

# Cause + Effect (Part 1): How the Cross of Christ Makes Friends of Enemies

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>1</sup> Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” <sup>3</sup> And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” <sup>4</sup> Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” <sup>5</sup> But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

<sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. <sup>7</sup> And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8</sup> When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. <sup>9</sup> So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. <sup>10</sup> The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. <sup>11</sup> And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup> And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other. (Luke 23:1–12)

### Dividing Walls of Hostility

A. The world is helplessly divided it would seem—especially these days.

1. When you consider the idea of people ever really getting along, across the myriad boundary lines—whether you want to talk about the boundary lines of politics, or race, or gender, or religion, or socioeconomic class—there’s a sort of hopelessness about it all isn’t there?
  - a. You step back from the stuff you see on the news and you think how will we ever break through this “dividing wall of hostility”?
  - b. And, of course, the wall isn’t just out there somewhere on the news or whatever, it’s running right through our own personal networks, isn’t it? Through our workplaces, through our neighborhoods, through our families, even through our churches. No doubt you’ve experienced it, the division, the hostility, the enmity.

B. So what do you do? Is there any hope of ever coming together?

1. Well, on my read of the text we have before us, the answer is unmistakably: yes!

## Cause + Effect

A. As we move into [Luke 23](#) now, I've come to see the opening 25 verses or so as really giving us two vignettes—two small pictures of what the gospel is and what it is intended to accomplish in our lives and in this world.

1. The first vignette comes to us in the text before this morning in [vv. 1-12](#).
2. The second one will come next week in [vv. 13-25](#).

B. I'm calling these next two sermons Cause + Effect.

1. The Cause is the gospel—Jesus the Innocent One is condemned in our place on the cross.
2. The Effects are those things which follow because of Jesus' cross.
  - a. Next week we'll see that one of these effects is our redemption.
  - b. But today we see that one of these effects is our reconciliation—and here the primary piece in focus is not our reconciliation with God (though that is certainly first and fundamental), but our reconciliation with one another . . . even with our enemies.

i. Cause + Effect.

C. So this morning, those two pieces will really serve as the main headings for this sermon: (1) Cause: The Innocent Condemned; and (2) Effect: The Guilty Reconciled.

D. But before we dive in, just to get us started up front and make sure we're ready to personally appropriate all we learn here, let me get you reflecting on a few questions:

1. Are you at odds with anyone in your life?
2. Are there people you ignore or unfollow or block?
3. Is there anyone you gossip about or slander or harbor bitterness towards?
4. Is there anyone you're trying to keep behind that wall?
5. Are you at enmity with another image-bearer of God, another human being?
  - a. The cross is designed to bring healing to this sort of division, to break that wall down. We'll see how this works out as we go . . .

## (1) Cause: The Innocent Condemned (vv. 1-11)

### Three Scenes

A. This first point is really what's fleshed out in the first eleven verses, but I'd like to try to divide these verses into three particular scenes. So let's look at those one at a time and just make sure we understand what's going on here . . .

#### Scene #1: The Jewish Leaders Accuse (vv. 1-2)

- A. Remember where we've come from in [Luke 22](#). Jesus had been dragged before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court as it were, and these guys from envy and disillusion and self-concern were looking to get rid of Jesus.
- B. Now, you recall in order to do this they had to not only find a charge that would stick before the Jewish people, they also had to find something that would get Jesus indicted before the Romans. We're told in [John 18:31](#) that it was not lawful for the Jews to put anyone to death. The Romans had removed that prerogative from them. So to kill Jesus they had to get Rome in on this as well.
1. As far as the Jews were concerned, the charge of blasphemy was the order of the day. That's what really set them off in the [Luke 22:70-71](#) right before this (cf. [John 19:7](#)).
  2. But now these men drag Jesus before Pilate, governor of Judea. And for Pilate and Rome it's not the charge blasphemy that matters all that much, but that of sedition—which of course is rebellion against the state, against the rightful authority of Caesar. So that's how they're going to spin it.
- B. Now, it seems to me, looking closely [vv. 1-2](#), there are three layers to their accusation here . . .
- C. First, they accuse Jesus of "[misleading our nation . . .](#)"
1. The Greek word translated "[misleading](#)" here is painful to consider. It means to [distort](#), or [deform](#), or [make crooked](#), or [pervert](#).
    - a. Now, I say it's painful to consider because it's precisely the opposite that Jesus has come to do. He's come to restore, to heal, to make whole, to make straight, to clean, to rectify, to save.
      - i. And the accusation is: "He's leading us astray." And critical to their charge of misleading here is this idea that he is leading them away from loyalty to Rome. And that's what really comes out full force in the next layer . . .
- D. So they go on to accuse Jesus, secondly, of "[forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar . . .](#)"
1. Now, this is a bald-faced lie and clear perversion of the truth. They'd already tried to catch him in this, as we saw earlier in Luke's gospel, and amazingly he managed to turn the trap back on them. And you remember his conclusion: "[Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's](#)" ([Luke 20:25](#)).
    - a. He didn't forbid them from paying tribute to Caesar. If anything, you could say he commanded it.
      - i. But these men are trying to paint Jesus as a seditious threat. So they're trying to really hit Caesar where it hurts: in the purse strings. "You're going to lose money because of this man, if you don't do something!"
- E. But the third layer here really drives it all even deeper. He is "[saying he himself is Christ, a king.](#)"

