

First Century Palestinian Focus Groups and the Glorious Appearing

Matthew 27:11-31

(Number 83 in the Matthew Series)

Pastor Peter Hiatt

February 19, 2006

Children's Sermon:

Aram is out of town at a meeting, so I'm glad I'm here with you guys. Do you know who I am? Do you know my name? Who am I?

[Kids reply] Peter Hiatt.

Peter Hiatt, yeah, that's right. Hey, I have a question for you. Any of you guys in school? Or do you go to kindergarten or preschool, anything like that? Do you go to something like that? Now when you're there, do other kids ever make fun of you?

[Kids reply] Yeah. No.

Happened to me quite a bit. What about this, do they ever get together and say, "Oh, dude, you're cool."? Do they ever do that?

[Kids reply] Yeah.

Yeah, the first happened to me more than the second, but I care about what people think of me. It matters to me what they think. I care about their opinion. So, all the people got together and they gave me a gift as a token of their opinion.

See this right here? See it says, "Opinion." See, it's their opinion of me, and it's big, so it must be important.

So should I open it? Something must be in there. [Peter opens the box.] It's another box. [Peter opens the box.] It's another box.

[Peter opens the box.] It's another box.

Another box?

There's nothing in it! There's an empty box in an empty box in an empty box. It's an empty box. So in other words, it's an opinion of an opinion of an opinion of an opinion of nothing.

[Kids laugh]

In other words, they don't know who I am. They have an empty opinion of me. So I shouldn't care that much what everybody thinks of me. Should I?

[Kids reply] No.

Oh, hey, Coleman, you got that?

Look at this. Whew, this is another opinion. You know whose opinion this is?

[Kids reply] God's.

Yeah, God's opinion of me. You know how I can tell? It says, "Merry Christmas" right on top.

[Kids reply] Santa!

No, not Santa's opinion. This is God's opinion of me.

So I'm gonna open it, okay? Oh, and it's full. Whew! What's this?

[Kids reply] A pillow.

A pillow, yeah. A heart pillow. Now I know it's kind of cheesy, but God's opinion of me is not cheesy, 'cause you know what He gives me?

[Kids reply] No.

He gives me His heart. Do you know who God's heart is?

[Kids reply] Jesus!

Jesus, from the bosom of the Father! This is His opinion of me. He says, "Peter, this is what I think of you," and He gives me His heart, Jesus. That's God's opinion of me. And you know what? That's God's opinion of you. He knows you, and He knows what you're worth.

So this is the point, try not to care so much about what everybody else thinks about you. What matters is what God thinks about you, and Jesus is what God thinks about you. That's how important you are.

So let's pray, God, thank you so much that you give us Jesus, and He has become your opinion of us. And so, Lord, help us not to care so much what kids at school think of us, what kids at work think of us, what kids at church think of us, but just what You think of us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, guys, you can go down to Kids on the Mount.

For the past four weeks, the news has been full of stories regarding Muslim outrage over some Danish cartoons printed last September.

A couple of weeks ago Palestinian gunmen kidnapped a German citizen. Some took over the E.U. offices. In Afghanistan 9 have died in protests. Norwegian and Danish embassies were burned in Syria. Iran is considering banning trade with any country that published the cartoons. Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan... the entire Muslim world is in a violent uproar.

I saw the cartoons on-line. To me they seemed incredibly mild. Yet Islamic tradition teaches against any images of God or his prophet, Mohammed, in order to prevent idolatry. Of course, they got that idea from the Old Testament.

Commandment #2: No graven images. Commandment #3: Don't take God's name in vain. Exodus 22:28, "Thou shalt not revile [make light of] God."

Like Paul said (Galatians 6:7), "God is not mocked."

On Monday, newspapers in Tehran launched a contest calling for Holocaust cartoons. Under the heading, "What Is the Limit of Western Freedom of Expression?"

That's a good question. I'm not sure what it is in the West. I'm not sure what it is in the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant. But what is it with us? That's a great question.

Does it bother us that Jesus is mocked? I mean the glory of Mohammed or Moses is nothing next to Jesus, but we don't seem to care.

In western media, Jesus is routinely turned into a joke... Hollywood comedies, cartoons like South Park. Tax dollars go to works like Andre Soreno's "Piss Christ."

Imagine if he made a "Piss Mohammed" or "Piss Moses."

