The Fifth Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows - 1977

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. LUKE 23: 1-23

This is the story of HUMAN DEPRAVITY, SIN, EVIL as opposed to what is GOOD, HONEST, and TRUE. This is the story of the DEEP, DARK, DEMONIC COMPULSION OF SIN as opposed to everything that is DECENT, RIGHT, and PROPER. This is the story of SIN, CRUELTY, BLASPHEMY, BLIND HATE -- the whole VILE CATALOG down to the LAST DREGS OF THE LOWEST DEGENERACY -- every WRONG APPETITE, every UNNAMED VICE to the LAST and LOWEST of them all ----- as it RUNS HEAD ON into HIM who is LOVE, and COMPASSION, and MERCY -- HIM who is really LORD OF ALL and SAVIOR OF ALL! This is YOUR STORY and MY STORY as we come FACE TO FACE with the SINLESS SON OF GOD! ..... In one way or another we ALL find ourselves with CAIAPHAS, Annas, PILATE, HEROD, the SOLDIERS, or the RIOTOUS CROWD. That is to say: WE ALL WERE THERE to PASS SENTENCE and CONDEMN THE INNOCENT JESUS TO DEATH! The WHOLE STORY is OUR STORY!

Look at what happens -- and please try to identify. PILATE is, after all, an AMBITIOUS GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. He is NOT a FOOL. He is, however, IRRITATED that he is AWAKENED so early in the morning to perform a piece of OFFICIAL BUSINESS. Moreover, history tells us that PILATE hates the JEWS --- three times before he almost lost his job by OVER-RIDING the JEWS too HARSHLY. ..... And now, Pilate LIKES THE LOOKS OF JESUS. He is NOT inclined to take the report of the JEWISH COUNCIL very seriously ------

the REPORT that "THIS FELLOW HAS BEEN LEADING OUR PEOPLE TO RUIN BY TELLING THEM NOT TO PAY THEIR TAXES TO THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT AND BY CLAIMING HE IS OUR MESSIAH -- A KING." PILATE -- just by the looks of JESUS -- does not take that accusation very seriously. He examines JESUS and then says: "I FIND NO FAULT IN THIS MAN." He examines HIM a second time and says; "YOU BROUGHT THIS MAN TO ME, ACCUSING HIM OF LEADING A REVOLT AGAINST THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT. I HAVE EXAMINED HIM THOROUGHLY ON THIS POINT AND FIND HIM INNOCENT." And again a THIRD TIME PILATE confesses: "I HAVE FOUND NO REASON TO SENTENCE HIM TO DEATH."

Now you and I can perhaps STAND BY and CLAP OUR HANDS and say to ourselves: "Good for you, Pilate! Hang in there!" But the real question is: "HOW OFTEN DO WE HANG IN THERE?" We are SO QUICK to CONDEMN people like PILATE -- to criticize ~~their~~ His lack of BACKBONE and FORTITUDE ----- but when the 'chips are down" and the "going gets tough" and we are "baked into a corner" and it becomes "embarrassing to stand up for Jesus" --------- JUST WHAT DO WE DO? ..... Don't we finally, ultimately GIVE IN to the WILL OF THE CROWD? "Can you be the only sane Christian in the whole world? Are you really the only one who knows what is right?" You may sit in the JUDGMENT SEAT all right -- but it is the VOICE OF THE MAJORITY that rules: "THEY SHOUTED LOUDER AND LOUDER FOR JESUS' DEATH, AND THEIR VOICES PREVAILED!" ..... PILATE gave in to POPULAR DEMAND -- and SO DO WE!

Or look at HEROD! HEROD -- the degenerate son of Herod the Great -- has nothing but an EMPTY MIND -- he is IDLE, VICIOUS, SHALLOW, LUXURIOUS, PETTY, COMTEMPTIBLE, CRUEL! He wants to AVOID even the SHADOW of ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANYTHING....."If JESUS can PERFORM any MAGIC or MIRACLES for him, WELL AND GOOD ------ BUT DON'T ASK ME TO PASS JUDGMENT UPON HIM!"

And don't WE do that? I dare to say that some of us get NO CLOSER TO JESUS than to want HIM to PERFORM MIRACLES or TRICKS for us. We want Him to become some sort of "DIVINE BELL HOP" in our HOUR OF NEED. And when HE REFUSES to SATISFY OUR AMBITIONS, we just "SEND HIM BACK" and let "SOMEBODY ELSE" -- like PILATE -- deal with the problem. .... If JESUS cannot be a "BIONIC MAN" or a "BIONIC WOMAN" or a "BIONIC CHILD" ---- then HE is NOT WORTH our time.

Do you see YOURSELF with BARABBAS? He is the one who DESERVES EVERYTHING THAT HE HAS COMING. HE DESERVES TO DIE. HE DERSERVES CRUCIFIXION. HE DESERVES HELL. HE DESERVES THE HELL OF HELLS. He is GUILTY of "INSURRECTION AND MURDER." ///.... BUT HE GOES FREE --- and JESUS, the INNOCENT ONE, D I E S! ..... Do you SEE YOURSELF WITH BARABBAS? DO YOUR SEE YOURSELF BEING SET FREE because HE WAS CRUCIFIED?