1. Here would be a direct affront to Caesar's authority. For as the Jews cry out to Pilate in [John 19:12](#): "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."
  - a. This is calculated language on the part of the Jewish leaders here, designed to bait Pilate into the fight and get Jesus killed.

## Scene #2: Pontius Pilate Dismisses (vv. 3-5)

### A. Pilate takes the bait as it were.

1. Governors of the various territories within the Roman Empire were given near autonomous authority under Caesar so long as they collected taxes for him and kept the peace by staying rebellions and things. So you see the concern for Pilate here. If Jesus is who these Jewish leaders say he is, then Pilate's neck is on the line.
  - a. So he inquires further, [v. 3](#): "'Are you the King of the Jews?' And he answered him, 'You have said so.'"

### B. Now, Jesus' answer here seems a bit odd, but I think it's his way of saying the answer is both yes and no. In other words: he's telling Pilate: "Am the King of the Jews? Be certain of that. But not in the way that you nor anyone else truly understands as of yet."

1. This comes out even further in the rest of the conversation here as recorded by John where Jesus says: "Am I a king? Sure. But 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world' ([John 18:36](#))."

### C. So Pilate is relieved it would seem. And he comes away from this conversation breathing easy: "This man is not a threat, at least not to me. This man is talking about some abstract notion of a kingdom without swords somewhere out there. He may be dealing in the realms of religion or philosophy or something like this, but he's nothing to worry about in the realm of politics and power."

1. So [Luke 23:4-5](#): " <sup>4</sup>Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, 'I find no guilt in this man.' <sup>5</sup>But they were urgent, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.'"
  - a. Now, with the mention of Galilee, Pilate sees his opportunity to roll this burden onto Herod's back.

## Scene #3: Herod Antipas Mocks (vv. 6-11)

### A. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of the regions of Galilee and Perea. He was technically not a Jew, but an Edomite, but Caesar had granted him authority in the land there.

1. He's the one responsible for the murder of John the Baptist among other things, so he's obviously quite an unsavory fellow. And that comes out all the more in this next scene.

- B. We don't have time to reread the verses, but let me at least say this: to Herod, Jesus was just another court jester, brought in for the sole purpose of humoring him—that the ruler might have a little “fun.”
1. He's “very glad” (v. 8)—not because he's interested in truly meeting Jesus, but because he wants a good show, a “sign” (v. 8).
  2. He “question[s] him at some length” (v. 9)—not because he's genuinely curious, but because he's trying to provoke something of entertainment value out of our Savior.
- C. So Jesus won't engage, and Herod's truest heart quickly emerges. If Jesus won't put on a show for him, he'll make a show of him, v. 11: “And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.”

## Amazingly Silent

- A. Now, the thing we must note before we move any further is that, while Jesus is accused and ridiculed and mocked in nearly every verse we've looked at thus far, through it all he remains quietly composed.
1. He doesn't talk back. He doesn't mount a defense. He stands there silent—curiously, amazingly silent.
- B. This is especially brought out in the way Matthew records it in his gospel, [Matt. 27:12-14](#): “<sup>12</sup> But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” <sup>14</sup> But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.”
1. Herod saw his silence and was enraged ([Luke 23:9ff.](#)).
  2. Pilate sees it and is “greatly amazed.”
- C. David Powlison, commenting on this writes: “When Jesus was silent before his accusers, his silence was the most eloquent thing that could be said” (“Straight Talk”). But what exactly is he so eloquently saying? At least two things I think:
1. First, it speaks of his innocence. The very composure he has, the kindness still present in his gaze, the fact that he won't stoop to the level of his enemies . . . it all speaks of his profound innocence.
    - a. He has nothing to say to his accusers because the accusations aren't even worth wasting breath on. They're baseless, and everyone can see it.
  2. But, secondly, it speaks of his willingness to wear these accusations anyways—they don't fit, but he'll put them on, like a ball and chain around his neck. In other words, his silence speaks of his willingness to die as a sacrifice in love for the very people who hate him.
    - a. This whole text is one vivid illustration of that verse foretelling of the Suffering Servant back in [Isaiah 53](#): “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened

not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth” (v. 7).

