

Luke 22:63-71 "God on Trial, Part 1"

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- If you have Bibles with you, in one form or the other, if you can open them or turn them on or scroll to Luke 22.
- This morning we're going to be looking at verses 63 through 71. We continue in this study of this high and holy time in these last hours of Jesus' life.
- And this morning we're going to look at Jesus on trial. Let me read. You can follow with me. As I begin reading at verse 63 in Luke 22.
- 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?
- [1 : 1 8] 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, tell us. But 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? He said to them, You say that I am. Then they said, What further testimony do we need?
- We have herded ourselves from his own lips. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit might come and teach us from this portion of God's word.
- [2 : 3 0] Holy Spirit, we do need you. We need you to come. We need you to open our hearts, open our ears, open our eyes, that we might hear the words of truth, that our hearts would receive them in faith, that we might behold the glory of your grace.
- Would you pour out your Spirit on this time? Help me in my weakness and the weakness of these words. We know these words themselves are not special.
- But the way you use them is. And so come and be our teacher. We pray in the name of the living word, our Lord Jesus.
- Amen. Amen. Well, this is the third sermon in a row that I've been here that I'm going to introduce it with a movie.
- But this is probably one that none of you have seen. Back in 2008, I borrowed the title of this sermon from a movie that appeared on public TV back in 2008.
- [3 : 5 3] And it was entitled simply God on Trial. The movie was a story of victims of the Jewish concentration camps who were awaiting their deaths, who were suffering horribly and asking questions of why.
- Why are we here? Why has God done this? Where is he? And thinking from their perspective that he had failed his covenant, they held a trial with a prosecutor and a defender and they wrestled with these issues and in the end came to the conclusion that God was guilty.

Guilty of failing to keep his covenant promise. That same year out in Nebraska, a guy named Ernie Chambers filed a lawsuit against God for all of the atrocities and the harmful activities he had supposedly committed, but that lawsuit was thrown out because the defendant could not be there in court to defend himself.

Sounds kind of silly, but here we see what happens when God finds himself in the hands of men. Especially when he's not the God we expect.

in Luke here we're going to see what happens when God comes and men get their hands on him.

[5 : 52] We're going to see two trials. This week we see the first being before the religious authorities. Next week we will look at him on trial at the hands of the Gentiles.

But this week what we see in these trials and especially this week is something very stark about the character of men.

Especially these Jewish leaders. leaders. Maybe we'll see something in the same way about us. But it's not just them.

We see something radical about the very character of God himself. So let's look at this story.

We see here really the only description we could rightly give this is a kangaroo court. It's an interesting trial but it's the way that Luke presents it.

[7 : 05] It is full of irony. The Jews who are highly legal highly particular about following all of their rules of jurisprudence they down to the tiniest detail they produce this trial really as a pretense.

First you have to notice if you look at all of the gospel accounts combined you'll notice that Jesus was arrested at night in the garden and at night in the cover of darkness he was first put on trial before the high priest and there they did it at night because there's a very good reason if they did it in the daytime they would have to deal with the people who up until that point they all loved Jesus and so they may have an uprising on their hands so they do it in the cover of darkness they call witnesses they try to produce these false witnesses but none of their stories collaborate well enough so that they can convict Jesus but here we see Luke in verse 66 saying when day came so now they've had this trial at night they have already determined what the outcome is going to be but to kind of cover their bases when it got daylight they have another trial and so in this trial they are not worrying about witnesses they go to Jesus himself and the issue here the whole issue for them is nothing that Jesus has done but it's who he's professing to be that's the issue and so notes and as we go through

Luke here there's a progression the Pharisees the Jewish leaders leaders begin the questioning and ask him are you the Messiah tell us if you're the Christ just let us know and for Jesus to have said yes to this question would not have condemned him because there have been many others who have come claiming to be the Messiah Messiah but this is where they start but Jesus his response is well interesting he won't answer them first and there's two reasons first he says if I tell you I am the Messiah you're not going to believe me and if I ask you questions you won't answer me so why would I answer you and it's like he's saying you have enough here you don't need me to tell you anything you have seen all that

I've done and you still don't believe why would you think that if I answered your question now would make any difference but here at this point Jesus needed a good attorney because a good lawyer would have told him don't say more than you have to say as little as possible to protect you from incriminating yourself but Jesus didn't stop he didn't stop by saying I'm not going to answer you then he goes on to say but from now on the son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God Jesus has just ratcheted everything up to a very critical level again the term he uses the term son of man and this term is his basically his favorite the one he uses most often to refer to himself and it's possible that that term could refer to simply another man but for anybody who knows the

