



We continued this Sunday in our Lent series in Matthew. Following on the heels of last week's passage, we saw Jesus carted from Gethsemane to Caiaphas (the high priest) who hosted a night-time gathering of the Sanhedrin to determine that Jesus was a blasphemer who deserved death (26v57-68). We also saw Peter deny knowing Jesus three times (26v69-75), and Judas take his own life in remorse at what he had done (27v3-10). We looked at the three key people/groups:

1 – See a kangaroo court who pull off their plot (26v57-68)

There is no pretense at justice in this Jewish 'trial'. The Sanhedrin want evidence to convince the Roman court that Jesus should be sentenced to death (v59). Eventually, they find two (false) witnesses whose statements agree, claiming that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple himself (v60-61). Jesus' words in v64 only add to this picture. They brand Jesus a blasphemer (v65), abuse him (v67-68) and have him sent to Pilate (27v1-2). This is a travesty of justice.

It seems that the Jewish leaders hardened in opposition against Jesus because he challenged them, named their sin, and called them to repent. Sadly, they knew that the only way to get rid of Jesus' message was to get rid of Jesus.

2 – See two failed followers for whom it all ends in tears (26v69-27v10)

Sitting out in the courtyard, three times Peter is recognised as someone who has been with Jesus (v69-74). He denies this with increasing vehemency until he hears the cock crow and flees in tears (v75). Was fear his motivation?

Matthew then tells us of a grim scene involving Judas that is recorded in no other gospel. Filled with remorse, Judas tries to return both the money and the responsibility for Jesus' death onto the shoulders of the chief priests (v3-4). When they refuse to let him shift the blame, he in despair kills himself (v4-5).

Matthew wants us to compare these two men. Both sinned terribly, but only one came back to God (as Matthew hints at by his inclusion of Peter in the 11 who met Jesus in 28v16). Judas regretted what he had done, but he did not let that sorrow, shame and guilt bring him back to God. This is a tragedy and a warning.

3 – See the silent Son of Man who now sits on the throne (26v62-64)

Although he is mentioned many times in the passage, Jesus does almost nothing! He is described as doing only two things:

1 – he stays silent in response to the two witnesses' false testimony of v61-63

Why? Because he resolved in Gethsemane that it was his Father's will for him to go to the cross, and so he does not want to defend himself against these lies. He will go silently like a sheep before its shearers (Isaiah 53v7)

2 – he speaks with astonishing boldness and clarity in response to Caiaphas' question (v63-64)

Why? Because he wants to show what is really going on. He is not just some 'earthly' Messiah or powerful Son-of-God-king-in-the-line-of-David (2 Samuel 7v14), he is Daniel's Son of Man (7v13-14) who at his resurrection will be given all *heavenly* authority over all things for all of eternity. This scene is not what we might first think. It is Jesus who holds *all* the power here. What a God we have!

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Why do you think the Jewish leaders were *so* opposed to Jesus?
→ How do we see similar attitudes expressed towards Jesus in society today?
2. What do Peter and Judas have in common, and how do they differ?
→ What is the difference between 'godly' and 'worldly' sorrow (2 Cor 7v10)?
→ Why do we find it so tempting to blame others for our sin?
→ What comfort can we take from Peter's experience?
3. Why do you think Jesus stayed silent in v63?
→ How does this fill us with awe, wonder and worship for him?
4. Why do you think Jesus spoke in v64, and why did he say what he said?
→ How do Jesus' few words here transform this scene?
→ How can what we see of Jesus here help and encourage us as we struggle?