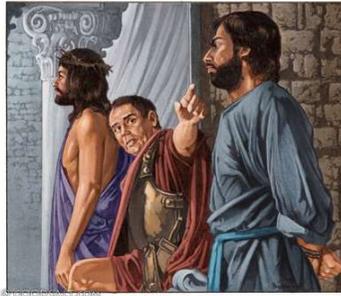


First United Methodist Church
506 Jackson Street
Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania 15851
www.fumcreynoldsville.org
(814) 653-8593



Spring 2019

Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” – Luke 23.18

Jesus has been arrested and brought before Pilate, accused of “perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” Pilate has questioned him, and finding no evidence to confirm the accusations, sent him off to Herod. Herod also has questioned Jesus, finding no evidence to confirm any accusations, and returned Jesus to Pilate.

It is at this point Pilate is determined to release Jesus and says so. The offer is made and rejected. The angry crowd makes a choice: “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!”

So often I have wondered, why would they do this? Why would they want to condemn Jesus like this while having someone else released? Even more to the point: who was this Barabbas they demanded from Pilate?

Luke tells us Barabbas had been put in prison for participating in a rebellion against the ruling power of the Romans in Jerusalem. He was also in prison for murder, presumably of someone during the rebellion.

The early biblical scholar Origen has suggested that Barabbas may well have been known as Jesus Barabbas (since Barabbas appears to be an Aramaic patronym meaning “son of the father” - *bar abba* - or “son of the teacher” - *bar rabban*) and “Jesus” was a very common name at that time.

This would suggest that the choice of the crowd became a choice between a death-dealing Jesus and a life-giving Jesus. Ponder that choice for a moment.

A choice between death-dealing and life-giving.

This was their choice. This is our choice.

I may never understand why they chose Barabbas any more than I understand all the times in my life when I have chosen a thousand death-dealing ways, big and small.

Their words, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!”, ring in my ears as I approach Holy Week anew. The echo bows my head and leads me to pray that I might learn to choose the life-giving way of Jesus the Christ.

By His Grace,

Pastor Tom Carr

April 14 - Palm Sunday: One Church Worship Service at 9:30 AM;
Sunday School at 10:45 AM

April 18 - Maundy Thursday: Silent Communion 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM

April 19 - Good Friday Crosswalk: Noon starting at the Christian Missionary Alliance Church
Good Friday Service: 1 PM at the Presbyterian Church

April 21 - Easter Sunrise Service at 7:00 AM;
Morning Light Service at 8:15 AM;
Sunday School at 9:30 AM;
Traditional Service at 10:45 AM