Old Testament would hear him referring to the seventh chapter of Daniel where there we see this vision of the ancient of days giving divine power and authority to one like a son of man and Jesus is saying I am that son of man and that's what the authorities heard because they are on the verge of going ballistic here and so to avoid any ambiguity to be perfectly clear they come back to him with a question that will clear everything up he says are you then the son of

[13 : 23] God and again Jesus responds in kind of a funny way he says there that's what you have said well it's it's what you say but a better translation of this would be well I probably wouldn't have put it that way but since you did yes and that's all it took the Jewish leaders go nuclear they start tearing their clothes he said what more do we need we've heard it from his own lips he has blasphemed he deserves to die bringing the trial to a close so don't miss the irony here the

Jews were very hot and they would tell you this they were very hot to protect the glory to protect the name of God because supposedly they thought so highly of him and thus they convicted Jesus of blasphemy but in so doing they became the blasphemers and condemned God himself to death because they did not recognize that they had thought so highly of themselves not God and so when God stood there actually stood there right in front of their face they did not recognize him and the person that was before them they hated because he's not like what they expected they had a world designed where they could determine everything where they were in control and this

God this person in front of them would not play that game with them and so they had to get rid of him so why the rejection why so passionately did they reject Jesus claim after all that they had seen after all that they had heard all that they had witnessed why well the reasons if we begin to understand what's going on with them we may understand a little bit more of what goes on with us because our responses can be very similar to theirs because remember these Jewish leaders are the religious conservatives of their day these are the evangelicals these are the church people and they're far more like us than we wish they were they should have known better just like us so what was going on well there were three things that they could not understand that

Jesus redefined for them the first was that Jesus redefines the kingdom according to the Jews the kingdom they wanted was where personal value personal significance was obtained at the head of the table they had at the seat of honor that's what gave them value that's what made them important their kingdom was one of wealth and prestige they loved the greetings of people on the street they loved the respect that they got but that was not what Jesus taught Jesus came and taught that the favored place in the kingdom was not at the head of the table but it was the place of the servant

Jesus taught that the place of honor was not for the wealthy but the humble poor and that kind of teaching smacked these Jewish leaders right in the face because everything that they trusted and pursued Jesus was saying was wrong there was another way in that way that Jesus promoted they hated they had no box for a kingdom like Jesus was teaching and they didn't want such a kingdom either their whole value system was built on a completely different foundation they had worked hard to get where they were and they were not about to give it up and is our world any different you know

[19 : 29] I think the theme of life in our culture today can be defined in the term the phrase human flourishing this is what life is all about that we flourish I need to flourish in my work I need to be involved in work that has meaning and is aligned with my passions I need to have a job that is fulfilling I should flourish in my family giving my kids every opportunity that they can be special I should flourish in my marriage and if I don't let's go find somebody that will help me flourish I need to flourish in my health avoiding anything and everything that might shorten life or decrease its quality

I need to flourish emotionally which means anybody that brings bad vibes into my emotional space need to be kept at a distance life is about flourishing the question is who defines what flourishing is you know when Jesus says the least is the greatest that is better to serve than be served that I must turn the other cheek when insulted or abused or that I should expect tribulation in life and that tribulation is actually a good thing what do we do with that what kind of a kingdom is that is that what

I want I have a right to flourish and that doesn't sound like flourishing to me you know I thought my life at this age would be different than it is today I thought by this time I could get all my kids out of the house and I would have just my wife and we would enjoy time together we would enjoy going out to dinner with friends we would enjoy getting on our bikes and riding down the greenway we would enjoy hopping in the car and going visit all the grandkids and all those places whenever we wanted it's not the way life turned out we are now in the service of a dear little 92 year old woman who's lost her mind and she's helpless and it requires some very undignified care flourishing if it was according to my definition would mean

I'm not flourishing and something's gone wrong but when these things come to our lives what do we do with those things well if you're like me what happens often is that I think that something has gone wrong and I get angry and I put God on trial and pronounce him guilty because he did not produce what I expected so where do you find yourself what has God brought into your life is it a place you did not plan for is it a place you didn't desire to be see his kingdom cuts directly across the bow of our definition of human flourishing and he paints a different picture of a kingdom that he comes to bring are you okay with humility are you okay with being at the bottom are you okay with serving in a way where nobody sees and nobody cares where there's no significance is that the kind of kingdom you want is that the kind of king you want

Jesus not only redefines the kingdom he redefines for us what righteousness is you know because of their view of the kingdom the Jewish leaders their concept of what righteousness is was also highly distorted they thought that they would be good if they kept their religious practices if they did all the right things if they did their sacrifices if they washed their hands at the proper times if they did not work on Sundays if they kept away from the goyim or the

