

May 16

Scriptures: Read Luke 23

Key Verse: “That very day Pilate and Herod became friends...” (Luke 23:12)

Overview

In this chapter and the latter half of the previous chapter, we read of the crucifixion. Some have called this the “Passion” narrative. In 22:47-53 we see Jesus arrested (even while His disciples were eager to use those newly purchased swords—“Lord, should we strike with our swords? V.49b). Then, in verse 54-62, we read of Peter’s denial that he was a follower of Jesus. After this, Jesus is taken before Pilate and Herod, and then led to Golgotha. He dies and is buried. The story is over; or so His enemies thought.

What happened next must wait for Luke’s concluding chapter. But there is something in this chapter, which is very rarely commented on. It’s a reference to two old enemies becoming friends.

We don’t really have any information on why Herod and Pilate were enemies. Maybe it was due to a clash of authority. Both men were accountable to Rome, but Herod, as Tetrarch, had a bit more autonomy than Pilate, as the Governor. Perhaps Herod resented that his autonomy could be challenged or ignored by Pilate from time to time: he could “go over Herod’s head” at will. And Pilate might have shared a common disgust for the paranoid Herod and flaunted it. But this is speculation.

For whatever reason, they were enemies, and Jesus made them friends. Isn’t that ironic? They their new view of one another sprang, not from being new men, but from trying to deal with “that Man”. They were both fascinated with and flummoxed by Jesus. Herod grew tired of his game with Jesus and had Him ridiculed and mocked. Pilate had Him crucified. Neither knew exactly why. “And it wasn’t all bad—after all, it pleased the people and we’ve become friends!”

Jesus became a friend too: with sinners.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus that You’re a friend of sinners. We need Your friendship. You’ve shown us the greatest love of all. You laid down Your life for Your friends (John 15:13).