

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 22:63-23:12

As we head into the final two chapters of Luke during the next handful of weeks, closing out our series, I would recommend checking out the other gospel accounts, noticing the varying details of each. We really do need to piece them all together to get the full picture of the ridicule and abuse that Jesus endured prior to the crucifixion.

These are hard accounts to read, but read them we must. The urge might be to emotionally distance ourselves as we read through them, or gloss over them due to our familiarity with the story. So try this on for size. Instead of Jesus, imagine that the person enduring the arrest, trials, the insults and violent cruelty is your child or your spouse (someone very close and dear to you.) Allow yourself to feel and experience the injustice of it all.

What has always impressed me about Jesus during His trials and torture is how calm He remained through it all. Most people would resort to either yelling, cursing, threatening their attackers, or withering into a sobbing heap of Jell-o. How do we account for Jesus' composure in the face of such injustice and brutality? This sort of equanimity comes from being secure and confident in who you are...the type of which is very rare. This poise and fortitude came from His deeply entrenched connection with His Father.

While none of us would desire the sort of assault Jesus undertook, I suspect we all would like the sort of courage, resilience and determination that Jesus displayed. The beautiful thing is that we have access to that same source of strength that He has. Jesus was intimately familiar with the love His Father had for Him, and pressed hard into that during His time of need. The reason Jesus came (incarnation), and died (crucifixion) was that we could/would experience a similar relationship with our Heavenly Father. Listen to the prayer of the apostle Paul: *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may **strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being **rooted and established in love, may have power**, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and **to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**"* (Ephesians 3:14-19, emphasis added)

By all means we should stand in awe of Jesus for what He did on our behalf, what He did **for** us. At the same time, we don't want to miss what He desires to do **in** us and **through** us. He "saved" us so that we can have His sort of life. Have you ever considered the idea that the demeanor of Jesus that we read about in Scripture—His kindness, grace, attentiveness, openness, inclusiveness, etc.—is available to us, for us to become like Him? Of all the things we could possibly want in life, the Jesus-type life is the best we can desire. Beyond that, it is attainable. He wants to form us into that sort of being.

So if being rooted and established in the Father's love is what gave Jesus (and can give us) that sort of composure in the face of hostility and torment, then what accounts/explains the cruelty, spitefulness and malice of the religious leaders and their cronies? Unlike Jesus, they were not confident or secure, rather they were fearful covered over with arrogance and a thirst to establish their own power. Jesus-type power came from love. Their striving for power sprung from fear. The power of love versus the love of power. Jesus had unshakable trust in His Father. The religious leaders actually weren't very "religious" at all, in the sense that they were not trusting the foundation of their religion, that being a God that loved them and promised to take care of them, who was in fact doing so in the face of their opposition.

In the culture and society we find ourselves in, and the rhetoric which is strewn across social media, we need to pause and consider the tact we will take. Will we spew more venom out of fear and add to the disintegration of civility? Or will we quietly trust the One who has all power and loves us deeply, who will take care of us, and desires us to partner with Him in the building of a better, redeemed world? Because of the example of Jesus, and His love and strength toward us, we can say like the apostle Paul, "*When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly.*" (I Corinthians 4:12-13a)

- Q. When faced with threat, opposition, hostility, or adversity, what is your typical response? (Fight? Flight? Passive-aggressiveness? Shut down? Etc.) What can we learn from the way Jesus handled the maltreatment He received?**
- Q. Give an example of a time that you handled antagonism well. Give an example of a time that you didn't handle so well, perhaps even regret.**
- Q. What is the cause/reason of human to human cruelty? How does the reality of Jesus and His Kingdom confront those causes/reasons?**
- Q. What were the religious leaders primarily concerned with? What was Pilate primarily concerned with? What was Herod primarily concerned with?**
- Q. When someone slanders your character, what is your response instinct? How do you think Jesus was able to handle the slanderous false accusations that were levied at Him?**
- Q. Confession time: Have you ever mistreated someone that as you look back now, perhaps causes shame and regret? (I wonder if those that ridiculed, mocked, and abused Jesus ever regretted it, and perhaps repented.)**
- Q. Between Pilate, Herod, and the religious leaders we see consummate politicians playing typical political games. (Not much has changed in time, really.) Sadly, at different times throughout history, the church has been embroiled in political mischief...usually in the name of a supposedly worthy (though highly questionable) cause. What examples do you see today of the church/Christians getting unwisely**

involved in political maneuverings? What would be more Christ-like ways of accomplishing Kingdom ends?