

Your Faithfulness

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbCn-BF5uBY>

Lyrics: <https://genius.com/Brian-doerksen-your-faithfulness-lyrics>

Part 1

The sun was beginning to creep through the sky as the soldiers dragged him towards the palace of Pilate. The Sanhedrin was not supposed to hold legal proceedings at night, but this matter needed to be dealt with. For hours, they questioned him and argued about what to do with him. They were desperate to find some reason to do what they needed to do to restore the peace, but despite being weary, he was calm and measured- this was not the first time they had tried to back him into a corner, and he knew what was coming. But they needed Roman permission for the death penalty, and they had to have evidence that he had broken the law to get that permission. They needed witnesses, and despite the fact that his teaching and ministry had been very public, they were struggling to find any. In the absence of witnesses to establish guilt, there was no legal need for him to prove his innocence. But they decided that he posed enough of a threat that it was necessary to bend the rules, the ends justified the means.

There had been much discussion over the previous weeks about what to do with this radical teacher, spreading dangerous ideas and doing things that undermined their authority. Some feared that the Romans would come and take away their place and by extension, their people. They were an occupied land, and their freedom was dependent on keeping Rome happy. Caiaphas the high priest already believed it would be better for Jesus to die than to risk the whole nation perishing. They were so intent on preserving the system, managing politics and power, they would do whatever it took. So after a quick trial after daybreak to make it legal enough, here they were, pulling him through the streets towards Pilate, ready to demand the death penalty.

These were ancient streets. These stones held a legacy of footprints of the people of God, of their gatherings and festivals, of their daily lives, the place they all came back to as the centre of their faith and their heritage. Families were already up and about their business, it was passover time, almost everyone had family visiting and extra things to do, Mothers were making breakfast and trying to get excitable children ready for the day. There were tents around the countryside, all the people come home to join in the festivals, some of them already in the city, hoping to buy supplies while there were still some left, getting ready to head to the temple to pray and catching up with loved ones they hadn't seen since the last festival.

Through this, passes this strange parade of Jesus, the soldiers restraining him, the priests and teachers of the law ready to ask for his conviction, and a growing crowd of curious onlookers. All his friends and supporters had scattered, save a couple perhaps hiding in the crowd, but he stood alone, with no advocate, no one to speak for him or even provide solidarity. They wait outside the palace, to enter the house of a gentile would leave them ceremonially unclean, and they still have to do the sacrifices later.

A sleepy and mildly irritated Pilate comes to see what they want. The Jewish leaders banging on his door this loudly, this early in the morning, can't be a good sign. But the man they are holding prisoner is standing quietly waiting. Not struggling, not cursing his captors, not angry. Almost resigned. Alone and quiet amidst a sea of angry men, of big emotions, of people listening to the fear and getting caught up in the crowd, worried about losing their way of life and willing to fight for it. He stands. Quiet, unyielding, still in control.

Part 2

Peter wept bitterly. The rising sun glinted off the tears staining his cheeks. He wasn't sure how long he'd been there. In a city full and bursting with people, he barely noticed any of them. It was all for nothing now. He had promised to lay down his life for Jesus, he had spent the last 3 years of his life with the Messiah, someone he had come to dearly love.

I will never deny you! The memory tasted bitter and once again threatened to steal all the breath from his lungs. The one time it mattered, the one time he really needed to stand up for his teacher, he had failed. And the way things were looking there would be no do-overs, he might never see him again. A fresh wave of tears threatened to overwhelm him. What did it matter what people thought anyway. What do you do when you betray God? Maybe if he'd done something different, things wouldn't have turned out this way. With horror he relived the moment when Jesus had predicted his betrayal. He'd been indignant at the time. As if he could betray his friend. Jesus knew all along. Peter was scared to think what Jesus might think of him. Maybe he was just a failure, and God knew all along. That he couldn't be trusted. His mind leapt to all the times he'd got it wrong, he'd put his foot in it or said something stupid. Part of him desperately wanted to see his friend one more time.. The other part of him couldn't bear to see the disappointment in his eyes. Even if by some miracle he escaped, it could never be the same. He'd gone too far this time.

