and long, complicated processes—  
 sometimes at the expense  
 of what feels like clear, straightforward justice.

Today's we are looking at the story of Jesus trial before Pilate,  
 A story that Pastor Harold began to explore two weeks ago.

The trial has same pace as those cases handled by Judge Judy.  
 It is fast, dramatic, and full of conflict.

But unlike the clear "common-sense justice" we find on reality tv,  
 It is marked by the same issues  
 that plague our modern-day justice system.  
 Jesus' trial is marked by self-interest, pride, and fear.

Just consider our characters.

There is Jesus.  
 He was brought before the court  
 because the signs he performed  
 were leading people to believe  
 he was the Messiah, the Son of God.

While some have accused him of sedition  
 He told Pilate his kingdom "is not of this world".  
 [For his part Pilate can't see how he is guilty  
 Of any charges.]

Jesus' greatest concern is not for his own well-being  
 But that he might, in his own words:  
 "do the will of him who sent me...  
 [and] lose none of those he has given me." [John 6:38-39]  
 Jesus concern is God's glory  
 and the salvation of those who believe in him

In this courtroom drama, Jesus is driven  
 By his love for God and for others.

But he is not the only actor.  
 Then there are the Chief Priests and Jewish Leaders.

In the time of Jesus, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders  
 held both religious authority and some political responsibility.  
 They oversaw Temple worship and helped maintain order  
 under the watchful eye of Rome.

A charitable view would note  
That they had the difficult task of ensuring  
Both the everyday faithfulness of the Jewish people  
And the long-term survival of the Jewish people  
under Roman control.

We see this concern expressed earlier in John's Gospel,  
Where at a meeting of the Sanhedrin the Chief Priests and Pharisees  
lamented  
About Jesus "What are we accomplishing?" ...  
"Here is this man performing many signs.  
If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him,  
and then the Romans will come  
and take away both our temple and our nation." [John 11:47-48]

Worries about survival afflict their minds  
And corrode their faithfulness.

"A daily Jewish prayer requested that God send the Messiah,  
and another prayer later used in the Passover liturgy  
affirms that God alone is king." [CBSB 1851]

Yet because of their survival mentality  
they are blinded to the fact that Jesus is their Messiah,  
and in their desperation to force Pilate  
to execute Jesus, they commit blasphemy  
declaring, "We have no king but Caesar..."

As one scholar notes "By vehemently insisting  
they have no king but Caesar,  
they are not only rejecting Jesus' messianic claims,  
they are abandoning Israel's messianic hope  
as a matter of principle, rejecting any claimant....  
And finally disowning the kingship of the Lord himself." [DA Carson 606]

The Chief Priest and Jewish Leaders  
are driven by their fears of losing place and position  
and sacrifice their own integrity  
in an attempt to secure it.

In this courtroom drama, there is Jesus,  
The Chief Priest and Jewish Leaders  
And there also is Pilate.

Pilate was "the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea,  
during the reign of the emperor Tiberius.  
The post of governor of Judaea was of relatively low prestige  
and nothing is known of how Pilate obtained the office."  
["Pilate". (2002, October 18). fifth Prefect of the Roman province of Judaea, from AD 26–36. Retrieved March 27, 2026, from Wikipedia.org website: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius\\_Pilate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius_Pilate)]

Pilate was the emperor's representative  
combining political, judicial, and military authority.  
He was responsible for maintaining order,  
overseeing tax collection, commanding troops,  
and acting as the highest judge—especially in capital cases.

Pilate needed to extract resources while preventing unrest,  
And only by balancing these diverging goals  
would he protect his own standing with Rome.

While it is not unreasonable for us to expect him  
To govern justly, this governance was set in the realpolitik  
Of trying to keep both his superiors and subordinates satisfied.

What we see in today's reading  
Is that Pilate's moral compass is working correctly.  
He recognises that Jesus is no political threat,  
And that Jesus has been brought to him  
because of the jealousy of Jewish leaders [see Matthew 27:18].

Having Jesus flogged,

as cruel as this might seem,  
 can be viewed as Pilate's attempt  
 To placate the anger of the Jewish leadership  
 And spare Jesus' life.

But when Pilate offers resistance to the Jewish leaders' demands  
 They start twisting the screw,  
 Implying that his inaction could result in a bad report to Rome:  
 "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar."

In the face of this threat,  
 Pilate's concern for justice evaporates  
 And is replaced by self-preservation and political expediency.  
 Pilate bends to their wishes and hands Jesus over to be crucified.

Jesus, the Jewish Leaders, and Pilate.

While Jesus is ostensibly on trial,  
 this trial serves to reveal the pride, fear, and self-interest  
 of his accusers and his judge.

John offered a preview of this revelation  
 Near the beginning of his Gospel:  
 "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world,  
 but people loved darkness instead of light  
 because their deeds were evil." [John 3:19]

It is easy for us to look down our noses  
 at Pilate and the Jewish Leaders  
 And dismiss them as pathetic and weak.

But they are not so dissimilar from each of us.  
 When our commitment to justice or faithfulness  
 is put in tension with our security or success—  
 what do we actually choose?

We won't face a Roman governor's court—  
 but we do face quieter moments  
 where the same pressures are at work.

Would you risk your employment to support another person's innocence?  
 Would you sacrifice your pension to maintain your faith commitments?

The Good News is that Jesus willingly submits to God's will  
 and human judgment to rescue the very people  
 that accused him and failed to protect him... people like us.

And that's the turning point of the story.

What looks like human failure does not stop God's plan.  
 In an unexpected move,  
 his condemnation is the means of our salvation.

Just before Jesus is sentenced,  
 John notes that "It was the day of Preparation of the Passover;  
 it was about noon."

John is inviting us to notice the timing:  
 at the very moment Jesus is condemned,  
 lambs are being prepared for the Passover meal.

You might recall that the Passover meal  
 Commemorated Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt.  
 More specifically it recalled how a lamb's blood  
 painted on the doorposts of their homes  
 protected them when judgment passed over.

On this day of preparation,  
 as people slaughtered lambs for Passover,  
 as a great injustice is made at the Stone Pavement,  
 Jesus—the Lamb of God—the faithful One of God  
 Enacting a greater salvation.

Redemption [not from Pharaoh]  
but from our sin, our selfishness, our self-interest.

In exchange for our injustice and unfaithfulness,  
we receive his grace, his mercy, and his love—  
because he was faithful all the way to the end.

Let me leave you with a poem that helps us see this moment more clearly.  
[The first poem from Malcom Guite's "Stations of the cross" entitled  
"Jesus is condemned to death"]

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice  
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers  
Of perception and discrimination, choice,  
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,  
His consciousness of self, his every sense,  
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.  
The man who stands there making no defence,  
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.  
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels  
That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts  
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.  
He gives himself again with all his gifts  
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away  
A door swings open. This is judgment day.

[Stations of the cross – Malcolm Guite. (2024). Retrieved March 28, 2026, from Malcolm Guite website:  
<https://malcolmquite.wordpress.com/tag/stations-of-the-cross/>]

It's easy to ask how the Jewish leaders responded to Jesus  
easy to ask how Pilate judged him.  
The harder question is—what are we doing with Jesus,  
right now, in our own lives?"  
Prayer