Don't we care about a "Piss Christ?" What are our limits? When do we say, "Enough is enough?" And how far do we allow the liberal Hollywood media elites to go in depicting mockeries and reviling images of our Lord Jesus, the Christ?

I searched my memory and my files to find the worst instance of mockery and reviling portrayed in media, and I found it. This is shocking so brace yourself. But then ask yourself, "How far do we let this go?"

[Scenes from The Passion of the Christ are shown. Jesus is flogged. Soldiers place a scarlet robe on his back, a reed in his hand, and crown him with thorns. They mock and revile Him. The strange women,

Mary of Magdalene and mother Mary wipe up Christ's blood using white cloths that Mary has stacked in her arms. Pilate stands with Jesus before the crowd and says, "Behold the man."]

Look at Him. Well, that kind of turns the world on its head. For thousands of years, and three years in Jesus, God demonstrated His glory through power and miracles and then *this*.

Not only did they mock our Lord's glory... *this is* our Lord's glory: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

They mocked Jesus, yet the Lord is not mocked. How could that be?

Well, maybe *they mock*, but *God is not mocked* for in reality it's not a mockery but a glory.

For when was He crowned?

When was His robe dipped in blood (made scarlet with blood)?

When did He trample the winepress, making wine that is blood?

When did He receive the rod prophesied in Psalm 2, "with which He would dash the nations in pieces like a potter's vessel," for His Father says, "Ask of me, and I will give you the nations."?

When did the slaughtered Lamb ascend to the throne?

When was His glorious appearing?

Matthew 26:64, Jesus has just announced, "I tell you from now on [from this point forward] you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

John 1:14, "The Word become flesh and dwelt among us, full [like an earthen vessel] full of grace and truth; we have [*have*] beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . from His fullness we have received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus. No one has ever seen God; the only Son [the only God as some ancient manuscripts attest] from the bosom of the Father. He has made Him known" Glory from the heart of God.

1 Corinthians 2:8, "None of the rulers of this age [world, *aion* in Greek], none of them understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

When they crucified the Lord of glory, when they broke his earthen vessel,
 blood spilled out,
 mercy spilled out,
 judgment spilled out,
 glory spilled out
 Love from the bosom of the Father spilled out.

2 Corinthians 3, "If there was glory in the ministry of condemnation [that is, the Old Covenant], the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory."

Paul then says that that old glory now has no glory at all in the light of Christ's glory.

"And we all with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. . . For God. . . has shown in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels [jars of clay] to show the transcendent power belongs to God and

not to us.”

When Jesus is broken, He bleeds His glory into us. When we are cracked and broken by this world and our enemies, when we’re mocked and reviled, “blessed are we,” says Jesus, and we bleed His mercy, His glory into others.

You know, if an earthen vessel is emptied and filled fast enough, it’s no longer a clay pot, it’s a clay pipe (always emptying, always filling) that contains a river, a river of blood, river of life. It’s a blood vessel, blood vessel in the body of Christ. A conduit of unending glory.

So, do your worst, and we do His best... we bleed glory.

Do you see the glory? “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.”

That’s absurd to Mohammed. In the Koran (600 years after Christ), Mohammed claims Jesus is a prophet, but He didn’t bleed for us. That is, He didn’t die on that cross.

Mohammed could not see the glory in a God like that. Neither can Satan. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it.”

Last week, John Piper wrote this, “The work of Mohammed is based on being honored, and the work of Christ is based on being insulted. This produces two very different reactions to mockery.”

So you see, those Muslims over there in Palestine and Iraq, they just don’t get it. They don’t get it.

I wonder why they don’t get it? Maybe they need democracy. Democracy will save ‘em and save us. ‘Cause if they have democracy they’ll vote... vote to love Israel and honor America. Democracy will save us all!

Matthew 27:11-31, as far as I can tell, this is the only instance of democratic vote authorized by a legitimate political authority in all of scripture.

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called [Jesus] Barabbas.

Several ancient manuscripts read, “Jesus Barabbas.” So there’s a very good chance that “Jesus” was Barabbas’ first name. Jesus was a common name. It’s the Greek form of “Joshua.” Joshua, Jesus, means God is salvation,” or “savior.”

