



Pharisees & The Crowd Agree: Kill Jesus

17th Confirmation Class Lesson

Supplies Needed: Notebooks; Handout; timer/stopwatch; 1 clothespin per student (the wooden kind with a spring that opens and closes on the one end);

Explain & DO Opening Activity: 7-11-21

- This activity will sort of look like Paper, Rock, Scissors
- First, we'll be getting into groups of 2.
- Then each of you will start with banging your fist against your hand and saying 1,2,3.
- On three (not after three, but ON 3), you will throw out a number using the fingers of your one hand.
- Together, you and your partner in the course of 1 minute are to see how many times you can create the number 7 by adding your two numbers together.
- So if I threw a 5 and my partner threw a 2, we would have 7.
- Except for counting to three, this is a NO TALKING event.
- We will have to stand up for this.
- Remember to count how many times you and your partner(s) got the right number. After every round, on the easel, we'll record our numbers.
- Any questions?
- On your mark, get set...GO!
- [after 1 minute] Ok...and...STOP!
- How many times did you get to the number 11?
- *******(Say only after first round): Now we will get into groups of 3 and do the same thing. Remember, NO TALKING! The number you'll be trying to add up to is...**11**. Ready? Set? Go!
- [after 1 minute] Ok...and...STOP!
- How many times did you get to the number 11?
- *******(Say only after second round): Now we will get into two groups of ____ (use whatever number that will evenly divide the class). Remember, NO TALKING! The number you need to create is.... **21**! Ready? Set? Go!
- [after 1 minute] Ok...and...STOP!
- How many times did you get to the number 21?
- *******(Say only after third round): Now we will all get into one group. Remember, NO TALKING! The number we'll be trying to add up to is...**30**. Ready? Set? Go!.
- [after 1 minute] Ok...and...STOP!
- How many times did you get to the number 30?

***Be sure to tell the students what number they need to get to as close to the start of each round as possible as a way to cut down on the temptation of students assigning numbers before the group starts.

ASK

- As the group size got larger, did it seem like throwing the right number got harder?
- Looking at the numbers on the easel, does the data back us up on our observations?
- So one thing that this activity shows us is something that we might already know: The more people that get involved in a decision, the harder it is to get agreement, right?
- So how DO groups come to a decision? Or, another way to think about this is: What are some ways that a group can become unified or of one mind? (3 main ways: by having a common goal, by having a common enemy, by giving authority to a leader)
- We'll come back to this as we discuss today's scripture story.
- But first...!

OPENING PRAYER

CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK REVIEW

Since the last class, we were to think about ways that we do not support our friends and/or Jesus/God as well as we would like. To help us think about this, we were encouraged to use the list of actions that we fined the characters in the story from last class as a checklist of ways we ourselves might fall short.

So, what do you think? How do you not support your friends and/or Jesus/God as you would like?

REVIEW

- Concepts we've talked about recently in class:
 - We've talked about the parable of the Sower and how, if we thought of the Word of God like a seed and thought of ourselves as soil, then we'd have to prepare the soil to receive the seed. One way to do this preparing is by paying attention to our breathing.
 - With the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem (what we call Palm Sunday) and cleaning out the temple, we talked about how following Jesus is disruptive. That disruptive quality of following Jesus can be unexpected and scary.
 - The Last Supper happens on the night Jesus is arrested. The Last Supper is the Passover meal, and Jesus equates his body and blood with the lambs of the Passover story that were slaughtered to save the oldest son and led to freeing the Israelites from slavery 1400 years before Jesus lived. Jesus during this meal demonstrates the

“take, bless, break, give” pattern that if lived out/practiced will bring communion to a community.

- Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane asking that God “remove this cup.” God does not remove the cup. Therefore Jesus allows himself to be arrested by the Jewish authorities and brought to the *house* of the high priest. Jesus is betrayed by Judas, abandoned by the disciples and denied by Peter. Everything’s falling apart. At this point in the story, Jesus’ obedience to God’s call is detrimental to his well-being.

TELL

- During these past few weeks and next number of weeks, we are focusing on the last week of Jesus’ ministry. It started with what we know as “Palm Sunday.” Today, we’re going to read and talk about Jesus’ trial.

