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[0:00] If you would please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 23. Luke 23. If you're using one of the Pew Bibles, that's page 1639. Luke 23. If you had the opportunity to be with us last night as part of our Maundy Thursday service, you know that we looked at what we call today the Last Supper.

Jesus' final Passover meal with his disciples where he instituted the Lord's Table, communion, as a reminder of his blood-bought covenant with his people. Earlier tonight, Billy read to us from Luke chapter 23, verses 26 through the end of the chapter, recounting the crucifixion and the death of Jesus. But you may be wondering, how did we get from last night's Passover meal, the Last Supper, how did we get to the cross? How did we get to the point of Christ's death?

So what I'd like to do tonight is just briefly review together the events that took place between the Passover and on through Christ's death. And what I want you to be doing is looking for the different responses to Jesus. I want you to be listening for how different people respond to Christ. And ultimately, I'd like you to ask yourself, what is my response to Jesus?

So in Luke chapter 22, the Passover meal, the last meal that the disciples had with Jesus, we focused upon that last night, Christ instituting his covenant with his people. Well, after that, Christ and the disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. Christ went into the garden, as he was often known to do, and he stayed up all night long to pray. You see, Jesus knew what was coming. Jesus was under tremendous emotional strain. Jesus was fighting an internal spiritual battle. Jesus was literally feeling the weight of the sin of the world upon his shoulders. And he went out to the garden to pray.

His disciples, they fell asleep. They didn't understand the significance. They were tired. And after that, Jesus is arrested. And the soldiers come. They take him away. They take him to the high priest's house. And Luke chapter 22 then alternates between Peter's denial of Christ and Christ before the religious leaders. And that brings us now to Jesus's trial, conviction, and ultimately his execution at the end of chapter 22. Look at verse 54, if you would. Luke 22, 54 says, Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. Skip ahead to verse 63.

[3:15] Verse 63 says, Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, Prophecy, who is it that struck you? And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council. And they said, If you are the Christ, if you are the Messiah, the anointed, the promised one, tell us.

And he said to them, If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

So they all said, Are you the Son of God then? And he said, You say that I am. Then they said, What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.

All right, so as we are working our way through this passage, as we are looking for various responses to Christ, let's look at the response of the religious leaders, starting with the temple guards.

Who did they say that Jesus was? Who did they treat Jesus as? What did they treat Jesus as?

Well, the temple guards blindfolded him. They mockingly asked him to prophecy who it was that was beating him. According to the temple guards, Jesus is a guessing game. According to the other religious leaders, according to the high priest, Jesus was a blasphemer. Jesus accepted their label that they gave to him as the Son of God. He didn't deny it. And therefore, they said, We've heard all we need. Jesus is a blasphemer. Now, what irony do we see here? These people, these religious leaders, the Jewish high priests and the guard, were blaspheming Jesus, and yet they were

accusing him of blasphemy. Let me ask you a question. Why is it that God commanded his people to sacrifice? Why is it that God established the tabernacle and later the temple and the entire priestly system? What was the purpose of the high priest? Well, ultimately, it was to point God's people to the coming Messiah. The high priest's whole purpose was to point God's people to the coming high priest, Jesus himself, and yet that high priest was denying that the Son of God was who he was and was accusing Jesus himself of blasphemy. Jesus was beaten, Jesus was mocked, and Jesus was turned over to the local political and governmental leaders to be ultimately executed. Let's look now at Luke chapter 23.

[6:26] Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate, and they began to accuse him, saying, We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king. And Pilate, the local governmental leader, asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? And he, Jesus, answered him, You have said so. Then Pilate said to the chief priests in the crowds, I find no guilt in this man. But they were urgent, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea and Galilee, even to this place. When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man, Jesus, was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. So let's ask ourselves, what was Pilate's response to Jesus? Pilate, hearing the accusations of the Jewish leaders, ultimately decided that Jesus,

Jesus is insignificant. He doesn't really matter. He doesn't bother me. He doesn't affect my power. He doesn't affect my position. I see no problem with him. Let's just leave him be. According to Pilate, Jesus is insignificant. He's nothing to worry about. He's not a big deal. But the Jewish leaders kept insisting. And so Pilate ultimately found a loophole so that he wouldn't have to be bothered by this insignificant man, this insignificant Jesus. And he said, Oh, you said Jesus is a Galilean? Okay, well, I am not the person then to deal with this. The person you're looking for, his name is Herod.

He is around the corner, two doors down on the left. That's the man that you need to talk to. And it's almost as if being on a phone call and being transferred from one person to another person to another person because nobody wants to deal with the problem. That's what was going on here. And so Herod ultimately saw Jesus. Luke 23, verse 8. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he long desired to see him because he heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he, Jesus, made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing him, and Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt, and they mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, they sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this, they had been at enmity with each other. What is Herod's response to this man, this Jesus? Oh, he was excited to see Jesus, but he said that Jesus is a magician.

Jesus is a miracle worker. Jesus is some sort of a novelty who can entertain me. I hope he does a trick for me. Jesus is a magician. Or later, he says Jesus is a joke. He says he's a king. Fine.

[9:44] Give him a kingly robe. Give him a fancy garment that fits his supposed position. And he sends Jesus back to Pilate wearing this royal kingly robe. And Pilate, well, he thought that this joke was so funny that, according to verse 12, these men who had formerly been not, they had not worked well together, they were fighting against each other. After this day, these men, Pilate and Herod, became friends. Because Jesus, Jesus is a joke. Jesus, he's a magician.

Jesus, he's insignificant. He's not a big deal. He's nothing to worry about. So back in front of Pilate once again, Pilate continues to not see any threat. Pilate continues to not recognize the significance of Jesus. Nothing to worry about. Not a threat. Not a big deal. But the Jewish leaders kept insisting. And Pilate didn't want to have to deal with this insignificant man. But he also didn't want this insignificant man to cause further problems down the road. So what did he do? He gave in to their demands. And that leads us to the passage that Billy read for us tonight. Luke 23, verse 26.

And they led him away and seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming up, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. You see, at this point, Jesus had been up for several days. Jesus had not had any sleep. Jesus was beaten and whipped and mocked and falsely accused.

Jesus was weak and weary. And he couldn't even carry his own crossbeam. So they conscripted this other man, Simon, to carry it for him. Verse 27.

And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them, Jesus said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. All right, so what is the crowd's reaction to Jesus? Here's Jesus now, convicted of a capital crime, headed to the hillside called the Skull, Golgotha, headed to Mount Calvary.

[12:11] Another two weeks to carry his own cross. These women, the crowds, they're gathering around him. And what do they say? What is their reaction to Jesus? They say, Jesus, well, Jesus is in trouble.

He is somebody to mourn over, somebody to weep over, somebody to worry about. They don't recognize the ultimate strength and power that Jesus has. They don't recognize that Jesus, throughout this entire process, is ultimately in control. These people see Jesus as being in trouble. And yet, Jesus turns to them and says, don't worry about me. You need to worry about yourself. The day is coming when, here he's prophesying Jerusalem's ultimate destruction and the destruction of the temple, and ultimately their own destruction when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Jesus says, don't worry about me. You need to worry about yourselves. All right, let's look at another reaction in verse 32. The soldier's reaction. Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him.

And the criminals, one on his right hand and one on his left. And Jesus said, father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they, the soldiers, they cast lots to divide Jesus's garments. And the people stood by watching, and the rulers scoffed at him, saying, he saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ, the Son of God, his chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, saying, if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. There was also an inscription over him, this is the king of the Jews. What is the soldier's reaction here to Jesus? Well, they simply see Jesus as some type of a gambling game, dividing up his garments, rolling the dice. Who's going to win Jesus's fancy robe? This is all just one big joke. Jesus is a gambling game. Jesus is a joke. Jesus is weak and powerless, and he can't save himself.

Ultimately, the soldiers did not recognize or understand who Jesus was. Scripture talks about two criminals, legitimate criminals, murderers and thieves who were being executed on either side of Jesus. Look at verse 39, Luke 23 verse 39. One of the criminals who were hanged railed against him, saying, are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other, the other criminal, rebuked him, saying, do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he, Jesus, said to him, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. Two criminals, two responses. Who is

[15:46] Jesus? Well, one said, Jesus is a fake. He said that he can save himself. But look at us, look at us. We're stuck here on the cross. He can't save himself. He can't save us. Jesus is a fake. The other one said, no, Jesus is a sinless savior. Jesus is innocent. We are guilty, but he is innocent. Let's keep moving on here. Verse 44, Luke 23. It was now about the sixth hour, according to the Jewish way of reckoning time, that would have been about 12 noon. And there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, about three in the afternoon, when the sun's light faded. So what's the response here that we're looking at? Not a person's response. We're looking at the earth's response. We're looking at creation's response. Now, you may realize that Easter is one of those holidays that fluctuates throughout the year. Some years it's earlier in the year, some years it's later in the year. And the reason is because

Easter is closely associated with the Jewish Passover. And the Passover is one of those fluctuating feasts that is closely tied into the full moon. And so just an interesting point here to note, it is scientifically impossible for there to be a solar eclipse at the same time of the month that there is a full moon. And so something miraculous was happening here. God did something to turn out the lights. Our passage here, verse 45, says,

The sun's light failed. The earth was dark. The creation was responding to Christ's death by saying, This Jesus is the creator. He is the one who has created everything. He is the one who is sustaining everything.