So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, [Jesus] Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, [in Greek, the righteous] for I have suffered much over him today in a dream.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified.” And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But

they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified." So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." [That's what the priests said to Judas.] All the people, [the "laos," which was commonly used to refer to God's people, the people of Israel... all the "laos"] answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Matthew 1:21, the angel says to Mary, "Call him Jesus for he will save the 'laos' of him from their sins."

How does He do that? With His blood! The people chant, "His blood be on us and our children." Maybe God is way gooder than you know. The blood is mercy and judgment. "They don't discern the body and so they drink judgment on themselves," but the judgment is mercy. It burns them. Old Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, but that judgment is mercy. God destroys our idols so we can be filled with Him.

Well, it's the unanimous vote of the people, "Crucify Jesus. We pick Barabbas." Barabbas means "son of the Father, Abba," or "son of the rabbi," "son of the teacher," teacher of the law... the knowledge of good and evil.

They voted for Barabbas.

Then he [Pilate] released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. [In case you thought the crowd that mocked and reviled Jesus was only Jewish, please note, this is a Roman battalion... normally 600 men.] And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

They took a vote. Jesus Messiah or Jesus Barabbas. Savior Messiah or savior Barabbas.

Five days earlier the crowd all chanted for Jesus Messiah saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord."

Of course, as Luke records, Jesus was weeping and saying, "You did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (Luke 19:44 NIV).

They saw but didn't see, and so now they chant "Barabbas. Give us savior Barabbas." Barabbas.

Does that make sense to you? Well, it would except that in the movie The Passion, they had the wrong guy cast as Barabbas. This is who they should have cast as Barabbas.

[image: Sylvester Stallone as John J. Rambo]

Matthew says Barabbas was "notorious." That means famous. This is John J. Rambo, and he's famous, wildly popular with the crowd.

Let me tell you, from the depth of my heart, I love John J. Rambo. When I saw the movie First Blood, sophomore year at C.U., when Rambo said, "They drew first blood. Captain, they drew first blood." I almost had a heart attack 'cause Rambo is so cool.

They drew blood; now he'll draw blood.

See, Rambo was a good guy, righteous guy... to a point. But once you crossed that line, once you went too far, all hell broke loose on the bad guys.

And if you ever saw the Rambo movie, you know Rambo battled for oppressed people. We call guys like that "revolutionaries" and "freedom fighters." Perhaps "terrorists," "insurrectionists" if we're on the other side.

Luke 23:19 tells us that Barabbas had been imprisoned for "insurrection" in the city. He was a violent insurrectionist. He was what the crowd expected Jesus to be, and he was exactly what Jesus refused to be:

A savior who would use the sword to drive out the infidel Romans, establish his worldly kingdom in this worldly Jerusalem defending ethnic Israel as God's only chosen and preferred people.

A savior who was merciful to a point, but when the enemy drew blood, he'd draw their blood in vengeance.

A savior who'd fulfill justice with vengeance upon his enemies.

A savior like Joshua in the old covenant conquering the land, like Mohammed in 600 A.D. capturing the nation of Islam, like John J. Rambo in 1982 in the cinemaplex fighting for the American dream.

Savior Barabbas or Savior Jesus:

Who said, "You've heard it said, 'Hate your enemies,' but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Who said, this very morning, "Put away your sword."

Who said on this very occasion, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from here."

Savior Jesus who fulfills justice by taking God's vengeance (His vengeance) on Himself, letting all hell break loose on Himself, allowing us to draw His blood and calling us to drink it.

Savior Jesus who triumphs over evil with mercy.

Who would you choose if you were part of an oppressed people group occupied by an evil and seemingly impervious alien oppressor?

Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Messiah?

[image: Rambo juxtaposed with a bloody and beaten Jesus being interviewed by Pilate in *The Passion of the Christ*]

Who would you choose if you were you?

Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Messiah?

I'm almost positive that had I been there I'd have picked Savior Barabbas. He would seem a lot more effective, a lot more glorious to me. And yet, I do believe scripture teaches *this* is Jesus' glorious appearing. [Peter points to the screen.]

[image: a bloody and beaten Jesus being interviewed by Pilate in *The Passion of the Christ*]

It doesn't mean he won't appear in other places and at other times, including the very last day in time. But it does mean that the cross is

the essence of God's glory,
 the judgment of this world,
 the victory over the evil one,
 the means through which God makes all things new,
 the manner in which the law and the prophets are fulfilled,
 the point at which the Lord cries, "It is finished."
 The revelation of His glory.

