

What is Your Verdict

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[0 : 00] This is the AM service on March the 29th, 1998. The preacher is Frank Anderson and his sermon is entitled What is your verdict?

It's from Matthew chapter 26 verses 57 to 68. In the name of the living God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Please be seated. What is your verdict? Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had assembled.

Now the chief priests and the elders and all the council were looking for witnesses against Jesus so that they could put him to death.

But they couldn't find any. Even though many witnesses came forward, they couldn't find the right ones.

[1 : 25] At last, two witnesses came forward and they said, this fellow said, I can destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.

Even that didn't seem to be enough to clinch a verdict.

The high priest stood up and he said to Jesus, don't you have anything to say? What's these things that they are witnessing against you?

But Jesus kept quiet. Then the high priest really put Jesus in a difficult situation.

Jesus had prohibited the use of oaths. He advocated simple, straightforward speech. Yes or no?

[2 : 31] But now the high priest forces Jesus to speak by putting him under oath according to the living God. I put you under oath.

Tell us, are you the Christ? The Son of God. Are you the Son of God? That's how it began with the temptation.

It was Satan who first used these words challenging Jesus to give evidence that he was the Son of God. That's how it began and that's how it ends.

Give evidence that you're the Son of God. Jesus' reply is simple but a little unclear.

He said to the high priest, you said it. You're the one who said it. Why raise this question? Why raise this question?

[3 : 41] But in any case, Jesus' response is virtually assent. Yes, it's true. I'm the Son of God. And then he goes on to say some more things.

Nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter, hereafter, you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

that did it. Then the high priest ripped his clothes and said, he's spoken blasphemy.

We don't need any more witnesses. Look, you've heard his blasphemy. What do you think? And they answered and said, he's guilty of death.

Guilty. But what do you think? If somebody like Jesus turned up in our society today, do you think they'd be treated any differently?

[5 : 05] Have the followers of Jesus, the genuine followers of Jesus down through the ages been treated any differently? If we are going to follow Jesus, we need to be ready to share his sufferings to receive the same kind of treatment.

If we're serious, Paul calls it the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Or making up with our contribution the deficit, the shortfall in the sufferings of Christ that still need to be experienced, but now experienced in us.

After they arrested Jesus in the garden and put him on trial, he was first interrogated a somewhat hastily improvised meeting.

He was found guilty, he was condemned to death, but it was a long, complicated process. After the last supper and the time of struggle and prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had no rest, no

sleep, no sleep until he slept in death.

It all went on for the remainder of the night. The disciples were already exhausted by the time they'd reached the garden and one doesn't need much imagination to relive the terror of the arrival of those armed guards with torches and weapons, swords and clubs, the shock of Judas' betrayal, the ending of all their hopes when Jesus was arrested, bound, and led away.

[7 : 05] What could anybody do? Why did he let them do it? Jesus very quickly put a stop to Peter's reckless attempt to meet their swords with his sword.

Jesus gave in without a struggle. He didn't stick up for himself. Now it's easy for us to be indignant and to say, well, if I'd been there, I wouldn't have done that or I would have done something else. We hear a lot of that kind of judgmental comment nowadays. If I'd have been the Pope, I wouldn't have let Hitler do that to the Jews.

We've had that recently. If I'd been the early settlers, I wouldn't have treated the Aborigines the way they did. If I'd been there in the garden or in the council with the high priests, I would have stood up for Jesus.

Well, that's talk. We weren't there. We're here. And what we have to work out is what we have to do where we are now in the situations that we find ourselves in day by day.

[8 : 33] If we are serious about following Jesus, we have to ask ourselves, if Jesus behaved like that, in that situation, how should I behave now in my situations as a follower of Jesus?

In the garden, Jesus prayed that the cup might pass from him, that he could evade the cup. The very thought of drinking that cup horrified him. It was a terrible cup of suffering and sorrow. It was the bitter cup of betrayal, rejection, desertion, abandonment.

Not only rejection by his enemies, but desertion by his friends and abandonment by God. To be abandoned by God would be the ultimate horror for anyone.

That's what hell is. To be thrown away by God. And for that to happen to someone, Jesus, whose life with God was so harmonious, whose love for God was so immediate and so intense, for Jesus to be forsaken by God, to be thrust into hell by God, carrying with him all the sins of the whole world, that would be an agony that we cannot even begin to imagine.

[10 : 28] And taking up that cup to drink it, lifting up that burden of human sin, taking it all onto himself and into himself the cup the Father had given him to drink.

And this is the task he is engaged in. This is what he is determined to achieve. Now what is it like that that we have to do if we are to be followers of Jesus and share us in his suffering?

What does it mean, the fellowship of his sufferings? Jesus said it must be so. The scriptures must be fulfilled.

