

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

EVER ASKED

N.Y. - Danaher climbs into heavenly success + arms of The Law. Geo. Witting, Toy Mahan, 3 hrs.
110 Story World Trade Center - Manhattan. Matt. 27:22 35 hrs. pact, 1 yr. Planning, - Made a choice
3 Boys - 1 - Tough - wear shoes every day. 2. Blue jeans everyday 3 - transport themselves in an hour -

I would like to call you to this text. I think it needs careful hearing by every boy and girl, every man and woman, every older person. Because the text is a personal question from which there is no getting away from - and it was a question that was asked by Pilate. "What shall I do with Jesus?"

This occurred when Jesus was before the Roman governor, Pilate. And we discover profound meanings here. Pilate, if we got the meaning, was arraigned before Jesus. Jesus was a prisoner at the bar of Pilate. Waiting for a verdict and a sentence. Pilate, the Roman governor, stood at the bar of Jesus - waving the verdict. And the governor asked, what then, shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ.

As though the disposal of Jesus was in his hands. By the answering of that question, Pilate was deciding what would be necessary. In the fullness of time for Jesus to do with him.

I do not mean to say that Pilate was lost because of his action on this occasion. But it is certainly clear that if Pilate never repented, of that moment, then his destiny was sealed. It may be that years afterwards, he had lost his position in power, that he had purchased at the price of disloyalty to conscience. That he found the grace of Jesus sufficient to meet his needs.

I have classified this as the most important question ever asked.

Dr. Lee once said that he was glad for the Bible - it gives me a chance to see how other men chose. And the results. There is the contrast between Abraham's choice, and Lot's choice between Sodom. There is Moses choice of his fellows rather than the riches of Egypt. There is Joseph's choice in the prison house. And Daniel's choice of the king's vegetables - rather than his meats. Paul paid a glorious price when he chose his lot with the early Christians. Christ made a marvelous choice when he set his stage towards Jerusalem at the Garden of Gethsemane and at the judgement hall.

Adam's choice cost him Eden. Esau's his birthright. Lot's his home and herds. Absolom his father's throne. Saul his kingdom. The rich young ruler, the companionship of Jesus. Judas lost his apostleship. Demas his discipleship. Pilate, Agrippa, and Felix chose wrong and missed immortality. Ananias chose and was fooling no one but himself. Kaleb and Joshua chose well. While Jonah, in his first choice nearly shipwrecked himself and the crew. "

You, who listen to me tonight as fathers and mothers, and as Christian leaders - if you are concerned for our young people, God would say to you today. Ask what ye shall make of these young people. Would your answer prove that you know how to chose the things that make or matter most. Would your answer prove that you are a wise leader.

I recall that familiar story - a man without a country. It is the tale of a young Naval officer - in a moment of anger, he hoped he might never hear of the United States again. The court before which he had been brought said that this should be his punishment. He was kept aboard one ship after another, the rest of his life. Transferred from one vessel which was approaching America, as another was leaving. He never saw his country again. He was never allowed even to hear of it. All mention of it was cut out of the newspapers that he saw. No one ever mentioned it in his presence. The folly of his hot desire dawned on him as the

years went on. There were times in his own life when his contemporaries wished that Jesus had never crossed their path. He contemplated life. He raised questions. You remember the rich young ruler. He turned away sorrowful. Christ was asking too much.

Some people say a new surge of religion is sweeping across the world. But we wonder if this is really so. Can it be really trusted. Now there are lots of people who snap up cures for their troubles or some guarantee for security. They want something that is easy or cheap. But Jesus might still say tonight, as he said in his own disciples - ye know not what ye ask.

The demands of Christianity are heavy. And there are times when people today wish that Christ would depart out of their part of the world. They wished that they had never known him. They have great possessions - they have social structure. Suppose this figure of Christ were to be absolutely wiped out of the world. Gone from literature, gone from art, from ministry, from healing - utterly finally gone. Little we realize that the man without a country was without a home land. For his human being. And the man without Jesus is out of a dwelling place for his soul. Lord, to whom shall we go. Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Now as we come to look at this most important question ever asked, there are three or four things about it that I want to fix in your mind.

I. THE QUESTION DECLARED - (I MUST DO SOMETHING)

Yes, here is a question - Pilate faced it. He had to do something. But he trifled with it. And he made shipwreck of himself. And everyone else that handles it in the way that Pilate handles it, will be disappointed. That question is yours and mine. Because the question declares that I must do something with Jesus.