Part 3

Pilate stared curiously at the crowd in front of him. They had by this time, gotten thoroughly worked up, and while he had the forces necessary to subdue them if he must, he was hoping it wouldn't get to that. His job was to keep the peace and this week of all weeks, he didn't want raised eyebrows from his superiors and questions about whether he could handle the job. Maintaining an air of calmness as best he could, he raised his hands to silence the crowd. He studied the prisoner for a moment. He'd heard a little of this man. He'd found it prudent to keep a basic awareness of what was going on, he didn't like surprises. His information said this man was popular with the people. That would explain the priests, they could get a little antsy when they felt threatened, he wondered where they had gotten the crowd. The chief priest's voice broke through with accusations of subversion and that he had claimed to be a king. Pilate was starting to get good at telling when they felt envy and were trying to frame an accusation in such a way to make it sound like his problem. What did surprise him, was that this man Jesus, stood there silently, making no attempt to defend himself on what were clearly trumped up charges. Pilate stepped down to look him in the eye.

"Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus' words were careful and measured.

"Yes, it is as you say".

Pilate watched him a moment longer, and turned to walk back up the stairs and sit on his judgement seat.

"I find no basis for a charge against this man".

The emotional tension in the atmosphere nearly doubled.

"He's been stirring people up all over Judea, he started in Galilee and has come all the way here". They were pushing hard. Pilate thought for a moment. Galilee is Herod's jurisdiction. This problem didn't have to be his, and Herod was even in town. He sent them off to Herod and sighed with some relief as they left. This matter still troubled him.

An hour or so later, they were back. This time Jesus was dressed in an elegant robe. The crowd seemed a little crueller. What had been tension and indignance when they left had turned to sneering and anger. Apparently Jesus had not defended himself to Herod either, and accusing him once again had heightened all their emotions further.

He looked down at the weary man in front of him, and then addressed the crowd.

"You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him, and then release him."

The prisoner was clearly not trying to stir up trouble, but he was wary of the crowds, and having an innocent man beaten, might be a price worth paying to settle the crowd and act as a sufficient deterrent.

The priests and crowds started shouting louder. Pilate considered his options. He typically released a prisoner as a sign of goodwill over the feasts. Perhaps.. There was a notorious prisoner called Barabbas locked up. One who really had stirred up trouble, and by all accounts was a rough and rebellious kind of man, also charged with murder. Hoping they would get some perspective, he asked which of the prisoners they wanted released. The peaceful man standing in front of him, or the rebel locked away for a good reason.

"Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"

In the noise, Pilate barely noticed the servant at his feet. Holding his hand up to hush them for a moment, he beckoned the servant forward.

"I have a message from your wife sir. She said, `` Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.''" The servant bowed again, and Pilate nodded to dismiss him. Truth be told, Pilate was also uncomfortable about this one. He tried appealing to them again, but they kept shouting "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Why? What crime has he committed."

They just shouted louder.

He called for a bowl of water. Dipping his hands in, he declared "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility". The people readily agreed, and with a heavy heart, he called his guard to bring out and release Barabbas. There would be more trouble where that came from. He looked into the eyes of Jesus one final time. Eyes that could see through you, but not eyes of hate. Eyes that understood. There would be every right for hate to be in those eyes, this was unjust, and what was to come was particularly cruel. He didn't think he would ever forget those eyes, and this quiet man, with an air of authority and a spirit of gentleness. He wished he could have convinced the crowd. For a moment he was angry at Jesus. If he'd made an effort to argue his innocence, maybe he could have found a way, it wasn't his fault. Not entirely. But he feared a riot, and a riot in Jerusalem during Passover could get very big and very messy, very quickly, he shuddered to think what would happen to him. He realised he was still looking into Jesus' eyes, and wondered if Jesus knew his thinking. He quickly turned away and walked back up the steps, afraid that he might betray his feelings if he stayed. He formally released the prisoner. There was a difficult conversation he wasn't looking

forward to having with his wife, but he couldn't stay to watch. His hands still felt damp, and some of the water had dripped onto his sandals. But he didn't feel innocent. They beat him and led him away, through those ancient streets once more.

Benedictus

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGbHnJCDMyE>

Lyrics: <https://genius.com/Karl-jenkins-benedictus-lyrics>

Translation:

Blessed

Blessed

He that cometh in the name of the Lord,

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest

Hosanna in the highest

Hosanna in the highest

Hosanna in the highest

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord