

Calvary's Cross: A Confluence of Justice and Love

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The global Christian community has been through its annual observance of Lent. Like all other citizens of the world the flock of Jesus Christ has endured many challenges in the post COVID period. But some of these challenges or should I say afflictions, have existed before the advent of COVID. For those who are wondering what these afflictions are they are- racism, corruption, injustice, discrimination, gender based bias, hate speech, threats to freedom of expression, illegal narcotics that destroys lives, organised crime, suppression of talent, delayed justice and underemployment. Globally many Christians have become disgruntled and desperate (we are frail humans) asking if God is blind and where is divine justice?

This year as we observe Good Friday and piously celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, may I remind you that the cross is not a sad symbol of death. It is not a relic hanging on a church wall amidst a stained glass window. It is not a monument erected on a Christian grave. The cross of Calvary is the original and enduring symbol of God's love and justice. Since Calvary it has extended from its religious mandate to become a symbol of hope and a second chance. The cross of Jesus Christ is a refuge where the believer finds redemption and renewed meaning to life. Today's reflection is for the global Christian community.

HOLY BIBLE

How does the holy cross deliver justice? Let us examine the Holy Bible. The ancient scriptures show us that one of the first persons to be convicted by his own guilt was Pontius Pilate.

This powerful prefect of the Roman Empire was bestowed with sweeping political and military power. His rule was a period of tyranny that caused affliction on the innocent population. He was not a man who was able to relate to the suffering of the people. Pontius Pilate exploited the power vested in him by the Roman Emperor Tiberius, and was supported by those who dwelt in the shadow of his regal influence. Contrastingly Jesus Christ lived amidst the Israelites, befriending the fishermen and lepers. During his engagement with the people he soon became famous as a teacher, preacher and healer. He was accessible to those who needed his help. A character like Jesus, a Jew was a threat to the dominant rule of the Roman prefect.

Prior to the incident with Jesus, the Antiquities of the Jews records that Pilate brought Roman standards with the image of Caesar and placed it in town. This offended the Jews and they surrounded Pilate's house



take responsibility as a Roman leader, Pontius Pilate gave the choice to the crowds to select between Jesus and another convicted murderer. Fueled by the heat of the moment the crowds decided to ignorantly call for the release of the prisoner charged with murder and chanted "crucify him" against the unblemished Lamb of God, Jesus.

TRIAL OF JESUS

Having cunningly manipulated a majority of the masses Pilate the powerful Roman governor symbolically washed his hands in a basin of water- to vindicate himself at the trial of Jesus. Sometime later Gods divine justice struck him like lightning. Used to suppressing people with military might, he slaughtered a group of Samaritans at Mount Gerizim.

This was his downfall. Pilate was summoned to Rome before the Emperor Caligula (the Emperor Tiberius had just passed away). Pilate was found guilty and removed of his post immediately. He was disgraced before all of Rome. The church historian Eusebius records that a guilty Pilate who harassed the people lived in shame. He ended his own life by committing suicide. God's justice was set in motion from the start and took effect.

The second person in this crucifixion episode is Judas, one of the 12 disciples. He was overcome by the desire for money, and did not hesitate to betray his own friend Jesus. For 30 pieces of silver, Judas revealed the location and identity of Jesus, with a kiss. A hug of evil betrayal. The other 11 disciples would have been so stunned by their comrade.

Yet that is how the devil influences those he controls. Judas watched as Jesus was beaten and dragged away. Hours later conviction descended on Judas. His own guilt became so unbearable that he ran to a tree and hung himself in shame. The second suicide. God's divine justice resonated so clearly in the Holy Bible.

The cross is a symbol of justice. The soldiers who crucified Jesus also lived with guilt. Almighty God will never tolerate injustice and abuse of power.

The cross also reflects the love of God for his people. For all people who look to him for the forgiveness of sins. The love of Jesus in paying fully for our sins is a great reflection of his love for us. Jesus died for our sins at Calvary. His blood cleanses us. He endured the pain and shame of a gruesome public death so that we might receive salvation and the gift of eternal life.