How shall I answer this question. What shall I do with it.

Maybe sometimes the best way to answer a question is to ask other questions. And maybe that is the way we ought to go through this greatest question that is ever asked.

What can I do with Jesus? You might reply immediately - I would suggest two things that you can do. You can crown him or you can crucify him. I can do none other than one of the two. Every one of us gives a vote for crowning him or for crucifying him. There is no middle course. Because his claim is supreme. He is either all he claims to be and all his followers claimed him to be.

Have you ever really considered the words that Jesus uttered as he stood in the midst of the multitude of men and women. Whose hearts were ruined with sorrow. Whose spirits were dejected. Whose hopes were defeated. Men and women in the grip of sin and vice. Physical pain. Weariness. And he said to them - come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest.

Now if that be not true - then that is the most cruel of all lies ever spoken. If it is the truth, then it is a truth that is worth living and dying for.

The man who can stand in the midst of human pain and temptation and can say, if he will come to me - I will give you rest. Or to be crucified if his claim is true. No, he ought to be crowned. What will you do with him. What can you do with him. Today, in Chesapeake. It is that he is able to take hold of the worst man and the worst woman and touch them with forgiveness and healing - and to make them into the best man and the best woman. He claims today that he can do this. He will present them faultless before God - so that God will not be ashamed of them. He shall not fail to command the respect of God.

Now anyone making that claim, should be crowned as king. Or I must crucify him or I must crown him.

You remember that Paul said I am the chief of sinners. Now he wrote that while he was standing in the presence of Christ. When a man stands in the presence of Christ, he always feels that he is the greatest sinner in the world. The further you get away from Christ, the better able you are to justify your sins.

Think about the difference. Before he knew Jesus - he made havoc with the church of God. Because he believed that Jesus was an imposture and that he never arose from the dead. That his claims were untrue. But the moment that the light broke upon him, he was convinced that when Jesus came to him with all honesty, he settled that question right then.

Pilate thought he could ignore Jesus. He had to do something with him. John 18:31. When they brought him to Jesus, Pilate said, take ye him and judge him according to your own law. Under the Roman rule over Palestine, the death penalty could be pronounced only by the Roman authorities.

The Civil cases and those involved in religious law, the Sanhedrin was in power to act. Regarding this case, Pilate looks not with favor upon it. But said, let other people decide Jesus' fate. Do not bother me with such trifles. I have more important business and things to take care of.

But the Jews replied it is not lawful for us to put any man to death. Pilate still had Jesus on his hands.

Is this your attitude towards Jesus. You got a lot of other things that are important. You cannot attain social things, intellectual things, political things.

And these things are going to take your concern. Christ, and religion, are for those of lesser genius. Thus you seek to pass it off as little importance.

You cannot ignore Jesus - anymore than Pilate did. You'll have Jesus on your hands and you must face it. You must turn your life over to him and claim him.

Do something - you must. There is no way to evade, I cannot avoid, I cannot escape.

I cannot be neutral respecting this greatest question ever asked. Now I can accept him as my Saviour - or I can reject him and turn him away. I can crown him as my Lord or I can crucify him. There are just two things - not three things. There is no neutral ground. I either must be his friend or his foe. Accept him or reject him. I must follow him or turn away from him. I either must say yes to him or no to him. I shall either be with him or against him.

The question declares, I must do something with Jesus. Who is to decide the question for me. Who is going to decide it. He declares - not somebody else. Certainly my foes are not going to decide it for me. And certainly my friends - even though I have trusted friends. I know they cannot decide it. I must myself decide it. It is not will I be forced to decide it. I will not be cohearsst to decide it. I am compelled to decide this question.

Jesus comes and stands before us and asks. What will you do with me. Do something with me - you must. What is it going to be. No body is going to compel me, drive me, or force me. I must face the question and I must answer it.

As a human being, I must say yes or no, to God. Here I am created a small individual in this world. And God makes a call. And where is the greatest danger in human life - there is none compared to it. To take this awful powerful choice that God has given men. I can ruin my life, my soul, my future. I can cast everything to the wind by the choice I make. God is never at fault. But a soul misses the way.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the ^{death} ~~death~~ of the wicked. But that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways. Why will you die, oh house of Israel. "

Certainly Jesus is (never at fault) that a soul misses the way. Look at Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. Behold your house is left desolate. Jesus is never at fault when souls miss the way. If some boy or girl tonight, or some young man or middle-aged man, or the oldest man here misses the way - or if any of us miss it - the fault will not be God's fault. But it will be ours.