As Pilate walked Jesus out on the stone pavement of the temple, John records that he proclaimed, "Behold the Man."

This is the man, the perfect man, the ultimate Adam, perfect image of the invisible Creator, the Son of Man "seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven given dominion, glory, and an eternal kingdom." (Daniel 7:14)

This is the glorious appearing, and the crowd unanimously chants for Barabbas.

The glorious appearing... it made me think of the book titled, The Glorious Appearing, the last book of the Left Behind series. So I got it and read it this week. Let me read a bit...

Mac stole a glance behind him. He was bringing up the rear. "Lord, forgive me," he breathed, spraying his Uzi and dropping at least a dozen GC from behind. He felt no remorse. *All's fair...* It was only fitting, he decided, that the devil's crew were dressed in all black. *Live by the sword, die by the sword.* . . . God knew that eventually sinners would grow weary of their own poverty, but His patience had a limit. There came a time when enough was enough. . . .

Jesus appears on His flying white horse to help the tribulation force as they protect ethnic Jews and battle the enemy using high tech military armaments.

But when Jesus speaks scripture like, "Grace and truth came through me," the bodies of Global Community troops get ripped open and filleted. Their blood makes a river. Jesus' robe is dipped in that blood... not Lamb's blood, enemy blood.

He's going to fulfill Old Testament prophecy that He didn't the first time around. He's gonna capture the old city of Jerusalem, reinstate the stone temple and sit on His earthly throne in His worldly kingdom having expelled the Roman-ian anti-Christ from Jerusalem.

[Page 132, a woman comments,] "This is sure different from the last time Jesus came." (or aion)
 Apparently, God's gonna play this one out for all it's worth."

[Page 220, a pastor states,] “That’s Jesus. And He’s here now. That rod of iron sounds like He’s going to take no baloney from anybody.”

[Page 226] Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, and as those around them turned to run, they too were slain, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ. . . .

[Page 285] The conviction that shone in the eyes of Jesus was of one who had finally had enough.

He “had enough.”

“No more baloney.”

“His patience had a limit.”

What is the limit of God’s patience?

What is the limit of His mercy?

“Allah is merciful,” says the Koran, but he’s merciful to a point. Maybe Allah is patient and merciful to level five. Joshua and Moses were patient to, like what, level four? Krishna, he’s probably merciful to level six (I mean, they got the kama sutra and stuff like that). Jesus is best, so He must be merciful to, like, level 8, but then “enough is enough,” and He’ll kick your butt.

So I guess “the steadfast love of the Lord *does* cease,” and “His mercies *do* come to an end.”

Is God loving to a point? Gracious to a point? Or merciful to a point?

God *is* love. Is there a point where God stops being God?

It could only be like the point where Jesus (who is the Point) dies... but that’s the point. He dies on behalf of His enemies and for the sins of the whole world. He’s perfectly just and perfectly merciful.

And it’s not that He doesn’t come back, “parousia.” It’s not that He doesn’t appear, “epiphaneo.” It’s not that people aren’t destroyed by the epiphaneo of His parousia, the revelation of His glory (2 Thessalonians 1:9, 2:8).

It’s that His very glory *is* mercy. His glory *is* His mercy, not the thing that happens when His mercy comes to an end.

Well, obviously I have problems with the whole Left Behind series. It could be I’m jealous. I wrote a book on the Revelation, and it sold like 10 copies. Left Behind sold 60 million.

But more than that, I have numerous exegetical differences with the series. I think that view doesn’t take the Bible literally. (Now if you’re a big fan of the series, I don’t want you to be offended or feel stupid ‘cause the discussion is incredibly complicated and wonderful folks fall into every camp.)

But more than jealous and more than Biblical inaccuracies (which we all have), there’s something that genuinely troubles me, and it’s why I’m telling you this. That something is that when I read about Jesus in The Glorious Appearing, I find Him very appealing in a scary kind of way. I mean, Jesus on the flying war horse looks just like John Rambo. I mean, He looks just like Jesus Barabbas.

And I think, “My dear God, are we still voting for Barabbas?” And it’s not just the Left Behind crowd, but the *entire* crowd. I think we all pick Barabbas.