READ Luke 22 & 23 (The Message) Still at the High Priest’s house during the night of Jesus’ arrest:

63 The men in charge of Jesus began poking fun at him, slapping him around. 64 They put a blindfold on him and taunted, "Who hit you that time?" 65 They were having a grand time with him. 66 When it was morning, the religious leaders of the people and the high priests and scholars all got together and brought him before their High Council. 67 They said, "Are you the Messiah?" 68 Jesus replied, "If I asked what you meant by your question, you wouldn't answer me. 69 So here's what I have to say: From here on the Son of Man takes his place at God's right hand, the place of power."

70 They all said, "So you admit your claim to be the Son of God?"

"You're the ones who keep saying it," Jesus replied.

71 But they had made up their minds, "Why do we need any more evidence? We've all heard him as good as say it himself."

Luke 23 Jesus’ “official” trial

1 Then they (the Jewish leaders) all took Jesus to Pilate 2 and began to bring up charges against him. They said, "We found this man undermining our law and order, forbidding taxes to be paid to Caesar, setting himself up as Messiah-King." 3 Pilate asked him, "Is this true that you're 'King of the Jews?'"

"Those are your words, not mine," Jesus said back to Pilate.

4 Pilate told the high priests and the accompanying crowd, "I find nothing wrong here. He seems harmless enough to me."

5 But they were vehement. "He's stirring up unrest among the people with his teaching, disturbing the peace everywhere, starting in Galilee and now all through Judea. He's a dangerous man, endangering the peace."

6 When Pilate heard that, he asked, "So, he's a Galilean?" 7 Realizing that he properly came under Herod's jurisdiction, he passed the buck to Herod, who just happened to be in Jerusalem for a few days to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread (the Passover). 8 Herod was delighted when Jesus showed up. He had wanted for a long time to see him, he'd heard so much about him. He hoped to see Jesus do something spectacular. 9 He peppered him with questions. But Jesus didn't answer - not one word. 10 The high priests and religion scholars were right there, saying their piece, strident and shrill in their accusations. 11 Mightily offended, Herod turned on Jesus. His soldiers joined in, taunting and jeering.

Then they dressed him up in an elaborate king costume and sent him back to Pilate. 12 That day Herod and Pilate became political allies. Always before they had kept their distance.

13 Then Pilate called in the high priests, rulers, and the others 14 and said, "You brought this man to me as a disturber of the peace. I examined him in front of all of you and found there was nothing to your charge. 15 And neither did Herod, for he has sent him back here with a clean bill of health. It's clear that he's done nothing wrong, let alone anything deserving death. 16 I'm going to warn him to watch his step and let him go." 18 At that, the crowd went wild: "Kill him! Give us Barabbas instead!" 19 (Barabbas had been thrown in prison for starting a riot in the city and for murder – releasing one prisoner during the Festive of Unleavened Bread was a yearly tradition.) 20 Pilate still wanted to let Jesus go, and so spoke out again. 21 But they kept shouting back, "Crucify! Crucify him!" 22 He tried a third time. "But for what crime? I've found nothing in him deserving death. I'm going to warn him to watch his step and let him go." 23 But they kept at it, a shouting mob, demanding that he be crucified. And finally they shouted him down. 24 Pilate caved in and gave them what they wanted. 25 He released the man thrown in prison for rioting and murder, and gave them Jesus to do whatever they wanted.

ASK

- If you ever get arrested (and I hope you don't), and the police officers take you to the mayor's/first selectman's home and start beating you, what might be some of your thoughts? (I'm in trouble now! Where's my lawyer? This isn't right!)
- Chapter 22, verse 70 & 71, what exactly is Jesus accused of by the Pharisees?
- Chapter 23, verse 2: What is Jesus accused of when the Pharisees bring him to the Romans/Pilate?
- Why do you think the Pharisees added charges?
- Chapter 23, verse 4: What is Pilate's verdict?
- Verse 5, in response to Pilate's verdict, do the Pharisees change the charges again?
- In the face of these angry people, what does Pilate do? (passes the buck)
- Verse 8, what is Herod's response to seeing Jesus (one of delight)
- Verse 10, *now* what is Herod's response to Jesus? (one of offense)
- Verse 12, why do you think this thing with Jesus made Pilate and Herod allies? (what makes a group of people come to an agreement? A shared problem, maybe. Or a shared enemy...)
- Verse 13 – 16: Again, what is Pilate's verdict?
- Verse 18 – 24: Why does Pilate change his verdict?
- Thinking back to our opening activity and conversation and now looking at this story, let's revisit the question of how a group comes to a decision...what brought people together in this story that we've read today? (dislike of Jesus, fear of displeasing certain groups of people)
- What elements were used to bring about consensus? (lies, fear, a common problem [Pilate and Herod] and anger)
- Do you think these elements that brought about a consensus will continue to sustain the group and hold it together...or not? Why?

