

Eyes on Jesus Lenten Series

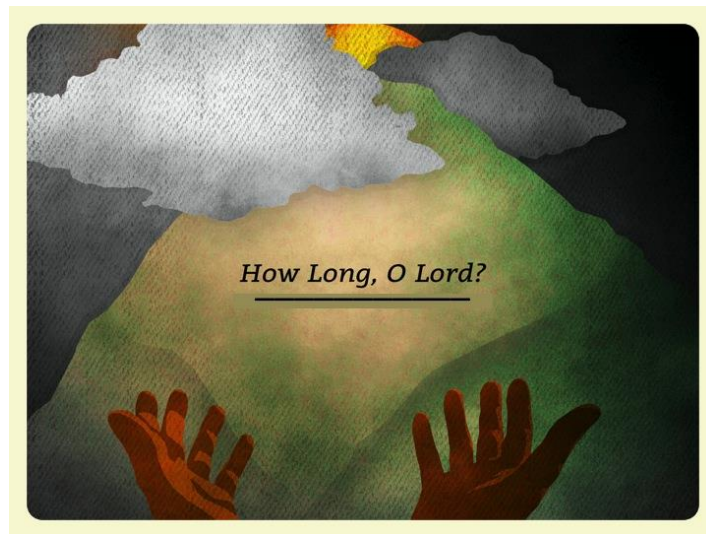
Lamentations 3:19-26

1 John 2:15-17

Mark 15:1-20

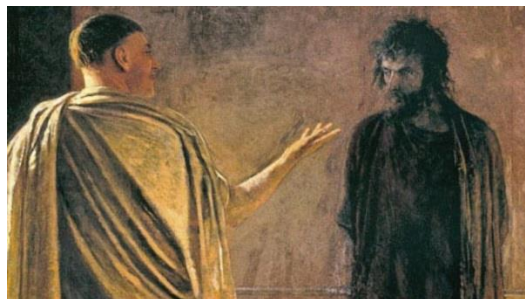
Worldly Eyes

The Book of Lamentations is a *lament*. A lament is an expression of profound sorrow; the mourning of loss – and in the Bible, we have a whole book full of them! Our Old Testament passage today was one of the few bright spots in that book of laments for the prophet Jeremiah, who both prophesied and mourned the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of Israel.



Surrounded as he was by an unrepentant people and sharp visions of the coming devastation, Jeremiah's eyes were opened to see things as they really were: bleak – but not without hope. Even there, Jeremiah can truly see and preach that **"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."** If you're like me, you need to hear that a lot, because it's easy to lose sight of God's unceasing love and new mercies when my routines and my patterns of life are thrown off – much like is happening today. Jeremiah responds to destruction by preaching the God in our midst. He responds to it all by calling us to repent and trust in God's mercies. Jeremiah looks at disaster and he sees God.

Pontius Pilate looks at God and he sees disaster.



As the governor of Judea and the local representative of Roman authority, his worldly eyes saw a threat to peace – to the “Roman Routine” of steady taxes and strict obedience. To preserve the status quo, to keep that peace, he hands over the Son of God to be killed. Now let’s give Pontius Pilate the benefit of the doubt: even without knowing Jesus as Lord, he still allows an innocent man to be killed to keep things orderly. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that he washes his hands and declares himself innocent. You know what happens next.

It’s tempting to scorn Pilate, but would you have done anything differently? What have you sacrificed to keep the peace – your dignity, your voice... or the truth?

Have you ever sacrificed God for the sake of peace? Would you give him up for the sake of things going back to the way they were?

Now don’t be so quick to answer, “No, I will never deny Him!”, because that’s been said before. It’s also not that simple because I’m not talking about being quiet when somebody mocks God. I mean putting God away in times of crisis so we can get some “real work” done, so we can focus on the task at hand. Is Jesus “essential personnel” in a time like this? Have your plans and your actions this week reflected a God who is alive and well, or is he a “non-essential” that you’ll get back to when things are clearer and more secure? If you can say yes to that – and we call can – then you’ve had the worldly eyes of Pilate – the man put God away for the sake of order and peace. And when you’ve done that, do you think blaming social pressure and strange circumstance cuts it?



Don’t try to wash your own hands. I know that’s ironic to say – please *do* wash your hands a lot – but you don’t need to try to clean yourself from that stain of putting God away. Let God do that. Because it was actually the Father who sent an innocent man to die – His son, his only son whom he loved – that we would be made clean, that *you* would be made clean and your eyes opened, so that God’s glory and power and daily mercies would never be hidden from sight, no matter the circumstance. Even on a cross – *especially on a cross* – your eyes were made to see God in the midst of trouble, not behind it, or apart from it, but right there with you. **“Great is your faithfulness,” Lord!**

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.”

Amen.