We vote for Barabbas. How could we see and not see, hear and not hear? How could we be so blind? Well, Barabbas is extremely popular with the crowd, any crowd.

“The crowd is like an envelope,” writes Kierkegaard, “one receives a large package and

thinks it's important, but look, it's a package of envelopes."

The crowd is fashion, and fashion is a large bundle of nothing.

This entire time many of you have been wondering, "Why is Peter wearing such a dorky tie?"

This was my dad's tie. He wore it in the 50's. In the 60's and 70's I remember thinking, "How could dad wear such a dorky tie. Everyone knows multi-colored, psychedelic ties are cool."

In the 80's I asked to borrow this tie because everyone knew that the multi-colored psychedelic ties that my dad was wearing were absurd.

That's fashion. We mistake it for beauty (which is truth, which is eternal). But fashion is a package of envelopes.

What if we get our theology the way we get our fashion... from the crowd? And so it seems beautiful and true, and yet it's nothing... a collection of clay pots in a clay pot containing nothing but air.

Paul writes that we were "all at one time the walking dead following the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air."

When we surrender ourselves to the crowd—the packet of envelopes containing nothing but air—we open ourselves to the prince of the power of the air. He inhabits the empty faith, the nothing of the crowd, and therefore, the something that is Jesus is never in fashion in this world.

The course of this world is toward the nothing, the darkness, the lie. It's to take and to consume so the first are first and the last are last. It's the survival of the fittest.

We say that explains life, but it explains the limitation of life. That explains death.

Love, sacrifice, mercy, "first last and last first"... giving explains life. That *is* life.

Life is not a crowd where all members (cells) are the same. That's an ooze.

Life's a body where each member is different, yet each member is obedient to the head.

So surrender to the crowd, and you're no longer connected to the head, nor the body. You're cut off, desecrated, in bondage to death.

"We are Christ's body and individually members, thereof." The head is Jesus, and Jesus is the truth.

Surrendering to the truth is freedom, which is faith, hope, and love. God's good choice in you. The presence of Jesus in you. The truth in you.

The truth sets you free, but in this world the truth hurts for as Kierkegaard says,

The crowd is, indeed, untruth. Man instinctively protects himself against truth and spirit by raising a cloud of numbers. If you want to be insured against having to deal with truth, with spirit, simply get together battalions, legions, millions who strive.

That is, get a crowd and start chanting.

We ask, "How could the Nazi's do that? How could terrorists do that? How could 1st century Romans and Jews do that?"

Easy. Get a crowd and start chanting, and then we abdicate our freedom, hide from truth, and invite the gods of nation, tribe, and mob—the powers of the air—to lead us.

Even as I've preached this week and last week, you've been tempted (as I'm tempted all the time), and so you ask, "Is Peter a progressive, conservative, Democrat, or Republican, fundamentalist, evangelical, or (God forbid) liberal?" You're tempted with the security of

groups, crowds, and parties. Tempted so that you won't ask the question, "But is this the truth?"

But you must ask that question, "Is Jesus Messiah, the Truth, the Righteous, the Beautiful One, the Glorious One?"

No one can ask it for you. Do not surrender that decision to the crowd. The crowd all, all voted against Jesus, the Truth.

Democracies have never ever saved a soul... only Jesus. And democracies cannot work unless individuals are surrendered to Truth. And so the greatest democratic political act you can achieve is to stop being partisan and share the Gospel with anyone and everyone.

Galatians 5:20 says, "The work of the flesh is a party spirit." I used to think that meant, like, smoking weed or MTV, but it doesn't. It means like Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative. It means defining yourself by your group, your tribe, your party, your crowd, rather than by Jesus—the Truth and the Life.

And now, if you're tracking with me, you should be thinking, "Hey, isn't the church a crowd? Isn't the church a mob? A tribe?"

Yes, sometimes, yes. Tragically, yes... inquisitions, crusades, politics, and power. The "laos" of God, the people of God, can become a crowd, the mob.

We get together and chant, "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord," and no one asks, "Which Lord?"

We get together and chant, "Glory, glory, glory," and no one asks, "Which glory?"

When Jon and Elizabeth were little, I took them to a Rockies game at the old Mile High Stadium. They loved it! The lights, the crowds, the noise, the chanting, the pizza. We got our pizza, found our seats. They were eating their pizza and yelling with the crowd, caught up in the collective effervescence of the mob when suddenly Jonathon stopped and yelled, "Daddy, Daddy, look! There's men playing baseball down there!" I said, "Hey, yeah, what do ya know!" Then, they finished their pizza and said, "Okay, we can go."

