



Owl Creek Baptist Church

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OUR VISION: To be a continuing light in the world's darkness, inspiring people to love God and to love others.

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News and Announcements...

❖ **Blessed 11th Sunday after Pentecost!** For those interested in a disciplined Bible reading program, the lectionary texts for this week are:

Old Testament: Genesis 45:1-15

Psalms: Psalm 133

Epistle: Romans 11:1-32

Gospel: Matthew 15:10-28

❖ **We continue our outdoor worship** on Sunday, August 16th, at 10:00 a.m. In the event of rain prior to the service, members of the Executive Board will phone each household (by about 9:00 a.m.) to give notice of cancellation. This was the option we exercised on August 2nd. If rain happens to occur during the service, participants will be invited to enter the sanctuary (masks and social distancing will be required) for the remainder of the service. Those who do not wish to join indoors are free to leave at that point.

❖ **The Buckeye Mission and Ministry Offering** is promoted and received in August at Owl Creek Baptist Church. The 2020 theme is "Sharing God's Hope for All Generations—Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministries." This offering provides significant support for the ministries of American Baptist Churches of Ohio (ABC Ohio).

❖ **"Faith and Activism Town Hall"** is a free webinar sponsored by the American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS). This interactive webinar will allow the virtual audience to listen in as five panelists delve into a conversation about the place of Christian faith in the public sector. The one-time event will be held on Wednesday, August 19th, from 1-3 p.m. Participants must register to attend. Those receiving this newsletter via email may <Ctrl-click> [here](#) to register.

❖ **The Executive Board**, which met on Monday, August 10, has determined that it would not be safe to have our Annual Picnic on Sunday, August 30. The picnic will be postponed until a later date.

❖ **The ABC Ohio Annual Gathering**, to be held on October 6th, will look very different this year. There will be a meeting at the Crown Plaza Hotel North in Columbus but social distancing and masks will be required. There will be no shared meals. As well, the meeting will be live-streamed via the internet. Stay tuned for details!

❖ **Send us your news items!** Phone or send an email to Bonnie Kohl or Pastor Chapman, telling us about the news events of your lives.

Let us lift up in prayer...



Our own beloved nation... That somehow, Americans will find ways to be civil during the last three months of a presidential election season.

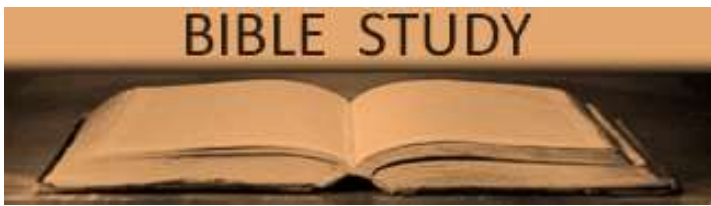
Our beloved nation, part two... That there be a resolve, among all Americans to take this pandemic seriously and practice all necessary precautions.

Titus Behrens, the 16-month-old great-grandson of Jim and Dorthy Hughes, on medication for seizures but doing well at home.

Jerry Skeen is suffering more back pain in spite of a recent epidural procedure, awaiting further treatment options.

Floyd Kriebel, 101-year-old uncle of Scott Hepner, residing in a nursing home in Pennsylvania, recently diagnosed with COVID-19 but doing well so far.

The Pastoral Search Committee, continuing their work, strongly covets the prayer partnership of the entire congregation as they rely upon God for discernment.



TEXT: John 18:19 - 19:16 (The trial of Jesus)

It is common among Christians to be quite sympathetic toward and appreciative of the suffering of Jesus. Unfortunately, Christians do not commonly appreciate the breaches of justice that fueled his misery. I believe that our insensitivity to the failures of the legal procedure is clouded by our belief that Jesus came precisely to die. God the Father, we profess, willingly offered his Son as a sacrifice. Does it really matter how it happened even if it involved crime in high places? I assert that Jesus' decision to offer his life does not at all excuse those who took it from him. In John's passion narrative, the eight scenes of Jesus' trial reveal this chain of deliberate judicial prejudice.

Scene 1, Jesus before the High Priest (18:19-24) – After his arrest, Jesus was taken to the Sanhedrin before the former High Priest, Annas (18:12-14). They wanted to question Jesus about his teaching, ostensibly to determine if he was guilty of sedition as a false prophet, a crime which carried the death penalty. But this scene was rife with irregularities. First, the Jewish Mishnah (a commentary on the Torah), states that capital trials were to be concluded during daylight hours. The interrogation of Jesus took place before dawn (18:27-28b). Second, trials were not to occur on the eve of the Sabbath or a festival. Jesus' trial occurred precisely on the eve of Passover (18:28c). Third, Jewish law required that witnesses to crimes be questioned to verify charges. Jesus, in fact, demanded that witnesses be found, certain that they would testify that his teaching was done publicly, not in secret (18:20-21). His protest was on solid legal ground, but the law was not being followed in the Sanhedrin. Fourthly, striking a prisoner on trial was considered highly unethical. But an officer struck Jesus in the face, an exploitation of power, when he called for witnesses on his behalf (18:21-22). It was clear from the beginning that this trial was headed toward a predetermined end, and that justice was not the guiding principle.

