

For Further Study



Read and meditate on the passage below:

24 *When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"*
25 *All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"*
26 *Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. (Matthew 27:24-26)*

The above passage comes from the gospel according to Matthew. Here, Jesus is on trial before Pilate after having been condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin. While Pilate finds no fault with Jesus, his ultimate goal is to keep the peace so that he can stay in good standing with the Roman emperor. In order to do this, he has to find ways to prevent a revolt or some kind of uprising. Hence, Pilate is conflicted.

To ease his conscience, he washes his hands in front of the crowd. Sometimes, we speak of "washing our hands of the situation" as a way of saying that we are done with it and do not accept blame for the outcome. Pilate says, "I am innocent of this man's blood."

Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, recounts that the Jewish leaders accepted responsility for the execution of Jesus. They think that they are doing the right thing by executing someone who they believe is destroying their religious faith. Conversely, they desire a person-like Barabbas (son of the father), who actually is an insurrectionist. Like the Jews of the first century, we must decide what kind of Messiah we want and will choose to follow.



REFLECTION:
Consider a belief you hold dear and how hard it would be for you to be open to a different viewpoint.

PRACTICE:
Spend time talking to someone who has a very different viewpoint than your own. Avoid arguing; learn from them.