



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

I have a friend who watches both CNN and Fox News every day. She says that way she can get both sides of the issues, then make up her own mind as to the truth of the matter. I admire her open-mindedness and her determination to seek truth. I imagine my friend is unique because most people like to get their news from sources that think the way they do. The polarizing effect of the recent election proved this point as well, as people began *unfollowing* those friends on Facebook who posted things which seemed hurtful, thus creating a safe zone of comfort for their daily browsing.

Do we do the same with Jesus? Take, for example, His command to love. Do we select only those who look and smell and think and live like we do? When was the last time you handed a panhandler fifty cents and a smile, not worrying that the money might go to alcohol? Do we share our faith only when it's comfortable? When was the last time you prayed in public at a restaurant, not worrying what others may think? Unfortunately, our judgmental natures and embarrassment affect our actions.

In today's scripture, Jesus withstood the Jews' slanderous accusations before Pilate and Herod's mocking. Pilate saw the truth of Jesus' innocence, but didn't have the courage to stand up for Him. Herod was attracted to the sensationalism of Jesus' healing miracles, but dismissed Him with mocking and ridicule when Jesus refused to respond to him.

Are we far from either of these responses? Are we guilty of creating a designer Jesus that suits our needs of comfort in this world? Do we believe only what we want to believe and avoid the rest? Or do we pick up our cross, bear the burden of embarrassment or dismissal by the world, and recognize God as the only authority to which we are ultimately held accountable?

— Paula Holmes, First Church member

A Family Affair

As a family, think about what it means to be a friend. We build relationships with our friends as we get to know each other. Out loud, think of times you tried new activities with your friends and it made your friendship stronger. Maybe your friend wanted you to try rollerblading for the very first time and you were really nervous. Perhaps you have been invited to attend Sunday School for the first time, encouraged by a friend.

Now, as a family, think of words to describe Jesus. Would you use the word friend? As young children we learn that Jesus is love. As we get to know our friend Jesus, we are challenged to love him even when we learn that he ate with sinners like Zacchaeus and spoke to outcasts like the Samaritan woman at the well. Discuss together: Is it always comfortable to love your friend?

Read Luke 23:1-12 together. Jesus did not always choose the easiest path and yet what he did, he did out of love. As we build our relationship with Jesus, let's remember he is our loving friend. As a family, list ways you can be a good friend to Jesus.

Dear Lord, Help us to stand by Jesus, knowing he stands by us, even during uncomfortable times. Teach us to trust in Jesus and be a good friend. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Monday: Luke 23:1-2

The Jewish assembly of the Council of the Elders, the Chief Priests, and the teachers of the law accused Jesus before Pilate.

- Read also Luke 20:22-26. What was the fake news created by the Jews?
- What can you do if you hear a rumor that isn't true about someone that you know?

Tuesday: Luke 23: 3-4

Pilate sees that Jesus is innocent of the charges made by the Jews.

- Read also John 18:38. What positive quality does Pilate display?
- Why is it hard to stand up against an angry crowd?
- Has there been a time when you stood up for someone against a crowd? Talk about the experience with your family.

Wednesday: Luke 23: 5-7

As the Jews persisted, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod because Jesus was from Galilee, Herod's jurisdiction.

- Why would we today say that Pilate "passed the buck"?
- Have you ever allowed peer pressure to change your thinking?
- What is the best way to stand up to peer pressure?

Thursday: Luke 23:8-9

Herod wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle.

- Why does Jesus not respond to Herod?
- Have you ever been in a situation when it was best to keep quiet?

Friday: Luke 23:10-12

Herod and his soldiers mock Jesus and send Him back to Pilate, Herod's new friend.

- Explain why today we would call Herod a bully.
- Why do you think Herod and Pilate are now friends?
- What did you learn about how to act in a crowd from the scripture this week?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to stand up for what is right and always to protect the innocent; even if I stand alone, I know you are with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.