Scene 2, Jewish priests meet with Pilate (18:28-32) – Jesus was hauled before the secular authority, the Roman governor. But due to strict regulations about ritual purity, they could not go into Pilate's thoroughly Gentile domain, forcing Pilate to come out to them (18:28c). The hypocrisy was flagrant, as the Jews avoided proximate defilement yet fully engaged in ethical defilement, seeking the agency of a Gentile ruler to do their bidding. Pilate immediately inquired about the charges, but the Jewish leaders deflected the question (18:30). Pilate saw through this, and rightfully suggested they handle the matter according to Jewish, rather than Roman, law. This was Pilate's first hint that Jesus was not a true criminal. But the Jews showed their real intent by stating, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death" (8:31b). Once again, the Jews were willing to prejudicially condemn Jesus without a proper trial.

Scene 3, Jesus before Pilate (18:33-38a) – The Roman governor, a man with authority to take life, got his chance to interrogate Jesus, and pressed Jesus to reveal his purpose. On the question whether Jesus claimed to be a "king,"

Jesus simply stated that his kingdom was "not of this (i.e., Pilate's, the High Priest's) world [Greek = *kosmos*]" (18:36). Jesus then clarified that his purpose was to "testify to the truth." Pilate's rhetorical "What is truth?" was ironic in that "the Truth" was standing right in front of him (cf. John 14:6). What Pilate did see was that Jesus was hardly the rebellious, treasonous threat that the Jews made him out to be, and was still confounded by all the drama surrounding this man.

Scene 4, Pilate's first solutions (18:38b-19:3) – Pilate went to the Jews a second time, admitting that he "had no (legal) case" against Jesus. He suggested that Jesus be freed for the traditional Passover pardon. But that was precisely the opposite of the Jews wishes and they selected the common thief, Barabbas, instead. Pilate had held out as long as he could and therefore ordered the corporal punishment of flogging as an attempt at appeasement. Roman flogging was more than a mere whipping. It was administered with pieces of iron or bone tied to the leather straps, leaving a victim's back in bloody shreds. Many died from this punishment. Prior to the flogging, Jesus also suffered the illegal torture of further beating and the crown of thorns, causing massive head trauma. Once again, these punishments were carried out without formal charges.

Scene 5, Pilate meets with the priests, again (19:4-8) – Still attempting to shrink from the ultimate decision, Pilate confessed a second time that he "had no case" against Jesus. There was no formal legal contest. But the Jews doubled down in their demand for Jesus' death, this time claiming that he violated the Jewish law by claiming to be the "Son of God." Was Pilate's fear upon hearing this due to his sudden recognition that this might be true? Either way, he still had no legal precedent for interpreting this claim as a criminal charge.

Scene 6, Jesus before Pilate, again (19:9-12) – A more desperate Pilate demanded answers from Jesus. He threatened him with crucifixion, lacking formal charges other than defiance of the governor. The Jews, for their part, blackmailed Pilate into executing Jesus on the ground that he was failing to protect the authority of the emperor.

Scene 7, Pilate meets with the priests a third time (19:13-15) – As a last ditch effort, Pilate attempted to turn Jesus over to the Sanhedrin officials. Perhaps he was hinting that he could overlook their taking the act of execution into their own hands. The Jews, having first accused Jesus of being a false teacher, then of his claiming to be the Son of God, finally moving to the charge that he claimed to be the king (of Rome!), insist on Jesus' crucifixion...but they wanted Pilate to make the ultimate decision.

Scene 8, Pilate hands Jesus over for crucifixion (19:16) – Pilate, who insisted that he had no grounds for execution, called for such merely to appease the angry mob of Jewish elites. And so the prejudiced trial of Jesus ended. The real criminals were all but Jesus. His suffering stemmed from a circus of injustices—false charges, fraudulent proceedings, illegal torture and a totally unjust sentence. The "servant songs" of 2nd Isaiah foretold this well: "By a **perversion of justice** he was taken away" (Isaiah 53:8). But the same prophet understood that the servant's suffering of injustice would lead to a divine reversal: "My servant...my chosen, in whom my soul delights, will bring forth **justice to the nations...and justice in the earth**" (Isaiah 42:1-4).