Every now and then, stop chanting in church and say to yourself, "Hey, look! There's a Man down there hanging on a cross, bleeding for me!"

He wants you to look at Him, connect to Him, be defined by Him, not the crowd. When we do that Truth connects to us, and the Spirit of mercy enters us...

And the mob becomes a body,
Each member different, but each coordinated by the head.

And the chant becomes a symphony.

Each a different note, but all in harmony, in tune.

And the crowd becomes the Church.

On Pentecost, tongues of fire, the Spirit of God descended on the crowd, and they didn't chant. They spoke in hundreds of different languages, and yet all in tune. All Gospel, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

The crowd became the church. The mob became the body of Christ, blood vessels of Christ, Holy Grail, Bride of Christ, Mother Church, the Strange Woman... remember her?

They all voted against Jesus... except one. She wasn't part of the crowd. She was a strange woman.

Pilate's wife. She had a dream, a prophetic dream, a revelation, and she knew in her heart Jesus was "the Righteous." She surrendered to the Truth in her heart.

There's the coolest scene in that movie, The Passion. As Jesus is being flogged, Pilate's wife (the pagan, strange woman) approaches Mary Magdalene (the Jewish, ex-prostitute, strange woman) and Mary, Christ's mother (the strange woman Mother Church). The three of them are not a mob—but a Body, the Bride, the Church.

Pilate's wife hands them white cloths with which they wipe up the blood of Jesus. His blood is precious to them. They are each uniquely emptied earthen vessels, Holy Grails, yearning for

His blood,
 His life,
 His love,
 His mercy to fill them.

We each must *individually* surrender our vessels to His mercy, or we can never be His body and His Bride.

We each must surrender to the eternal Word—the logos, that is Jesus—by surrendering to His Rhema, Word, His Word, alone in our hearts.

Don't surrender your choice, your faith, to the crowd. Take time to read scripture (not just people's opinions about scripture) and call on the Living Word to guide you. Seek and you will find.

Don't just chant what everybody chants. Don't just say what everybody says. Jesus loves *you* and longs to fill *you* and yearns to hear *you*.

He doesn't want a mob of uniformed religious robots. Satan does, but not Jesus. He wants *you*.

On judgment day, He doesn't ask, "Why were you not Moses? Why were you not Peter or Paul?" But maybe, "Why were you not *you* filled with Me? The pattern of our emptiness becomes the pattern of His substance in those earthen vessels of clay. Christ in us. Your clay jar filled with Jesus.

We each must surrender to Him and not the crowd or we'll find ourselves worshipping the "prince of the power of the air," the god of nation, mob, clan, and tribe. We'll find ourselves chanting for Jesus Barabbas and totally miss the glorious appearing.

The crowd picked Barabbas. He's entirely familiar. He's common sense; the way people are; what boys do. He's the way of this world, this *aion*. He's just like Mohammed, Osama, John Rambo, and the rest. They're all the same, just with different slogans on their t-shirts.

But Jesus, He's strange to the core. He's holy. He's entirely unfamiliar to the crowd, and yet He's made Himself familiar to you. ("His sheep hear His voice." Maybe they can't understand all the words, but they know His voice. It's familiar.) He's made Himself familiar to you, like bread and wine that nourishes you from inside out.

He's there when you turn off the TV and kiss your wife.

He's there when you sacrifice your honor, prestige, and position and say, "I'm sorry," or "I forgive."

He's there when you pull your car out of the traffic, walk up to the guy on the corner (that you think is trying to con you), look him in the eye, and say, "Hey man, could I buy you some

coffee?”

He's there in the last and least of these His brethren.

He's there in those mocked and reviled by the crowd.

He's there when they persecute you or utter all manner of evil against you.

He's there and what's He doing?

He's preparing to invade this world with His eternal kingdom of mercy as you choose to love, to bleed, to forgive your enemies. It's the glorious appearing.

And then the rider on the white horse goes riding. He's the Word, far more than a guy on a magical, physical horse. He conquers.

The crowd all, all voted for Jesus Barabbas, yet Jesus Messiah conquered:

He conquered as they crowned Him with thorns, and the 24 elders “cast their crowns before Him in the heavens” (the slaughtered Lamb on the throne).