The question declares - I must do something.

Luke 23:7 → Pilate sought to put the decision off on somebody else. In the cries of the mob, Pilate heard the word of Galilee. Luke 23:5. He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all the land, beginning from Galilee to this place. Learning that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate sent him to Herod. The king of Galilee. Who was in Jerusalem at the time. Herod and Pilate were not friends - they were at odds with one another.

So Pilate's gesture was not one of friendship - he wanted to get Jesus off of his hands. To shift his responsibility.

Herod soon sent Jesus back to Pilate. He still had Jesus on his hands.

You, who are listening to me, may seek to shift the responsibility concerning Jesus onto someone else's shoulder. But like Pilate, you will find that you still have Jesus on your hands. Sometimes husbands assume the position of religion in their wife's name. Or children, many times say well, father and mother will take care of religion. That is their responsibility as parents.

There is no such thing as someone else doing your faith in Christianity. Being born of Christian parents or being married to a Christian mate, does not make you a Christian.

Sin is personal. Salvation is also personal. A Christian father may leave a fortune - but not his faith to his children. Every other member of his family may sit at the dinner table and eat food. They may be satisfied physically. But still be starved spiritually. You have to eat for yourself. And there is no Herod who will take the responsibility. What you must do with Jesus - you must do something.

This question declares that I must do something - more than just admire Jesus. Luke 23:14, 15. You have brought this man unto me as one who perverted the people. And behold, I have examined him before you and have found no fault in this man.

II. THE QUESTION DECIDES THE RESULTS OF LIFE

Now this question not only declares that I must do something. It decides the results in my life. As to how this question is asked--this really is vital. In that it will decide all of these things about my life. You say what does it matter. Does it matter at all if I do something with Jesus or not.

First, it matters with your own life what you do with Jesus. Jesus offers (forgiveness of your sins.) If you will surely trust him - Jesus comes offering to give you a new heart. If you will trust him as your Saviour. He offers to change you and to make that change within you. And you will find peace with God. If you come and give yourself to Jesus as your Saviour, then in his own way, he will change and forgive.

If you do the right thing with Jesus, he will save you.

It makes all the difference in the world with your character. Your attitude toward Jesus Christ. As you crown him, it will ennoble your life. If you were here tonight and you go back to the time and place where you crowned Jesus Christ as Lord, you will realize that your character changed. When John looked at Jesus, he saw grace, truth, love, and life, and holiness. Some of us have known the struggles for a long time. And how patiently we have struggled. But rejecting this Christ, a man's standards of character and morality are lowered. He departs, from the higher ideal. And he descends.

Think of the man tonight who is (drunk) and in the gutter. Somewhere, where ever he is. He did not intend or think that he would ever be there. Do you suppose that any man in the grip of some Hellish dirty habit in the grasp of that evil. No, gradually the shame passed. And then he could sin without a blush.

And the question decides the results in yourself - your character.

Second, the question decides your influence and your relationship to everybody else. What you do with Jesus might even effect those you live with here in this world. And it determines your relationship. But you crown him and obey him.

You are the salt of the earth. The influence you exert prevents the spread of corruption. And gives the man who is struggling and weak a chance. Ye are the light of the world. You will so live in your business office. Wherever you are - that you will help to build a life that will help men toward God. But now if you refuse Jesus - instead of being salt that prevents corruption, you will corrupt society. And this is not in generality now. You let a man reject Jesus, and just see what kind of life he lives. What will you do with Jesus. It doesn't make any difference where you work. Where you live. But it makes a whole lot of difference and it decides your relationship to others. Jesus wants to save our lives and he wants to save our influence -- influences over other people. And what you do with Jesus not only matters to yourself, but it matters with your influence in everybody else. Do you desire and wish to live a life that is most useful.

You might say that I have patience and yes, I'd like to be useful. The most useful life comes when people do the right thing with Jesus. If you do not take Jesus as your master, the most useful life is impossible. Jesus comes wanting to shape our lives and our influence.