SNACK

EXPLAIN/DO Clothespin Activity

- We're going to do another activity.
- It's really more of an illustration than anything else.
- But it seems fitting since we just read a painful story and this activity has a little bit of pain to it.
- First, everyone gets a clothespin [the wooden kind with a spring]
- Next, we're going to guess how many possible times we think we can open and close this clothespin in 1 minute. There's one catch though, you have to hold the clothespin a certain way.
- **The clothespin should be held so that it is pointing away from the index finger and thumb in a direct line with the finger and the thumb. Just the tip of the finger and the tip of the thumb should be holding onto the clothespin. You are to hold the clothespin away from the body and not use any other part of your body to help with the activity.**
- Let's write these guesses of how many times you can open and close the clothespin on the easel.
- OK, let's stand up for this. Ready? On your mark, get set...GO!
- Alright. One minute has passed. How many times did you open and close it?
- Let's match these up with our guesses. Not too bad, eh?
- Now we're going to try something else: How long do you think you can hold the clothespin open while using the same technique we used to open and close the clothespin?
- We're going to stand up for this activity. When the pain becomes too great and you can't hold the clothespin open anymore, sit down. I'll call the time out loud, so remember how long you went for before you sat down.
- **WE HAVE TO HOLD THE CLOTHES PIN THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE – ARM STRETCHED STRAIGHT OUT and just the thumb and forefinger to hold it.**
- OK, everyone's standing. Get ready to open on 3: 1, 2, THREE!
- Alright, while everyone's in pain and sitting down let's figure out how close we came to our guesses.

TELL

- First, let's rank these three activities in terms of least to most painful:
 - Leaving the clothespin closed,
 - opening and closing it,
 - and holding it open.
- Second, I said at the start of this activity that this activity is more of an illustration, so:
 - Think of the closed clothespin as a human being afraid (of things, others, God, etc).
 - Think of the open clothespin as a human being trusting of something (of things, others, God, etc).

- This illustration then shows that being afraid is the easiest. Fluctuating between fear and trust is difficult but usually bearable. But being trusting (staying open) all the time is the most painful.
- If we look at the story from today there are characters in the story who are represented by all three parts of this illustration.
 - The Pharisees and then the crowd were afraid at all times.
 - Pilate, and maybe even Herod, tried to be trusting (not of God, but of justice? Due process? Entertainment?), but couldn't stay open.
 - Jesus trusted God the whole time and was beaten and sentenced to death for it.
- At the very beginning of class (not today, but of the year), we talked about perspective.
- We talked about how there can be more than one perspective to an object that we looking at.
- Having more than one perspective offers a depth of understanding that one perspective cannot offer.
- There are more than two perspectives regarding this story, but these are the two we'll be talking about today and in future classes:
 - Jesus died *for* our sins (it's the Passover celebration and Jesus is saying at their last supper that his blood will be salvation for others – he's drawing on imagery of the lamb's blood saving the eldest son and freeing the Israelites from slavery – the lamb died so that others may live and live free). This perspective helps us understand why God would direct Jesus to allow himself to be arrested.
 - But this first perspective (a standard perspective in most churches) does not explain *why* Jesus was *killed*. The Pharisees did not want Jesus arrested and crucified so they'd be saved from their sins. Instead, they wanted Jesus gone because they did not like the ways that he showed them how their way, which was supposed to be God's way, was NOT God's way. And the crowd just got caught up in it (as crowds tend to do). A simple way to think about this is that Jesus was killed *because* of our sins (the way we live without God as illustrated by the Pharisees, Pilate and the Crowd will kill – every time – the way God intended us to live as illustrated by Jesus).
- We'll talk more about this in our next class.

CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK

Pay attention to your friends, small groups in school, in extra-curricular activities, etc to see how it is that they make decisions and what it is that brings them together – or if they're really "together" at all.

CLOSING PRAYER – ask for prayer requests and give time during prayer for students to pray.