

## **Good Friday 2017**

### ***Pilate***

Pilate was having a hard time.

Governing Judea should have been a relatively straightforward matter. You dispense justice. You execute criminals. And everyone does what they are told. Everyone is happy.

But the Jewish leaders were not happy. They were not happy about that odd little man, Jesus of Nazareth. What was difficult for Pilate was that they wanted to involve him. In fact they wanted him to execute him. And Pilate was blown if he could see that he should. It wasn't his problem.

But Jesus did not help. Every time Pilate asked him a straightforward question Jesus was evasive, ambiguous. It was a difficult political dilemma. And then he had an idea. He could wriggle out of it. Why hadn't he thought of this solution before? It was a masterstroke! He would hold a referendum! And the people could not fail to give the right answer. When the people were faced with freeing a notorious criminal and Jesus of Nazareth, whom the crowds idolized, who could doubt the outcome? And Pilate would move on with his reputation enhanced as a masterly political dealer.

And the people gave the wrong answer.

Give us Barabbas they shouted. John 18:40

Pilate's blood went cold.

I don't think Pilate was a bad man. In fact he knew what was right. The questions he asks are simple and straightforward:

What accusation do you bring against this man? John 18:30  
Are you the King of the Jews? John 18:34  
What have you done? John 18:35  
So you are a king? John 18:37

Neither the Jewish leaders nor Jesus give straight answers. But Pilate gives a straight verdict

I find no case against him John 18:39

It is not clear what happens next. Do the crowds begin to jeer? Do the Jewish leaders whisper vaguely threatening comments in his ear:

What if this were to get back to Caesar?  
Do you want to be responsible for a riot?

John's Gospel leaves the question quite unresolved. But what he does make quite clear is that having pronounced Jesus not guilty, Pilate then passes the matter over to the crowd

Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?'  
John 18:39

He passes the buck. He knows what is right. And he does not do it.

N Clews  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2017