

What Shall We Do With Jesus? [Matthew 27:22]

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*Pilate said to them, **A**Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?* [NRSV]

This, one of the holiest days of Lent is an important time in the liturgical year for us to study and ponder our personal relationship with Jesus in order that we may be prepared spiritually, mentally, and emotionally to celebrate Easter. This evening I invite you to place yourself before Pilate for a few minutes because I think Pilate is still with us today.

A few years ago, a newspaper had an article entitled, What Shall We Do With The Atom? The writer claimed this was the most urgent question to be resolved. The atomic age had forced humanity into the valley of decision, compelling each person to choose between life or death; racial annihilation or unparalleled prosperity; or a tremendous new lease on life.

When the first atomic bomb was exploded out in the Pacific Ocean in history's most momentous experiment, it was prophetically called: *Operation Crossroads*. Thus, the question: *What shall we do with the atom?* There is however a more urgent and crucial question for us today watching our global village spin out of control in so many places and in so many ways. It is Pilate's question to those who will hear it. If ever a person stood at the crossroads, it was Pontius Pilate. He was an unwilling, yet the principal actor in the greatest cosmic drama of the Crucifixion of God's Son. He articulated his dilemma with the memorable words: *Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?*

As it is impossible to ignore the impact of the atomic age and the choice thrust upon humanity, is the same where Christ is concerned. There is an easy casual assumption on the part of millions who dismiss Jesus as though He had never lived or died or rose again. Even history is split over His coming but as is our custom, we will use the date 2018 to order our lives. The truth is that you cannot ignore the fact of Christ, any more than you can ignore the fact of the atom. Jesus is invincible and inescapable. I cannot run or hide from Him. We know Adam tried. He is and will always be there to confront us in judgment and mercy. Hear His words that echo across the ages to everyone of us, *I am with you always*. The question of Pilate also echoes down through the centuries and demands an answer from every individual.

Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? [KJ]

I want to suggest that there are four answers open to us:

1. There is the answer of rejection.
2. There is the answer of neutrality.
3. There is the answer of admiration.
4. There is the answer of surrender.

1. **The answer of rejection:** *They all said unto him, Let him be crucified.*

Who are *they*? *They*, are ordinary people like you and me, some clever, some emotional, some patriots, some bloodthirsty, some hypocrites and some religious. It was the human attitude of pride, fear, lust, and self-love expressing themselves on religious, social, and political levels as they rejected the Son of God and said, *crucify him*. That shout is heard today. The anti-god

philosophy did not lessen when the iron curtain came apart or when the Berlin wall came down. Some see it as clever and smart to deride Christ and Christianity, and as they do, they continue to say, *let him be crucified*. To reject Christ is spiritual suicide. To turn your back on God is to judge yourself. Also involved are the attitudes to life and its responsibilities; death and its mysteries; eternity and its issues. *What shall I do then with Jesus* might be more correctly asked, *What will Jesus do with me?*

2. **The answer of neutrality:** Pilate was concerned. Obviously, he was moved and challenged by Jesus and he searched desperately for an honorable way out of his predicament. He could prevent the crucifixion of Jesus, BUT! And at what risk to himself? He took neutrality as he washed his hands and declared his innocence. Many people still give this answer today. We see our churches empty. This does not mean that the average decent citizen is anti-Christian, they just stay away, because? Spiritually they are neither for nor against Jesus, they simply do not want to get involved. Many say they believe but they haven't got time to be involved in God stuff. It is the same of our society as throughout history, no complication of making a choice.

What shall I do with Jesus? Why, nothing. After all, I am neutral. Pilate said he did nothing and did not take sides but he delivered Jesus to be executed. Therefore history has judged him that he was indeed involved. Therefore, when it comes to Christ there is no such position as, neutrality. God's Word demands that you be either hot or cold, for if you be neither, He will spit you out! In other words, have nothing to do with you.

3. **The answer of admiration:** Pilate finished with Jesus then the soldiers took him, mocked him, humiliated him, and crucified him. It was a terrible death with pain and degradation, yet Jesus reigned from the Tree. There is nothing in any other literature to compare the magnificence of His Passion. Then those who stood by admired him said, *truly this man was the Son of God*.

Jesus has always had his admirers to the point that some have even become a cult such as the Unitarians. And as the crowd comes to Him, He continues to say, *You are not far from the Kingdom of God*. This is not a threat. It is the truth that needs to be reckoned with. Christ does not ask for flattery but that we follow. Admiration must become adoration. Therefore, one must make a choice, either he was a mere man or he is the Saviour, God of Gods, Emmanuel. He proved that you can kill him as a man or you can fall on your knees and worship Him.

3. **The answer of surrender:** The enemies of Jesus thought they had settled the issue when they sealed him away behind the stone. How wrong they were! The poet wrote,

*All alone, alone, alone,
He rose again behind the stone.*

Since then men and women in every century have been committed to the Risen Christ.

There is a story about St. Brendan, the pagan King of Brude. The King had heard about Christ and asked the Saint, *What shall I find if I accept your Gospel and become*

Christ's man? And the servant replied, *If you accept this Gospel and become Christ's man, you will stumble upon wonder, upon wonder and every wonder true.* Ten thousand times, thousands say the same. We preach what we have discovered and experienced. The sheer glory of the new life in Christ moves our hearts to worship and fires our wills to do His service.

Beyond surrender to Christ we have found a wonderful companionship. The unseen companionship of a living friend whose love never lets us go, never lets us down and loves us more. The strong God, immortal love who continually reinforces our weakness and makes us more than conquerors. Beyond surrender to Christ we have found a wonderful adventure, a cause that captures all our scattered energies, releases our latent possibilities and is worthy of our utmost devotion and sacrifice. Beyond surrender to Christ we have found a wonderful hope, the hope of the Kingdom of God, consummated and triumphant. The hope of a life beyond death in which these personalities of ours will realize fulfillment in the eternity where Christ reigns forever.

In these exciting and demanding days of expectation we must have nothing to do with shoddy compromises, indecision, and half-hearted commitment of a conventional religiosity. Accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Give him the throne of your life. Make the experiment of faith: *What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ in this day of my life?*

**Reign over me, Lord Jesus
O Make my heart Thy throne:
It shall be Thine, dear Savior
It shall be Thine alone.**

**O come and reign, Lord Jesus,
Rule over everything
And keep me always loyal
And true to Thee my King.
And then, wonder upon wonder,
and every wonder true! Amen.**

Let us pray. Hope is stronger than memory
Salvation is stronger than sin.
Forgiveness is stronger than bitterness.
Reconciliation is stronger than the bloodied cross.
The Risen Lord is stronger than the dead Jesus.
We are called to be an Easter people.
We are a people of hope.
We are the people of the empty tomb, The Risen Lord,
The new life in Christ.
(adapted from a prayer, Kennon L. Callahan)