I remember reading, Dr. Truett told about an old man that was saved. He was 80 years old. Not many people live to be that old. Very few people, who are listening to me tonight will live to be 80. Three score and ten. But this old man lived to be 84. But he was gloriously saved at 80. Like a little child, he said yes, to

Touching those things whereof you accused him. So nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

Throughout the trial, Pilate sought to release Jesus. So much so that the Jews said, if you let this man go - you are not Caesar's friend. John 19:12.

Pilate feared Caesar more than he feared God. He recognized Jesus as righteous. Matt. 27:24. But he did not have the moral courage. Pilate had sought to get rid of Jesus by passing him on to Herod. He thought that he could also handle the situation by just admiring the man. But he stopped short of committing his life to him. Pilate may have even believed that Jesus was what he claimed to be. Because he declared Jesus innocent - even setting him forth his virtues. Saying that he could find no fault in this man.

There are a lot of people who favor Jesus but they do not trust him. A teacher, a miracle worker, a good philosopher. They compliment him. But they will not accept his Saviorhood. And they deny his resurrection and his sinless life. There are a lot of people who love the sermon on the mount. But they do not like the sacrifice on the mount. They accept him as teacher but they reject him as their Lord.

Dr. T. T. Shore wrote, the question that Pilate asked and that he answered so fatally is a question which we have every one of us still to answer. It is far more awful for us than it was for Pilate. We have to answer it with a full knowledge of what Jesus was and is. We have to answer it aided by the light of centuries streaming on the divine faith.

Jesus when Jesus called him. And then he went on to live four more years. He would often tell his grandchildren and great grandchildren, when they would say Grandpa, how old are you. The dear old man would say, my children, Grandpa is four years old. And they would laugh. Why Grandpa, you are 84. No, he would say. I am four years old. And they would all laugh again. Why Grandpa are you just four years old. And he would stop to explain. Well, my children, Grandpa lived 80 years (without) God. And Grandpa had gone these years without being a friend of Jesus. It was a long road and the (wrong side) of life - with (sin and Satan). And I have lived this (four years on the right side) Four years on the side of Jesus. And therefore, he insisted that he was four years old.

And there was deep truth in that humble way of stating it. And he had a point. And Jesus wants to save you and save your loved ones.

But third, this decision decides your (salvation) - your destiny. It is a matter of salvation - what you do with Jesus. Where are you going to spend eternity depends on what you are going to do with Jesus. Where shall I spend eternity - eternity, where shall I spend it. Shall I do so without Christ. Now, isn't that a matter that takes hold of your heart. Regardless of what age you are. Where will you spend eternity. I shall spend eternity according to what I do with Jesus here in the world. In this time, in the flesh, while I am here on earth. This question decides the results of my life. This life, and the life that lies beyond the border.

Now I believe that you who I am preaching too have had an opportunity - you have heard the Gospel before. The name of Christ has been lifted up, before you.

Jerry McAleer in the mission in New York City had a certain motto that was plain and caught your attention in that mission. "If I should die tonight, where would I go?" Every man and woman that comes into that place, sees that on the wall. Perhaps, I should ask you that tonight. If I should die tonight, where would I go?

This most important question decides the results of your life. The destiny.

III. THIS QUESTION DETERMINES MY FUTURE

Yes, what I do with Jesus - what can I do. I can accept him or I can reject him. I can say no. The final place, this question determines what Jesus will do with me. What shall I do with Jesus is your question, my question. The inescapable question. Yesterday is gone and shall never come back again. Shall it be decided tomorrow. We do not know about tomorrow. We have no promise of tomorrow. The Bible distinctly prohibits our building our lives on tomorrow. The Bible says today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. If you hear his voice, harden not your heart. Time to answer this question and to settle it is here and now.

Why should we settle this question of what we are to do with Jesus today.

It is because this question will determine what Jesus will do with us. This is God's house. He knows the best. And God has challenged that this is the hour for us to come to him.

We have already talked about - that we must decide the question. Jesus compelled them to crucify him. And Pilate began to wash his hands and said - I am innocent.

But that will never do. Listen Pilate, you cannot wash blood out in water.
Pilate, you stand before the judgement bar. That trip will not save you. God knows where the blame is. Those evil doers. That mob saying crucify him.

What then shall I do, Pilate said. He said, hand him over for us to crucify him. And he wrote a superscription - and he said, what I have written, I have written.

Now (no one) could compel Pilate to reject Jesus. Thank God there is no one that is going to compel you not to accept Jesus.

