

**24 Hours That Changed the World by Adam Hamilton**  
**Session 4- “Jesus, Barabbas, and Pilate”**

**Session Goals:**

- Explore the Gospel’s account of Jesus’ trial before Pontius Pilate;
- Explore the meaning of Jesus’ seeming determination to submit himself to suffering and ultimately death at the hands of religious and political authorities;
- Consider how this part of Jesus’ suffering is understood to be purposeful and redemptive by examining the themes of atonement, messiahship, and the “suffering servant.”

**Opening Prayer -**

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh – my adversaries and foes – they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident . . . Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! (Psalm 27:1-3, 11-14)

**Biblical Foundation**

*As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to their custom. The he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (Mark 5:1-15)*

**Watch the Video (9:10 minutes)**

**Questions for Discussion -**

- Why do you think early Christians developed devotional exercises such as the Stations of the Cross? What can you imagine feeling as you followed behind someone carrying a cross along the Via Dolorosa?
- In what ways are we still presented with the opportunity to confront our culture by choosing the way of love (Jesus) or the way of violence (Barabbas)?
- If you had been at Jesus’ trial, which character would you most likely identify with: Pilate? The crowd? Barabbas?

**Bible Study and Discussion:**

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12, 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9

**52:13** See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. **14** Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—**15** so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand..... **53:1** Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? **2** He

grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. **3** He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. **4** Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. **5** But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. **6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **7** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **8** By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. **9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. **10** Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. **11** After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. **12** Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors..... **42:1** "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. **2** He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. **3** A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; **4** he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope." ..... **49:1** Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name. **2** He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. **3** He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." **4** But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." **5** And now the LORD says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—**6** he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." ..... **50:4** The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. **5** The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. **6** I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. **7** Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. **8** He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! **9** It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

- The Gospels seem to suggest that Jesus saw a connection between his suffering and Isaiah's vision of the "suffering servant." And as Adam Hamilton mentions in the book (page 64), the early church also made that connection. Read the fourth Servant Song that begins with Isaiah 52:13 and reflect on how those words support or give meaning to the story of Jesus' suffering.

Read John 18:28-38

**28** Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. **29** So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" **30** "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." **31** Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," they

objected. **32** This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die. **33** Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" **34** "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" **35** "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" **36** Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." **37** "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." **38** "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

- Compare Jesus' response to Pilate in John's account with Jesus' near silence in the Synoptic accounts?

Read Acts 3:11-26 (Peter's Second Sermon); Acts 8:26-39 (Philip and the Ethiopian)

**3:11** While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. **12** When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? **13** The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **14** You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **15** You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. **16** By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. **17** "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. **18** But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. **19** Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, **20** and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. **21** Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. **22** For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. **23** Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.' **24** "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. **25** And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' **26** When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

**8:26** Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **27** So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." **30** Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. **31** "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." **34** The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" **35** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. **36** As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" **37** Some manuscripts include here Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

- In this sermon, Peter twice uses the term “servant” to refer to Christ and refers to the prophet’s prediction that this man would suffer. The Scripture Philip explains to the Ethiopian eunuch is one of the “suffering servant” passages in Isaiah. Why do you think it was so important for the first Christians to acknowledge an Old Testament context for Jesus’ suffering and death?

## **Wrapping Up In Perspective**

To conclude the session, ask group members to consider and discuss one or more of the following perspectives. For the painting of Ciseri’s *Ecce Homo*, google it or print out a color copy and display it or pass it around for the group to see.

### **IN THE ANTONIA FORTRESS**

Imagine yourself next to “the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement” (John 19:13) just outside the fortified home of Pontius Pilate. It is high noon, and the sun is bright and hot. What do you see the Roman guards doing behind you? Look out on the crowds of Jews straining to hear the proceedings. What do you see in their faces? What do you see in Pilate’s face? What do you see in Jesus’ face? What insights into this part of the Passion story come from reading the faces of those involved in the scene?

### **INSIDE THE MIND OF BARABBAS**

Imagine that you are a criminal, guilty of murder and sedition. You have just been set free because someone you have never met is about to be crucified in your place. What are you thinking? What will you do next?

### **IN FRONT OF CISERI’S *ECCE HOMO***

One of the striking characteristics of this painting of Jesus before Pilate is its almost photographic quality. This was one of Antonio Ciseri’s trademarks. Notice particularly the perspective of this scene: We view in sharp detail the figures and action from behind. What does the artist want the viewer to know about this moment in the Passion narrative from the way he has painted it? Why do you think he chose to depict the scene from behind? In the painting, whose face is visible and whose is not? Why might that be significant?

## **Sharing Joys & Concerns**

### **Closing Prayer**

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. (1Peter 5:10-11)