The will of God must be done and this is how it is being done. Doing God's will, carrying out God's plan of salvation, bearing the sin of the world, meant going through all those painful experiences, including a farcical trial, unjust condemnation, and humiliating, brutal abuse.

And all of that completed in the death on the cross. Hear the shedding of innocent blood on the cross, the culmination and the climax of Jesus' achievement.

[12 : 03] Then he could shout, it's accomplished, I've finished my assignment, I have done the will of God. God's love and all of that was for love of us.

We think of Jesus' exposure to sin all through his life and how he would feel the impact of it in a very sensitive spirit for whom all wrong would be so repulsive and abhorrent.

and he met it everywhere, in everybody, in every shape and form, in attitudes, words, deeds.

People were always sinning against one another, sinning against God, sinning against Jesus.

And that hurts. It grieves God. It hurt Jesus. That's part of the task to feel and receive that hurt.

and to accept it in unconditional love for those who are doing all of these wrong things and doing them to him.

[13 : 24] And yet he never sinned back against anyone. Never. Sin hurt him, but it never infected him.

He loved the people who hurt him. God and he wants to help and to change them. And that's why he never hit back. He left the outcome to God.

It was a struggle, a struggle to do the will of God, to obey his Father and to keep himself pure in a foul world, painful to resist temptation.

temptation. And to endure that pain, to be the victim of human wrongdoing, we see this wonderful attitude of Jesus throughout his whole trial, providing us with a model and an example and an

inspiration, all of his followers who are expected to be like him.

This is what Peter said in his first letter. For even here unto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

[14 : 50] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, he committed himself, to the one who judges righteously.

He committed himself to God, he left the outcome to God, who his own self, bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, and by his wounds we are healed.

So how then did Jesus behave during his trial, showing us how to behave under trials.

First, he preserved his integrity through quiet trust in God. Second, he accepted verbal abuse and physical abuse without retaliation.

salvation. Third, he honoured the name of God. Fourth, he spoke the truth. The circumstances of Jesus' trial were particularly disgraceful and humiliating.

[16 : 17] sin. We expect some degree of fairness and we also expect people to stick up for themselves.

We expect them to protest. We expect them to fight back. But Jesus did nothing and said nothing. in the values of our culture, if we behave like that, we would be branded whips.

we've got a very serious practical problem here as to how we respond and behave day by day.

Here's a big divide between the values of our secular society and the values that Jesus gave to his followers.

Jesus, when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered, he did not threaten. but he committed himself to the God who judges righteously.

Now, this confidence in God and leaving the outcome to God is the secret of Christ's strength in apparent weakness.

[17 : 35] He became truly human and he lived his human life under the same limitations that we live in. God. He had all the powers of God on call.

All the resources of God were available, but he didn't use them. He emptied himself of all those prerogatives and became like a slave.

God's God's God. As he said in the garden when he told Peter to put his sword away, don't you think that if I wanted to, I could ask my father to send me 12 legions of angels?

angels. But Jesus managed without squadrons of angels because he lived by the rules that we have to live by.

We have to manage without angels. And that takes courage. Above all, trust in God to manage without angels.

[18 : 45] that first informal hearing in the hall or home of Caiaphas must have been set up in a hurry.

It was improvised and irregular. There was no formal charge. Jesus wasn't accused of anything. They had to round up people to testify.

There was a certain show of legality in that there had to be some basis, for a criminal charge. And the laws of Israel said that no one could be convicted on a capital charge except on the consistent witness of at least two persons.

And finally, they got two testifiers to allege that Jesus had made a claim to be able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.

Yet even that didn't seem to be enough. And while all this was going on, Jesus remained completely silent, quite unresponsive.

[19 : 54] And even when the high priest invited him to comment, he remained silent. It seems as if he was not willing to recognize the validity of the proceedings or to be entangled in all of this.

But there was no way of avoiding the trap. But this composure of Jesus is the first remarkable thing about his demeanor.

He preserved his dignity and his integrity. integrity. The second shows his respect for the name of God.

He responded to the oath that the high priest put on him. Jesus loved and honored the name of God. And when he was adjured by the living God to answer the question, then and only then did he speak.

Caiaphas asked, are you the Christ, the Son of God? And Jesus' reply again is somewhat restrained. After all, what difference would it make what he said?

[21 : 11] They were out to get him and anything he said would be shown to be incriminating. But he said to the high priest, you're the one who said it.

You brought up this issue of the Messiah and the Son of God. that has brought the central question into the discussion.

Are you the Messiah, the Son of God? And Jesus' reply, although somewhat oblique, is tantamount to, yes, I am. And then he goes on to say something else.

but even then, there's something elusive about the conversation. The priest has put the real issue out into the open.

Jesus had gone around teaching, helping, healing. He'd done it very modestly, not showing off his divine powers. His claims were often indirect hints to get people thinking.

[22 : 24] Anyone could say, I'm the Christ, but what kind of Christ? What kind of Messiah? Is the behavior of Jesus what people want in a Messiah, in a Savior, in a Deliverer?

Any imposter can say, I'm the Christ. Pretend Christ's are common enough. how can you tell the genuine one? Not just by saying, I'm the Christ.

There were tests. Did Jesus match the portrait given in the old scriptures? Did he fulfill the task of the Messiah set out in the Old Testament?

Jesus was always referring to their Bible as his own guidebook. That's what he lived by. And it gave them a checklist. How did he shape up?

That's how they could come to a sound conclusion. Not just on his say-so, but search the scriptures. Bring out the book. See what it says. Look at my life.

[23 : 32] Do they match? Then a fair verdict can be reached. But then this other reference.

Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power coming in the clouds of heaven. They asked him about the Son of God and he replied about the Son of Man.

He presents himself as one of us, as one who has become truly human in our life. And by anticipating his future glory sitting on the right hand of power coming in the clouds of heaven, Jesus refers to an event in the future, something that no one has yet experienced, something that no one can testify to.

That's not evidence. That's not the basis for a decision in the trial of Jesus here in the present, something that will happen in the future.

But it's precisely because of his confidence in the outcome, leaving it to God, that he is able to anticipate the future glory that will be given to the Son of Man because he lived our life the way we have to live it.

[25 : 02] Out of his solidarity with us in our humanness as the Son of Man, out of his humility and his humiliation will come a different kind of majesty and authority that people want.

In his capacity as the Son of Man, he will be brought to the throne of God in power and glory. And in this glimpse of the future, there is a warning and an invitation.

just as Jesus had called Judas his friend in a last-minute bid to win him back, so his words to the high priest are an invitation.

Leave the future open. You, Caiaphas, will see the Son of Man in glory. glory. If you believe, you will enjoy that glory.

If you don't believe, that glory will destroy you. The choice is yours. What is your verdict?

[26 : 13] But the faith that accepts Jesus as the Son of God and the Son of Man is based on a promise for the future. It's the faith of hope.

Faith in the truthfulness of Jesus' prediction. Confidence in God's certain vindication of Jesus, no matter how hopeless and helpless he seems to be now in front of all those strong people.

I mean, just at that moment, Jesus is a failure by all the usual standards. With not one single loyal follower left.

This is the Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man. And that too is our calling, to live in hope, to live in expectation of future glory, the glory of Christ in spite of all the appearances of our present helpless and hopeless circumstances.

And this is another marvelous thing about Jesus, his hope for the future, when he is at the bottom of his despair.

[27 : 34] These closing scenes of the preliminary hearing give us another feature in which we are called to be followers of Jesus. one of the ugliest things about human wickedness is bullying.

The mean and vicious treatment of weaker persons. And look what they do to Jesus. They make fun of him. Then they spat in his face, they buffeted him, and others struck him with the palms of their hands.

And then they taunted him, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote you? In this language, there is another part of Jesus' identity.

He's the last and greatest of the prophets. And a great prophet had been promised from the beginning. He'd been predicted in the Old Testament.

and they should have recognized him. Jesus takes his place in the succession of God's human agents.

[28 : 51] And like so many of them, he's very vulnerable to the insults and mistreatment of a person who might be able to save others, but cannot save himself.

And they turn the office of God's prophet, into a cheap and ridiculous game.

They make Jesus out to be a kind of mind reader, or fortune teller, or psychic, with their silly guessing game. Nothing could be more trivial than to think of a prophet who is the one who can just find out secrets for us.

Tricksters can always put on stunts like that, and people like to be entertained and deceived by stage magicians. But Jesus, again, is totally unresponsive.

There's no word, there's no reaction. He allows them to treat him in that disgraceful way. he allows them to exhaust their wickedness, because he is able to absorb it.

[30 : 09] In this very brief account of the first hearing of Jesus in his trials, the gospel writers show quite amazing detachment. It's all very compact.

They give very little commentary, very little analysis, whether it be on the character of the high priest, or on the reprehensible conduct of all the people there, tormenting Jesus.

There's one point where the evangelist does supply a term. I'm sure that the high priest didn't say let's get false witnesses. They would keep up a show of trying to get effective witnesses.

It's the evangelist who says they're all false. It's all a fabrication. With a show, with a show, of factuality.

After all, Jesus had said things about the temple, but how were they interpreting them? The evangelists don't give a moral analysis of the conduct of the trial.

[31 : 11] They're not worried about technical questions as to whether it was legal or not. That doesn't matter. They just tell the story. And Matthew's restraint is particularly remarkable.

Matthew simply reports the fact. He doesn't tell us what to think. He leaves that to us.

So what do you think? What's your verdict? What's your verdict? what's doing?

What's said? What's what's doing? Han Broadway was called mother river day night and Ve what's your life lib bitte Su ?