He conquered as they placed the reed in His hand, a mockery turned to mercy with which He breaks the principalities of this world like a potter's vessel.

He conquered as they laughed and placed the robe on His back, a robe dipped in blood... His blood.

He conquered as His “laos,” His people cried, “His blood be on us and our children,” and His blood splattered them as it did the Israelites long ago, but not old covenant blood (the blood of sheep and goats), eternal covenant blood as prophesied.

He conquered as He trampled the wine press outside the city, as He hung on a cross and bled blood that is wine, and the blood formed a river and covered the nation, then flowed to Rome and conquered Rome, and over the sea, and into this room.

They mocked, but God is not mocked.

He turns their mockery into mercy.

And conquers the world.

That's glory.

Don't follow the crowd. Follow Him.

On the night that He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body, which is given to you. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me. My body.”

And in the same way after supper, having given thanks He took the cup, and He said, “This is my blood of the covenant, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

And so we invite you to come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread and dip it in the cup. The black cups are wine. The purple cups are juice. They're both blood.

We come to the table as a crowd,
but we're to leave as a church.

We come as a mob,
We're to leave as a body.

Don't just do this 'cause your neighbor does
 or it seems right
 or you're an American
 or it's the suggestion of the moral majority.

Do this because you discern the body,
 and you surrender to His glory.

Come and worship, strange woman.

You are the King of glory, Lord. You are the King of glory. You have many crowns of glory, don't You? For You are the Word who was with God and was God and through whom all things were made that have been made. You have a crown of glory for that. You spoke the stars into existence. You speak them into existence even now, all things upheld by Your word of power. You have crowns of glory, many crowns of glory and the elders fall before Your throne, Father, and they crown You with those crowns of glory. And then You have another crown. God, it's my favorite crown. All those other crowns had to come first, didn't they before we could see it? Before Your children could see it... crown of thorns, glory from Your heart, that You died and bled for me.

Oh, and You're here aren't You? You are here because You said You'd be. We can't see You with physical eyes. We're gonna get eyes to see You, but right now we can see You with the eyes of faith, can't we, Jesus? And I think this is what You're doing, You're kneeling in front of each one of us, and You're saying to us, "Would You crown Me?" That's how good You are, how humble You are.

And so, strange woman, let's crown Him with praise, right now. Amen.

[The worship band plays...]

"Crown Him With Many Crowns"

© Public Domain CCLI No. 62700

Crown Him with many crowns,
 The Lamb upon His throne.
 Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
 All music but its own!
 Awake, my soul and sing
 Of Him who died for Thee;
 And hail Him as thy matchless King
 Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Son of God
 Before the worlds began
 And ye who tread where He has trod
 Crown Him the Son of Man
 Who every grief hath known

That wrings the human breast
And takes and bears them for His own
That all in Him may rest

Crown Him the Lord of peace
Whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole that wars may cease
Absorbed in prayer and praise
His reign shall know no end
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend
Their fragrance ever sweet

Crown Him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave.
Who rose victorious in the strife,
For those He came to save.
His glories now we sing,
Who died and rose on high.
Who died eternal life to bring,
And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of love:
Behold His hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above,
In beauty glorified;
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends His wondering eye
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of heaven,
Enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him to whom the name is given
The wondrous name of love
Crown Him with many crowns
As thrones before Him fall,
Crown him, ye kings, with many crowns,
For He is King of all.

And now in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, may you follow Him and not the crowd. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you'd like prayer, we have a prayer ministry team. They'd love to pray with you. They'll be down front at the end of the service, which is now.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

“For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person

according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. . . . Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. . . . When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.” . . . Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Matthew 16:27-28, 24:30-35, 25:31, 26:64 (ESV)

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. [Luke 23:19, John 18:40] So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!” So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” [Matthew 1:21, Exodus 24:1-8, Isaiah 52:15-53:12, Hebrews 9:18-22] Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him [Hebrew 9:19, Revelation 19:13], and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” [Zechariah 3:8-9, Zechariah 6:11-12, Hebrews 2:9, Exodus 22:28, Psalm 22:1-8, Galatians 6:7] And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:11-31 (ESV)

Everything that needs numbers in order to become significant is by that very fact insignificant. Everything that can be arranged, executed, completed only with the help of numbers, the sum of which startles people in amazement, as if this were something important—precisely this is unimportant. The truly important is inversely related, needs a progressively smaller and smaller number to implement its completion. And for the most important of all, that which sets heaven and earth in motion, only one person is needed.

