



THE BLACKLIST | THRONEKEEPER | Week 3 March 24, 2019

Luke 23:1-12, Matthew 14:1-12

Opening: During the Lenten season we are reflecting on the opposition that Jesus encounters on the way to the cross. We have discussed the Chief Priests and the Pharisees, and last week we discussed the Caiaphas. It's extremely helpful for our own spiritual formation to understand what motivated their hostilities, perhaps what blinded them, from the very Truth in their midst. And once we understand we can prayerfully ask, "Are we doing anything like that?"

Context: Life is filled with responsibilities. We live within reporting structures, annual objectives and realms of authority. We each have a realm within which we are expected to act on our own authority albeit in concert with the authority of those over us. We call this "chain-of-command" and our culture values rising up the chain and expanding the realm over which we have reign. *How do you respond to this description? As you read the words does it inspire pride or caution? Why?*

Attitudes of Power: There is functional need for exercising power. Decisions have to be made and strategies need to be executed. The well-ordered assignment of responsibility (power) and competent execution allows progress to be made. Competence and success are good things, they lead to progress. We all have experience in this, for it is just one way to describe life that can apply to work, family, school etc. *Think of a time this was really satisfying for you. What was the attitude of those above you in the "chain-of-command?" What was your attitude toward those for whom you were responsible? Have you had an unsatisfying experience with power? What was the difference?*

Background on Herod: Pastor Dan describes at length the pedigree of Herod Antipas. Eldest son of Herod the Great, successful governor for an unprecedented 40 years and a political savvy that maintained an appearance of respect for his Roman overlords. He also wanted to appear sympathetic to those he ruled over. He was born half Jew and tried to appear "in touch" with his constituents. *Amidst this brilliant political execution, what do you think was Herod's main objective? Have you known this kind of atmosphere? Talk about how it affected you.*

An earlier test: Read Matt 14:1-12. Read this passage for insight into the character of Herod. Herod abandoned his wife and took Herodias, his brother's wife, for his own. John objected and was jailed because the criticism was inconvenient for Herod, his throne was being challenged by a prophet. *Where do you see "appearances" entering this drama? What was Herod's priority? What was his frame of reference?*



The power of “apparent success”: We can all adopt a frame of reference that is based on apparent success. We can define a realm where we can get what we want and indulge our self-centered desires. For a CEO that can be a company. For others it may be the shop floor or the kitchen table. Or maybe it’s the barstool with our friends. Whatever that seat looks like, if it becomes a throne it can become addictive. Satisfying ourselves has power. *Where do you go for comfort? Is there a throne there? Talk about how you might get deceived by that frame of reference, by that feeling of control and success.*

Turning back to TRUE north: Read Luke 23:1-12. Pilate and Herod are both trying to dodge this judicial issue. Herod is curious about the man, Jesus, that he has heard about. But it is an inconvenience in the midst of the festival and there seems to be no clear advantage to risk a position. *Again, what is the frame of reference? Jesus did not plead for mercy, in fact he would not even answer Herod. This was disorienting and far outside Herod’s “throne world” of slavish devotion. How did Herod respond when his view from the throne and his compass of personal satisfaction no longer worked? Do you think he was questioning himself? Why or why not.*

Before the Throne: Our choice of frame of reference could be “on the throne” or “before the throne.” Pastor Dan presented two prayer attitudes: “be with me God” (On the throne) and “God, help me be with you today” (Before the throne). As believers, we don’t sit proudly on the throne deciding what feels good and then declaring it is right. Instead, we sit thankfully before the throne, grateful that we have been invited and are welcome. *How can we cultivate a “before the throne” attitude in the midst of our high-performance world? What do you see as your major barrier to that? What will you do next week to chip away at that barrier?*

Practice of the Week: Who’s on the Throne?

Each evening this week prayerfully consider your day. Re-count in your mind the events you remember. Who was “on the throne” in those encounters? Write about it in your journal.

Family Formation: Why does Teacher do that?

What can we pray about? Ask your kids what they would do if they were a teacher. What do they like about what their teachers do and what do they dislike? Try to pick up on any power or authority issues that come up. Now ask questions to try to unpack WHY those issues are there: order in the class, teaching socially appropriate behavior vs. the teacher likes to be mean, or wants to make us work, or suffer. The goal is to get to awareness of motivation which hopefully is for the good of the students, not an “on the throne” attitude self-serving to the teacher.

Additional Resources: *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, by Tim Keller

We’d love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

Roger Peer: [contact through Eric](#) * Eric Haskins: ehaskins@christchurch.us