- i. “I know I’m innocent, but I know what I’ve come to do. I’ve come to die as a ransom for sinners, to save them from the wrath of God . . . and to reconcile them to one another.”

## (2) Effect: The Guilty Reconciled (v. 12)

### From Enmity to Friendship

- A. In v. 12 of our text, almost as just a little sidenote, something written into the margins, Luke, before going on to tell us more about the trial and things, writes this: “And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity [Gk. echthra] with each other.”
  1. I read that and it just captivated me. Why’s he put that in there? No other gospel writer talks about this. What is Luke doing?
- B. Now, let me be clear, I’m not trying to imply here that Pilate and Herod somehow got saved and that’s how they then as an “effect” of the gospel get reconciled to one another. As far as we can see, they don’t repent, they don’t receive Jesus, they don’t get it.
  1. But what I do think we have here is a picture, a little vignette, an illustration of what Jesus has come to do, what the cross can do. I think that’s why Luke records it.
    - a. Jesus, wherever he goes, he brings reconciliation along with him. Even while he’s being hated on and falsely accused, he’s still restoring and reconciling people. It’s a picture of what Jesus has come to do, what he can do through the gospel in our own lives.
- C. Now, historically speaking, we don’t know exactly what the deal was previously between these two . . .
  1. maybe some sort of a turf war;
  2. maybe it had something to do with the time Pilate had stolen from the temple treasury to fund one of his aqueducts;
  3. maybe it had something to do with that bloody encounter we learned about in [Luke 13:1](#), where Pilate had presumably slaughtered these Galileans in the midst of their worship in the temple so that their own blood “mingled with [that of] their sacrifices.”
    - a. Whatever the case, though “they had been at enmity with each other,” when Jesus is done with them, they “became friends with each other that very day”—Friday, the day of Christ’s death.
      - i. It’s a picture, a foreshadow of the sort of thing the gospel works out in people. Enemies become friends.

- D. I thought immediately of that majestic text in [Ephesians 2](#). Paul writing about how Jesus brings Gentile and Jew together as one, writes this: “<sup>13</sup>[N]ow in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [Gk. echthra = “enmity”] <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility [Gk. echthra = “enmity”]. <sup>17</sup>And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (vv. 11–22).
- E. If you noticed, it’s almost impossible in this text to tease apart and determine in each instance whether Paul is referring to the way Jesus reconciles us to God or whether he’s referring to the way Jesus reconciles us to one another. The two ideas seem to be so inextricably interwoven, that Paul can’t take the up the one without also taking up the other.
1. And that, it seems to me, is the point. The cross of Christ doesn’t just reconcile us to God, it does that, he takes my guilt, my sin, and pays what I owe, removes the hostility a holy God had towards me and reconciles me to him, but the cross also reconciles me to other people. It breaks down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, between human beings. And where there was once enmity, now there is harmony and friendship.
    - a. In the gospel, it’s as if Christ takes the stones which we stack up as walls between us and instead he uses them to build a home for the household and family of God. And we come in and find peace . . . with God yes, but also with each other.

## But How?!

- A. But now the question I want to spend the rest of our time on here this morning is: How? How does the gospel or the cross of Christ do this with a people?
- B. But, before we can attempt an answer, here I’d ask you to reconsider those opening more personal questions about your own relationships.
1. Is there anyone being held up even right now behind this wall of hostility?
    - a. If there is, what we need to see is that we are not, then, merely at odds with this or that person, we are also at odds with the gospel and God himself, because this is what Jesus has come to do, this is the mission he’s on: to tear down this dividing wall, to reconcile enemies and render them friends.
- C. So let’s look at how the cross does this for us. There are five aspects to it as far as I can see, and you need all of them for this reconciliation to work.

## Aspect #1: The Cross Rebukes Us

- A. You know, underneath all our division and enmity, there's always going to be pride. You dig deep enough in the dirt, you really get to the roots, that's what you find.
  - 1. We think we're better than the other person. We feel justified and righteous in our bitterness because they "deserve it"—they're crazy, they're evil, they're perverted, or whatever.
- B. But you know these kinds of roots can't spread in gospel soil. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We all stand rightly condemned before a just and holy God. And we all find ourselves equally desperate for his mercy and grace.
  - 1. As Paul says so sweepingly in [Rom 3](#): "[22b \[T\]here is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . \(vv. 3:22b–24\).](#)
    - a. "[N]o distinction"?! What a rebuke for the self-righteous, for the one who likes to build the wall and separate himself from others.
- C. If you can't see yourself in your enemy then you are not yet seeing things in reality. And if you can see yourself in your enemy, doesn't it soften your heart towards them?
  - 1. You realize they're not all that different from me. And they're just as in need of grace as me. And God gives it. So how dare I withhold it?!

