

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN



March 2011



SERMON SERIES: THE JESUS TRIALS

TROY ONSAGER

As we approach the celebration of Easter, this year we are going to walk through a series of texts from the Gospel of Matthew – a walk that will begin at Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and end at the cross. These passages are generally passed by in the rush from Palm Sunday to Easter, but they incorporate essential stories – not just for accurate historical reflection on Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, but also for the theological understanding of how the depth of human failures collides with the grace and the truth of God.

This series is entitled the Jesus Trials – they are the events on the last day of Jesus' life on earth in which he was constantly being put to the test for who he was, what he said and what he did. The irony, though, is that the trials he endured were actually the trials of the people involved. Each group we will look at in the Sermon Series – the “Christian” disciples, the “Roman” leadership, the “Jewish” authorities – failed their own time of trial. That is to say, in the midst of Jesus' ordeal, he remained the innocent one led to death while all the participants of the story were guilty of a whole host of sins, all which led Jesus to the cross – a cross intended to deal once and for all with those very sins.

This will be a sermon series exploring the fallenness of all humanity, hopefully dismantling the often asked but theologically absurd question of “who killed Jesus?” The Bible is clear – no one is righteous, no, not one. Therefore, all are responsible, all are complicit in the death of Christ. For there is no one for whom Christ's death was not necessary, who does not need the atoning sacrifice of Christ on their behalf. The Bible is also clear that Jesus' death on our behalf was God's will for our salvation – a will that can never be thwarted by the depths of human sin.

However, as we walk through this we will also see the powerful redemptive nature of Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a gospel that can take the cowards, the liars, the powerful, the deniers, the betrayers, the abandoners and extends to

them a grace they did not deserve, a power they could never gain on their own, a love that is deeper than the depths of their sin. We will certainly see ourselves in the failures of all involved – but the text of Gospels is intended to lead us through the valley of failure and into the glorious vistas of grace. It is a climb we cannot make on our own, but a climb made possible by the truth of Easter.

Christ died for the very sins that led him to an unjust cross – yet a cross that achieved the justice of God, the dismantling of sin, death and evil. Prepare yourselves each Sunday by reading the texts listed and pray through what God is speaking to his church.

2011 Lent Sermon Series – The Jesus Trials

- March 6 - Matthew 26:47-56
The Trial of the Christian Disciples
- March 13 - Matthew 26:57-68
The Trial of the Jewish Leadership
- March 20 - Matthew 26:69-75
The Trial of the Christian Disciple Peter
- March 27 - Matthew 27:1-10
The Trial of the Christian Disciple Judas
- April 3 - Matthew 27:11-26
The Trial of the Roman Leadership
- April 10 - Matthew 27:15-26
The Trial of the Jewish People
- April 17 - Palm Sunday - Matthew 27:27-31
The Trial of the Roman Soldiers
- April 22 - Good Friday - Matthew 27:32-44
The Trial of Everyone
- April 24 - Easter Sunday - Matthew 28:1-10