

### LESSON #3 - WASHED HANDS - MATTHEW 27: 11-26

**COMING TO THE WATERS** - Pontius Pilate discovered a basic truth of life: WASHED HANDS cannot cleanse a human being from his sins. Only Jesus can bring us to the cleansing water of forgiveness.

**THE PRAYER** - Dear Lord, no amount of water can cleanse us from our sins. We come to You giving thanks for the forgiveness which is ours through the blood of Jesus. By His grace, and calling upon Your wisdom, may our lives be spent doing that which is right and glorifies Your Name. Amen.

**PARCHED HEARTS - ILLUSTRATION** - Their friends laughed when Private Glenn Sollie and Private Andrew Bearshield of the Fifteenth Infantry were singled out to receive special honors. The two soldiers, involved in War Games, had been ordered to guard a certain bridge until they were relieved. The two did their duty. They went and they guarded that bridge. Then they guarded it some more. They guarded the bridge, without food and blankets, for three days and nights. At the end of that time, they were not relieved, they were found..... guarding the **WRONG** bridge. They had lost their way and had been watching a bridge, seven miles away from their designated assignment.

**THOUGHT:** A great many people in Scripture are like these soldiers: they have an assignment, but they just don't get the job done. When they are caught in their failure, they try to wash their hands of responsibility. That was true for the Roman judge at Jesus' trial: Pontius Pilate. As the procurator, his designated job was to give justice to all who appeared before him. Unfortunately, Pilate guarded the wrong bridge. He was more concerned with his reputation and popularity than justice. Let's see how Pilate ended up washing his hands of Jesus' death.

**SCRIPTURE SEARCH - HUMANKIND'S THIRST** - (The passage is Matthew 27: 11-26) Please turn to the chapter and answer the questions which follow:

- v. 11 - What is happening.....Jesus is on trial before the governor
- v. 14 - What is Pilate's reaction when Jesus doesn't reply to the charges?.....He is amazed
- v. 18 - Did Pilate think that Jesus was guilty?.....He knew the priests envied Jesus.
- v. 19 - What did Pilate's wife call Jesus?.....An innocent man
- v. 17 - What did Pilate try to do?..... Release Jesus.
- v. 23 - What couldn't Pilate figure out?.....Any crime that Jesus had committed
- v. 24 - What made Pilate want to give up?..... He wasn't getting anywhere.
- v. 24 - What was Pilate most concerned about?.....His innocence.
- v. 24 - What did he do to show his innocence?..... He washed his hands.

Like the fellows in our opening story, Pilate was guarding the wrong bridge.

#### **THIRST FOR AN ANSWER:**

1. What bridge was Pilate guarding? ..... His own skin/political future/reputation/innocence.
2. What bridge should Pilate have watched? .....The Fellow Who was on trial in front of Him.
3. What did he end up doing? .....Sentencing an innocent Man to death.
4. How did he try to cover up his actions?..... By saying it wasn't his responsibility.

In Scripture, Pontius Pilate is not alone in guarding the wrong bridge. There are many other people who are given a job, fail and try to wash their hands of the matter. Drink deeply from the Scripture Search and see what happened:

**2. SCRIPTURE SEARCH - DEEP DRINKING** - look up these passages and fill in the blanks:

TEXT	WHAT WENT WRONG	HOW DID HE WASH HIS HANDS	TEXT
Gen 2:17 & 3:6	Adam ate the forbidden fruit	Blamed his sin on his wife, Eve.	Gen. 3: 12
2 Sam 11: 4-5	David slept with Uriah's wife	Had Uriah, her husband, killed	2 Sam 11:16-17
Acts 5: 2	Ananias wanted to keep his money	He lied to the Lord	Acts 5: 3

From Adam to the time the Lord comes again in judgment, not a single person has been able to escape sin or the guilt that it brings. True, some of us feel pretty good about ourselves. We're pleased we're not as bad as the really bad sinners. When we feel that way, we're guarding the wrong bridge. We should come to God's waters for forgiveness. Jesus tells us that in His parable from Lk 18: 10-14:

**ISAIAH 55:1 "COME, ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY, COME TO THE WATERS  
GROUP BIBLE STUDIES - TEACHER'S PACKET - LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

- v. 11 - Why did the Pharisee feel good about himself? He wasn't like other men.
- v. 11 - How did he wash his hands of sin? By believing he wasn't a big sinner like others.
- v. 12 - Did he do good works? Absolutely - he fasted and tithed.
- v. 14 - Was that enough to declare him innocent? No - it wasn't enough

The Bible is quite clear, that all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's grace. Of course, there are those people who maintain they are perfectly fine just the way they are. Their ignorance says "God has no complaint or judgment against me." It's hard to get through to those folks who foolishly guard the wrong bridges, but one story that I found that worked is:

**ILLUSTRATION:** A clean-living young man who very proudly, said to a preacher, "I do not think I'm a sinner." The pastor asked the young man if he would be "willing to have his mother and sister know about every thought, word and action he had ever done. Was he willing to have his mother and sister informed of every desire in his heart?" The man quietly whispered, "I would not like that. I would do anything to stop that." We can't wash our hands of our sins. Eventually we have to admit that.

**AND THOUGHT:** We are all guilty sinners, that need to be washed. Some time ago, a product called "Disposable Guilt Bags" came on the market. (I don't make these stories up.) Guilt bags were ordinary brown bags on which these instructions were printed: "Place the bag securely over your mouth, take a deep breath and blow all your guilt out, then dispose of the bag immediately." Silly idea? The Associated Press reported that 2500 kits quickly sold at \$2.50 per kit. Unfortunately, sinners can't blow up or wash away their guilt. We cannot fix ourselves. We cannot wash away our own sins. We need to hear the invitation of the Lord to come to the forgiving waters of Baptism. We need to drink deeply of God's grace which comes through Jesus.

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"  
Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
Acts 2:39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

**LOOK AT ACTS 2: 37-39, AND, ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS, TELL HOW GOD WASHES US:**

- 37 - What does God need to wash? .....A heart that is convicted of sin.
- 38 - What should we do? .....Repent and be baptized.
- 39 - Who does God tell to come to these forgiving waters? .....All whom God will call.

**SHARING THE SAV(I)OR** - In Jesus' trial, Pilate had an opportunity to dispense justice. As Christians we have an opportunity to point people to the Water of Life. We need to tell them that falling into sin is bad, but staying in sin is worse. A visitor at a fishing dock asked an old fisherman who was sitting there, "If I were to fall into this water, would I drown?" It was a odd way of asking how deep the water was, but the fisherman had a good answer. "Naw," he said, "Fallin' into the water doesn't drown anybody. It's staying under that does you in." Similarly, we sinners can't stop falling into sin, but we don't have to stay under. God wants to bring us up, our souls washed fresh and clean. God wants to make sure our scarlet sins are as white as snow.

Do you know someone who is trying to "wash himself? Write down his name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Does he know he needs help?  YES  NO  
If the answer is YES, what can you do to share God's forgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_  
If the answer is NO, will you: REMEMBER THEM IN PRAYER?  YES  NO  
Is there anything the group can do?  YES  NO WHAT: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANKS FOR THE WATERS** Dear Lord Jesus, we give thanks that it is by grace that we're saved, not through our works or any washing that we might do. Help us share Jesus with those who are still dirtied by sin. Do not let me be like Pilate who knew what was right and was too afraid. In Jesus' Amen.