Soren Kierkegaard

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (ESV)

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 (ESV)

For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. . . . And we all,

with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. . . . For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

2 Corinthians 3:9-11, 3:18, 4:6-7 (ESV)

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory?

Romans 9:22-23 (ESV)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. . . . Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

John 2:23-25, 6:15 (ESV)

The crowd is like an envelope. One receives a large package, thinks it is something important, but look, it is a package of envelopes.

Soren Kierkegaard

A society which becomes democratic in ethos as well as in constitution is doomed. And not much loss either.

C.S. Lewis

The crowd is indeed untruth. Christ was crucified because he would have nothing to do with the crowd (even though he addressed himself to all). He did not want to form a party, an interest group, a mass movement, but wanted to be what he was, the truth, which is related to the single individual. Therefore everyone who will genuinely serve the truth is by that very fact a martyr. To win a crowd is no art; for that only untruth is needed, nonsense, and a little knowledge of human passions. But no witness to the truth dares to get involved with the crowd. His work is to be involved with all people, if possible, but always individually, speaking with each and every person on the sidewalk and on the streets—in order to split apart.

Soren Kierkegaard

We prefer to “be part of a group,” and to “form a party,” for if we are part of a group it means goodnight to conscience. We cannot be two or three, a “Miller Brothers and Company” around a conscience. No, no. The only thing the group secures is the abolition of conscience.

Soren Kierkegaard

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit. . .

Galatians 5:19-20 (RSV)

For the great concern of these miserable creatures is not that every individual should find something to worship that he personally considers worthy of worship, but that they should find something in which they can all believe and which they can all worship in common, it is essential that it should be *in common*. . . I tell you once more that man has no more pressing, agonizing need than the need to find someone to whom he can hand over as quickly as possible the gift of freedom.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karmozov*

Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others—fresh and ever fresh news of the “My God” whom each finds in Him whom all praise as “Our God.”

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV)

In every generation the people of God is offered two Jesuses, one of whom is a popular, nationalistic, hate-the-enemy Liberator. . . The contribution of the Barabbas story is its teaching the church her main trial in every age: her interpretation of Jesus.

Fredrick Dale Bruner, *The Church Book*

Mac stole a glance behind him. He was bringing up the rear. “Lord, forgive me,” he breathed, spraying his Uzi and dropping at least a dozen GC from behind. He felt no remorse. *All’s fair...* It was only fitting, he decided, that the devil’s crew were dressed in all black. *Live by the sword, die by the sword.* . . . God knew that eventually sinners would grow weary of their own poverty, but His patience had a limit. There came a time when enough was enough. . . ~ As Rayford slowly made his way down to the desert plains, though he had to concentrate on missing craters and keeping from hitting splayed and filleted bodies of men and women and horses, Jesus still appeared before his eyes—shining, magnificent, powerful, victorious. ~ And that sword from His mouth, the powerful Word of God itself, continued to slice through the air, reaping the wrath of God’s final judgment. The enemy had been given chance after chance, judgment after judgment to convince and persuade them. To this very minute, God had offered forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, salvation. But except for that now-tiny remnant of Israel that was seeing for the first time the One they had pierced, it was too late. . . . ~ That’s Jesus. And He’s here now. That rod of iron sounds like He’s going to take no baloney from anybody, doesn’t it? ~ I heard that. ~ Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, and as those around them turned to run, they too were slain, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ. . . . ~ The conviction that shone in the eyes of Jesus was of one who had finally had enough.

Tim La Haye and Jerry Jenkins, *The Glorious Appearing*

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end.

Lamentations 3:22 (ESV)

Ever since there have been such things as novels, the world has been flooded with bad fiction for which the religious impulse has been responsible. The sorry religious novel comes about when the writer supposed that because of his belief, he is somehow dispensed from the obligation to penetrate concrete reality. He will think that the eyes of the Church or of the Bible or of his particular theology have already done the seeing for him and that his business is to rearrange this essential vision into satisfying patterns, getting himself as little dirty in the process as possible.

Flannery O’Connor, *Novelist and Believer*