

April 3, 2022

Fifth Sunday of Lent

John 19:1-16a

Jesus is condemned

There are many horrible situations a person can find themselves in during their lifetime. We have talked in the past about being betrayed by a trusted friend. Today we read about a situation that is far worse and very harmful. That being accused of something that you did not do. This morning's gospel is about Jesus being wrongfully accused. After doing a lot of reading and research, I came to the conclusion, that Jesus handled the situation very well.

During the whole trial and judgement, if you can call it a trial, Jesus kept calm and cool. That is what you are supposed to do when you are wrongfully accused of something. Most of us would get angry and lose it. Not Jesus though. They say that if you get angry and lose it and try to strongly defend yourself it works against you. Doing these things make you look more guilty and that you are trying to hide something. I actually learned a lot about how not to react in a situation like this. Actually, it made no sense to me, but if it will work in my favour then I will give it a try.

Have you ever been falsely accused of something you did not do? How did it make you feel? There are so many emotions that wash over us when we are falsely accused of something. Some people said it is like

drowning in emotions. That is how overwhelming the experience can be. Some people have said that being falsely accused is worse than having a loved one die. When a loved one dies you have family and friends to comfort and support you in your loss. However, those who are wrongfully accused are often made out to be villains, they have been judged by public opinion, they become isolated and alone. They actually have very few people to support them. Remember when Jesus was on the cross. There was only three people at the foot of the cross to be with Him while He died. All of His disciples and apostles abandoned Him.

The wrongfully accused go through many stages and emotions. The first stage is shock, withdrawal and panic. They can have panic attacks, insomnia and anxiousness. The second stage is anger toward the person accusing you. Many times this anger is misunderstood by people. They view it as an attempt to cover your guilt. The third stage is a loss of self-confidence and fear. The accused person feels that their reputation and self-worth has been destroyed. They will think that people are judging them when they are out in public. The fourth stage can be depression and guilty feelings. These people start to blame themselves for what has happened to them. This can make them suicidal. Finally, as if all this has not been enough, there is post-traumatic stress disorder. We are now only starting to understand this condition and its effects on people. Even if the accused person is found innocent, the trauma of the ordeal can last a life-time. The damage of being falsely accused has been done to this person.

The loneliness and isolation would be worse in this situation. Maybe worse than the actual wrongful accusation. The whole ordeal does a nasty number on your head. You start to see yourself differently and

you see people around you in a different way. One's identity is destroyed along with the support of your community, family and friends. Your sense of reality is shredded.

Looking at all of this helped me to better understand what Jesus was going through and experiencing. It gave me an insight into how He reacted and why as well as the emotions He was feeling. It helped me understand why the apostles and disciples abandoned Him. They feared being guilty by association. People would judge them as they judged Jesus. They also feared being arrested too. Through it all Jesus knew that He had to go through this brutal experience in order to save us. During the passion we sometimes forget the human emotional cost. The experience took a lot out of Jesus and His family and friends. Do not forget that He was fully human also.

Knowing what I shared with you this morning, please be cautious when accusing others. There is greater responsibility upon us when we accuse others. Remember that when we point a finger at someone, there is always three pointing back at us.

Lenten Reflection: Acts 2: 46-47.

This reading shows an idyllic or perfect picture of the church fulfilling its purpose and mission. The early church is meeting in people's homes on a regular basis. They seem to have a strong commitment to prayer and communal meals. The church is committed to the Eucharistic celebrations and remembering Jesus's ministry amongst us. It seems that things are going well for this young church. The Holy Spirit appears to be guiding and inspiring the church.

The church is doing its best at living out its purpose and mission in the world. They are meeting the spiritual and physical needs of those in the church. A great rule of thumb is: know your people and meet them where they are at in their lives. That is a great starting point. The church is also welcoming to those who wish to join the churches mission and become Christians. The mission of the church has always been a delicate balance of the spiritual and physical.

The constant element from the conception of the church on Pentecost until today, has been the Holy Spirit. It continues to inspire and guide the church. The Holy Spirit has taken Christians to the far ends of the earth to preach the gospel and make believers in every nation. To build the Kingdom of God everywhere. Our lives and how we live them is the greatest advertisement for the church and the Holy Spirit.

The purpose and mission of the church is still the same today in Green Bay and Thalberg. The thing that could be different is how the Holy Spirit inspires and guides us. Remember that God always supersedes our expectations. So dream very big, wait and watch. Pastor D