But like Pilate, you may try to substitute something else. Result to Roman customs.

V. 15 Matt. 27:15 - There was a custom. A prisoner whom they would or wished should be released as the Passover. At that time, Pilate was holding Barabbas leading a revolt in the country.

The Jews accused Jesus. That Barabbas was a murderer and John added, that he was also a robber. He was probably scheduled to die along with the two companions in crime that died with Jesus. But now the Jews would prefer Jesus rather than this vicious man.

V. 17 Pilate offered them the choice and to his dismay - they chose Barabbas. What a contrast these two prisoners. We have not time to disguss the difference between Barabbas and Jesus. But here is one that wanted to be a military messiah. Political one. But here was the Lord who refused that and he was leading a redemptive movement. The one promised salvation. Through the shedding of his own blood. The choice was greater than Pilate or the people knew.

So Pilate still had Jesus on his hands. Are you seeking to follow Pilate. Do you seek someone or something as a substitute for Jesus. Are you really rejecting the salvation offered by Christ. Are you depending upon your self-righteousness. Your own judgement.

You still have Jesus on your hands after you have done your best. What will you do with Jesus which is called Christ.

v. 24
Matt. 27:24 - Pilate says I am innocent of the blood of this person. See ye to it. He took the bowl of water and washed his hands.

v. 25
V. 25 - The Jews answered, his blood be on us and on our children. Now we can't put all the guilt there. Nor can you put the blame somewhere else. Jesus was crucified by Jews and Romans almost 2000 years ago. What concern is it to you - that cross that was raised up.

You have Jesus on your hands. And you still have to face the question, what must I do with him.

And it must be answered immediately. You drove the nails in his hands. My sins and your sins put him on the cross.

And the great issue here that I am coming up to - is this. What is going to be the results in the long run. The question is going to determine what he does with you. Today, you have the privilege of doing something with Jesus. He is going to do something with you. How do I know that. There is a day coming when the same king shall appear again. He is coming into his kingdom - blessed be God.

That is the comfort of all such as believe. Jesus shall reign wherever the sun but successive journeys run. The New Testament says he is to appear again. He has appeared - he has had a first advent appearing. And that was of infinite grace. The awful lowliness, pain, and death. He is coming again. And this is going to be the second advent. But how changed, the son of man shall come in his own glory. In the glory of his father. And how all of his holy angels will come with him. There is an hour coming when the world shall see him again as a king. And then the question is going to be reversed. What shall I do with Jesus - no. What will Jesus do with me.

V. 29 He came and they crowned him with thorns. He came and they put a reed in his hand. He came and they lifted him to die on the cross. But he is coming, seated upon the throne. And when he comes again, he will do with men what men have done with him. Men have had their opportunity and choice. I have rejected him - he will reject me. If I have accepted him - I will be accepted of him.

Now, are you understanding the most important question ever asked. Pilate's question. If only I could emphasize - what shall I do. Would to God somehow, that a voice out of Heaven might speak to you. Now I don't know all that takes place in a moment between a soul and God. But I thank God for the sacredness and the peace that when we face that question - then something happens. Everything depends upon the answer. We crown him, at all cost. Shall I do it. Men and women are asking the question - shall I pay the price to do that. This is the question.

Do you have the courage to bear - to do this. To lay down your rebellion against God. And become his friend.

Just what will you say. Will you say God help me make this real.

I close with this story of Dr. George W. Truett, of a little Sunday School girl of 10 years of age. He went by to see, who was desperately ill. Later in the day they took her to the hospital. She told him that "she had accepted Christ the week before when he made a plea for them in the Sunday School. She said I decided for Christ and I trusted him, and I meant it."

She says I must go to the hospital. And so about midnight they called him again and little Nellie wanted to talk to him. And so he made his way, and when he got to her bedside, she said - I cannot go back home. And I cannot go back to Sunday School and Church. I want you to tell the girls that I was not afraid - that I was ready because of when you preached a week ago. "Now is the accepted time to decide for Christ, it shall be my time."

I think that was a glorious thing that he had to tell the boys and girls that that timid little girl at the end of her days could say, I am not afraid - 10 years of age. I wonder how it is in your life. Would you be afraid if Jesus were to ~~Return~~ now. As to what he would do with you. Let us deal with this most important question ever asked - what shall I do then with Jesus. It is up to you.