## Aspect #2: The Cross Refreshes Us

- A. When we come to know God's love for us in Jesus, we're filled up. One of my girls was doing a project for school and they were discussing this quote from Victor Hugo, taken from his *Les Miserable*: "[The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved; loved for ourselves—say rather, loved in spite of ourselves.](#)"
- B. And he's not wrong. This is what the gospel offers.
  - 1. At first, we think we'll find it in other people. So, like the woman at the well in [John 4](#), we go about from man to man, looking for someone who will know us truly and love us fully and quench the thirst of our hearts.
    - a. But we never find it. So we grow bitter and burn bridges with folks. Or she would get divorced and move on.
  - 2. But then she meets Jesus and she drinks, not from a broken cistern, but from a fountain of living water. Jesus knows her truly and loves her fully in spite of the junk. And it refreshes her soul.

- a. And that's what we have in the gospel. As I've heard Tim Keller say: "He knows me to the bottom, but loves me to the sky." And it fills our cup.

### Aspect #3: The Cross Reorients Us

- A. This refreshing in Jesus reorients us in our relationships at a fundamental level.
  1. Sadly, we all by nature are oriented towards other people in selfish way. We see them as objects to be manipulated for our benefit.
  2. But the gospel changes that. Because Christ has served me now I can serve you. Instead of inflicting wounds on you when you don't do what I want, now I have the resilience to absorb wounds myself. I can lay my life down in love for you even when you're not what I want.
    - a. Instead of your slavedriver now I'm a servant. I don't come to drink in, I come to pour out . . . because of Jesus.

### Aspect #4: The Cross Retunes Us

- A. Another reason there are so many divisions between people I think is we don't know how to hold together truth and love.
  1. Sadly, Christians can be some of the worst at this. We get in all these heated conversations and share our various opinions and when we land on different sides of the issue, we don't know how to continue the relationship.
    - a. We think if I fellowship with them now, it looks like I'm approving of their lifestyle or their perspectives. It looks like I'm selling out on Jesus or whatever. So I'll just keep my distance.
- B. But Jesus could walk with sinners, eat with them, talk with them, love them . . . without compromising the truth.
  1. This is what the cross is. God is unswervingly just and righteous, won't let down on that, and yet also startlingly kind and gracious.
    - a. The world has nothing like this. But we have it, so we ought to be so different, we ought to be able to move in love towards those with whom we have deep disagreements, just like our Savior could.
- C. With the image of retuning here's what I mean. I'm thinking of a guitar. And you know how you tune the strings.
  1. Well, if you tune them too tight, that's truth with no love, where the sound is shrill and the strings are ready to snap. You have no ability to absorb difference and conflict in relationship.

2. But when the strings are too loose, well that's love without truth, you're too easily bent and malleable, and you pluck the string and it makes an indiscernible sound.
  - a. You can't make proper music with either. No, you need the strings to be retuned in the gospel, where the tension is kept in balance. You hold to the truth, but carry it with such grace and love.

## Aspect #5: The Cross Reassures Us

- A. One of the things that keeps us at odds with others is a concern for personal justice. So when we are unfairly treated, when it's not right, we want to push back and level the score, defend ourselves.
  1. But we often get so disfigured in the process.
- B. And what we see with Jesus and the cross, especially in our text here, is that he has this confidence that God always gets the last word. He doesn't have to speak up or push back because he knows his Father will do that for him. He will make all the wrong right in the end.
  1. That's what the resurrection is on Sunday morning. It's the vindication of the Son by the Father over all his enemies. "My son was innocent, righteous, good, let it be known!"
    - a. That's the sort of thing that sustained Jesus in self-sacrificial love for his enemies, and it's meant to sustain us as well.
- C. The early church was facing such great oppression and persecution, right? People throwing them in jail, killing them, etc. So how did they keep from either running away in fear or taking up arms in anger? What enabled them to move towards their enemies in love? Well it's this idea.
  1. So in [Acts 4](#) we see them huddled up, a bit scared, praying, and they reassure themselves like this: "<sup>27</sup> [T]ruly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,<sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place" (vv. 27–28).
    - a. They thought back to the cross and all the stuff we're reading about in [Luke 23](#) with Herod and Pilate, and they reassured themselves with the fact that just as God was in control there, so he is in control now. He's sovereign over this. His eyes are on us. He knows the wrong done to us and how much it hurts. And he's going to make all the wrong right in the end.
      - i. And they go out from there and keep preaching . . . keep loving.
- D. And you know what . . . we can too!