And as Christ was dying, the light faded and died as well. Let's continue looking at verse 45, the second half there. And the curtain of the temple was torn into. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, he breathed his last. What's the response we're looking for here? The response of the temple. The response of the holy of holies. The response is, who is Jesus? Jesus is the true high priest.

Jesus is the only mediator that can make things right between sinful people and a sinless God. Jesus is the true high priest. And the curtain was torn from top to bottom in two, no longer needing the sacrificial system that was ultimately pointing to Christ.

[18:55] No longer needing the high priest that was ultimately representing and reminding us of our need for Christ. What was the temple's response? Jesus is the true high priest.

Let's look at verse 47. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God saying, Certainly this man was innocent.

This centurion, this soldier, not even named here, an insignificant, unnamed soldier, yet God opened his eyes to the truth.

And he said, who is Jesus? Well, Jesus is innocent. Jesus is an innocent sacrifice. Jesus is ultimately the sacrificial lamb for our sins.

As we look at the concluding paragraph here, in verses 48 through the end, we're looking at the response of the crowd, and of Joseph, and of the women. Verse 48, Now there's a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea.

[20:15] He was a member of the council. Remember that council at the very beginning who accused Jesus of blasphemy? They blasphemously accused Jesus of being a blasphemer?

Well, Joseph was a part of that council. Verse 51, He had not consented to their decision or action, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone where no one had ever yet been laid.

It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment. So the crowd, Joseph, the women, how did they respond?

[21:17] Jesus is dead. He's gone. He's buried. Working our way through the end of chapter 22 on through the end of chapter 23 here, we're looking at various responses to who Jesus is.

And so let me ask you in conclusion here, what is your response to Jesus? Do you wrongly respond like the religious leaders that Jesus is some type of a game or that Jesus is a blasphemer making divine claims of himself that are not true?

Do you, like the political leaders, disregard Jesus as being insignificant, as being some type of a novelty or a magician only out to do things for your entertainment or for your good?

Do you respond like the crowd, saying Jesus is helpless? He's in trouble. He can't do anything for himself. Or like the other soldiers, turning Jesus into some type of a gambling game or, again, some type of a joke, mocking him.

Are you like the one criminal who says, Jesus, he's a fake. He can't save himself. He can't save us. Look at him. What is your response to Jesus?

[22:38] Or is your response like the other right responses that we saw throughout this passage? Like earth, recognizing that Jesus is the creator and the sustainer of all of the universe, of the whole creation.

Or like the temple, recognizing that Jesus is the ultimate, true high priest, the only one that can bring sinful people in right relationship with a sinless God.

Or like the centurion, who says Jesus is innocent. He is an innocent sacrifice on behalf of sins like ours.

Or like the crowd, do you say Jesus is dead? Well, Jesus did die. Jesus died a horrible and torturous death.

So terrible that we can't even fully understand or imagine it. We hear about it so much, we often write it off as just the story of Jesus' death.

[23:38] But his death was torturous and horrible. And although he was innocent, his death was not pointless. Innocent Jesus died to save guilty sinners.

Innocent Jesus died to save people like you and like me. Jesus died, but he is not dead now. Jesus died, but Resurrection Sunday is coming.

But today, well, today is Good Friday. Today is a dark and a sober reminder. Today is a day where we focus upon Christ's death.

And so tonight, as we focus upon his death, in conclusion, I'd like to close with a poem and then we will be dismissed. And as is often tradition in services like this, I'm going to request that we be dismissed in complete, total silence, meditating upon the dark and sober truth of Christ's death.

And Sunday, when we gather again, we will enter rejoicing, saying that he is risen. He is dead, this man from Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, the Lord of the world.

[24:59] With his dying breaths, he spoke words of forgiveness, finality, and faith. But now the breathing has ceased, and the lungs that exhaled forgiveness are deflated.

My Jesus, dead. The eyes that looked at the crowds with compassion are closed. The arms that reached out to the unworthy are lifeless.

My Jesus, dead. The hands that touched the leper are driven through with spikes. The ears that heard the cries of blind men are deaf.

The lips that told the truth of a kingdom are stilled. The voice that calmed the seas is silent. My Jesus is dead.

The feet that walked on water are stopped. The heart that bled for sinful humanity no longer beats. The bread from heaven broken on earth.

[26:04] The light of the world in the shadow of death. The vine that bears fruit it's withered and fallen. My Jesus dead.

The gateway to God now sealed in a tomb. The shepherd of souls struck down by his sheep. The resurrection and life a crucified corpse.

my Jesus dead. I'm going to invite you to be silently dismissed tonight and meditate upon the truths of Christ's sacrifice for sins like yours and mine.

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