[25 : 58] Gentiles they were good because they do all of this outward stuff that unfortunately had no power or ability to cleanse them on the inside instead what that outward goodness did was it deadened their senses and it deadened their hearts to the deeply rooted problems that were inside you know in Matthew 23 27 Jesus refers to the Pharisees and the scribes as whitewashed tombs beautiful on the outside but inside full of dead man's bones so how do you dress up and clean up a corpse what can you do well we can put clothes on it we can put clean clothes on it do its hair maybe a little makeup and a lot of perfume

I mean I still every time I think about this I think about John when Jesus raised Lazarus and before when he told him to open the tomb the people came and said and I love the King James version he stinketh you can always tell dead because it smells dead and no amount of perfume no amount of clean clothes no amount of deodorant can make dead smell anything other than dead that corpse regardless of what we do to it is still dead you know my life is basically clean it's moral I mean it has to be I'm a pastor right I don't do drugs well

I don't do illegal drugs at my age I have to do drugs more and more just to stay alive and keep moving but I'm faithful to my wife I give money to the church hey I've even been a foreign missionary can you top that I'm a good person according to most outward standards if that's all I have that's all there is to go on at best I'm spraying perfume on dead how does Jesus define righteousness it's not on the outside it's something else you know what does he command he commands us to love that's a disposition of the heart and it's hard to love even those that we find friends but he pushes the bar up farther and says you gotta love your enemies and to love enemies doesn't just mean that we tolerate them that we might smile and greet them when we see them it means that we find our joy in their joy it means that we work for their flourishing we love them so as you sit here and worship who do you despise who have you not forgiven who do you avoid when you see them coming down the hall but Jesus doesn't just say that he says go sell all for the sake of the kingdom you know how much of my time and energy am I spending just to gain more so that

I'm going to feel more secure that I'm going to experience more of this human flourishing so how do you smell right now see it all depends on which bar we're using if we use my bar of my outward goodness I'm doing okay but when Jesus walks into the room the deadness becomes obvious and I'm hopeless to measure up as Tim Keller puts it when he comes you know we might hate him or we might love him but nobody is ever left ambivalent to Jesus because he brings the light into the darkness and we often like roaches have two choices we either stay in the dark and hide or we've got to turn off the light the

Jewish leaders decided to turn off the light to get rid of Jesus but there's a third thing here that Jesus redefines and that is loving kindness he comes and redefines God's covenant love you know the picture we have here the way that the Jews all saw God and this is where I mean they had part of the story correct but from their stories they saw God as someone so holy and glorious dwelling in glory that he was totally unapproachable when Moses approached him and Moses saw him from behind his face glowed and that glow was so brilliant that the

[33 : 21] Jews had to have Moses cover it up cover it up we can't stand this and so the tabernacle as well though it was designed to be that representative representation of God's presence in their midst it was still designed to keep them away because there was level after level where in even the holiest of holies only the high priest could go in there one time a year and when people went in there and worshipped wrongly or in some careless manners they came out crispy and so the Jews these Jewish leaders with this kind of an idea of who God was how could they think of anything other than God his reality was terrifying and there's no way they could believe that he stood right in their midst they thought it best that he would send the Messiah another person another messenger who would come and make things right they did not believe and could not see that their sin problem was something so bad another person was not enough it took

God himself and he came if they had a clearer understanding of the kingdom if they had a clearer understanding of their own need and their lack of righteousness they would have known what they needed and they would have rejoiced when he came and they would have known and seen that Jesus did not come to dress up the dead he came to raise the dead Jesus did not come to make our outer image more beautiful he came to restore the image of the God of glory in us he didn't come to make life better he came to make life new and to do that he had to die for the dead he had to take death upon himself and in this trial we see he was not convicted unjustly though in a way he was he was convicted because he himself uttered the words by choice that would send him to death for the very people who abused him the the Jewish leaders could not fathom and neither can we he knew that God himself had to come because we were that bad but also that he was glad to come because of the greatness of his loving kindness he didn't forget the covenant he fulfilled it he became the sacrifice that would usher in a whole new world and a whole new kingdom and a whole new level of flourishing that these

Jewish leaders could not imagine I love what Ephesians 2 1 through 6 tells us and I'm going to read quote just part of it it says and you were dead in your trespasses and sins but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our sins he made us alive together with Christ by grace we've been saved and has seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ can you imagine we don't just get a good life here we are raised to new life in

Christ and seated with him in heavenly places in the presence of Yahweh himself and that's what he came to do may we not miss God's coming for us may we not miss this glorious salvation that he has bought for us may we not miss that he did it gladly because of his loving kindness for us for more information visit us online at southwood.org