

JESUS JUDGED BY PILATE

Charles Morgan writes...

I have selected the following reflection by Paula Gooder on this station because one of the things that I pray about during the current lockdown is the interaction people are having on chat sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter. We are all more aware of “trolling” and bullying that can occur online by the untimely deaths of 19 year old Chloe Davison who killed herself just before Christmas, or 14 year old Molly Russell or more recently Caroline Flack. Increased isolation and more use of these type of sites cannot help these selected to be harassed by a faceless crowd.

“They shouted all the more” by Paula Gooder

“The Pilate we encounter in the Gospels comes across as a reasonable, gentle soul who does everything within his power to save Jesus from crucifixion. Pilate has one last try to persuade the crowd to let the innocent Jesus go and to crucify in his place Barabbas, a well-known violent criminal and political revolutionary.

What we know of Pilate from Roman sources presents a very different picture to that found in the Gospels. He was the fifth Roman governor of Judea, after the Romans has taken over direct rule in AD 6, and was well known for his brutality and the harshness of his rule. In fact, in the end, his cruelty led to such complaints that he was removed from the post in AD 37 and returned to Rome.

Those first writing and reading the accounts of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion would probably have known this about Pilate, and this detail makes the attitude of the crowd even more stark. The backdrop of someone as notorious for their cruelty as Pilate, throws the crowd’s baying for blood into sharp relief. Even Pilate could look reasonable in contrast to their pack-like instinct to destroy him.

It is easy to sit back from this account and to feel superior. To do so, however, would be wrong. The capacity of a crowd to turn on someone or something with a viciousness that beats all reason remains as strong today as it was during the time of Jesus. We can never be confident that it won’t happen to us.”

Taken from *“Walking the Way of the Cross”* by Stephen Cottrell, Paula Gooder and Philip North (Church of England Publishing, 2019) page 43