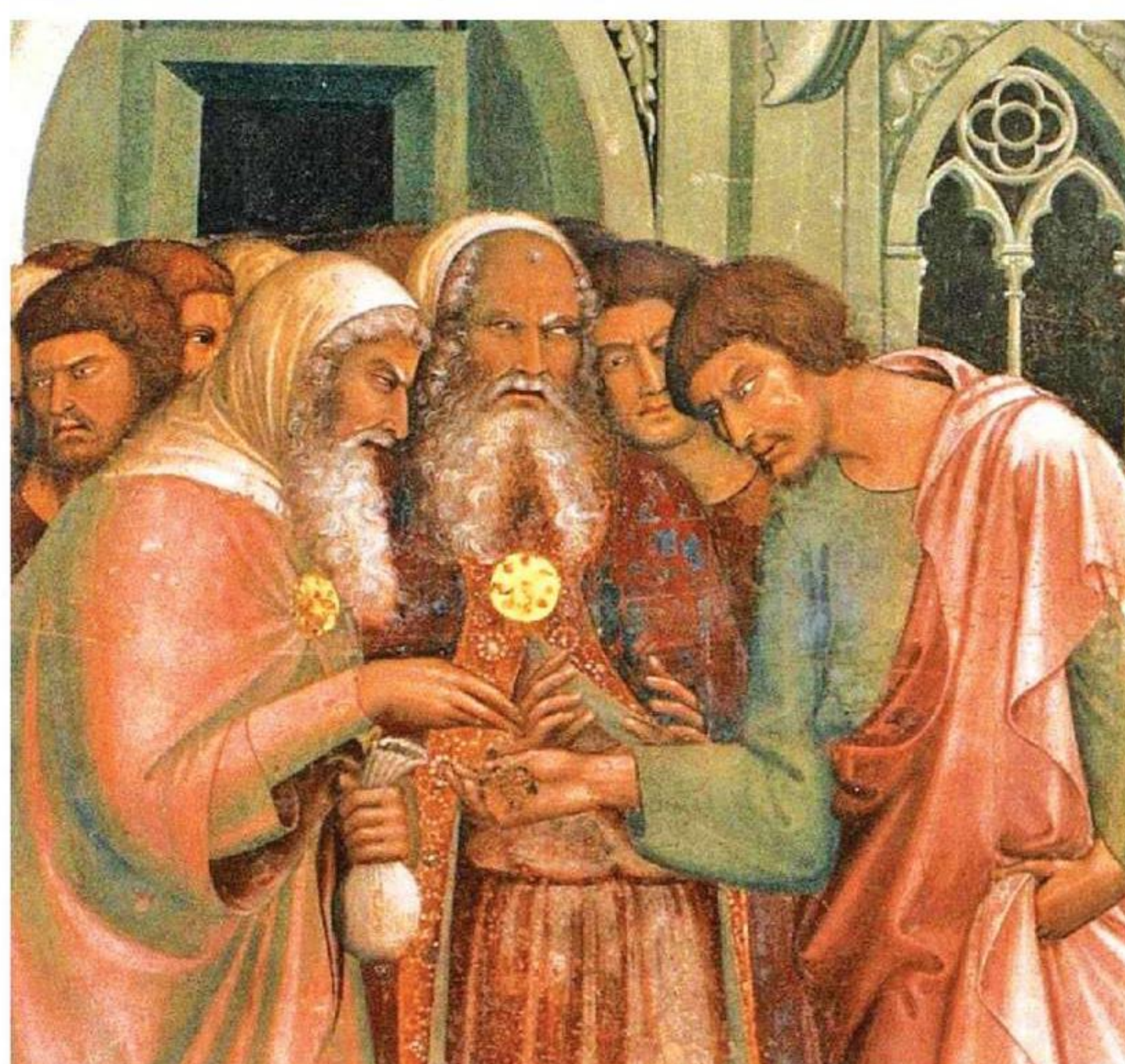
The iron nails didn't hold Jesus to the cross- it was his love for us that held him there. As we observe Good Friday at church or home, our risen Saviour is omnipresent. He watches over us. Jesus caringly intercedes for us to the father. Jesus understands our worries and knows our struggles.

He will protect us and defend us, if we place our trust in him. Our Jehovah God is our provider, in every situation. As we move into Easter may the resurrection power of Jesus empower us to be bold and patient with hope. May the blessed Holy Spirit guide us to propagate the justice and love of Calvary's Cross.

for five days in Caesarea. Pilate is also accused of robbing the public's money from the temple treasury (korbanos). Feeling intimidated Pilate ordered the Roman Army to wield their swords. The Jews united and stood their ground. Realizing his error Pilate relented the move and withdrew the soldiers.

So a plot was planned and a trap was set to arrest Jesus, with no proper charges and no credible witnesses. A few of the Pharisees and High Priests, who were so 'ritualistically' holy supported the Roman administration in this grand plot. Jesus was arrested by the Roman soldiers (a cohort of 500 troops to arrest an unarmed man) and presented to the governor of Judea. Jesus stood in silence before Pilate.

The shrewd Roman prefect used a draconian law called the *cognitio extra ordinem*- a law used in trial for capital punishment. Jesus was presented to court with no credible witness or charge sheet. Pilate also had the habit of releasing a jailed convict during this season- the Passover. Not wanting to



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