

HELD HOSTAGE

John 18: 33-37

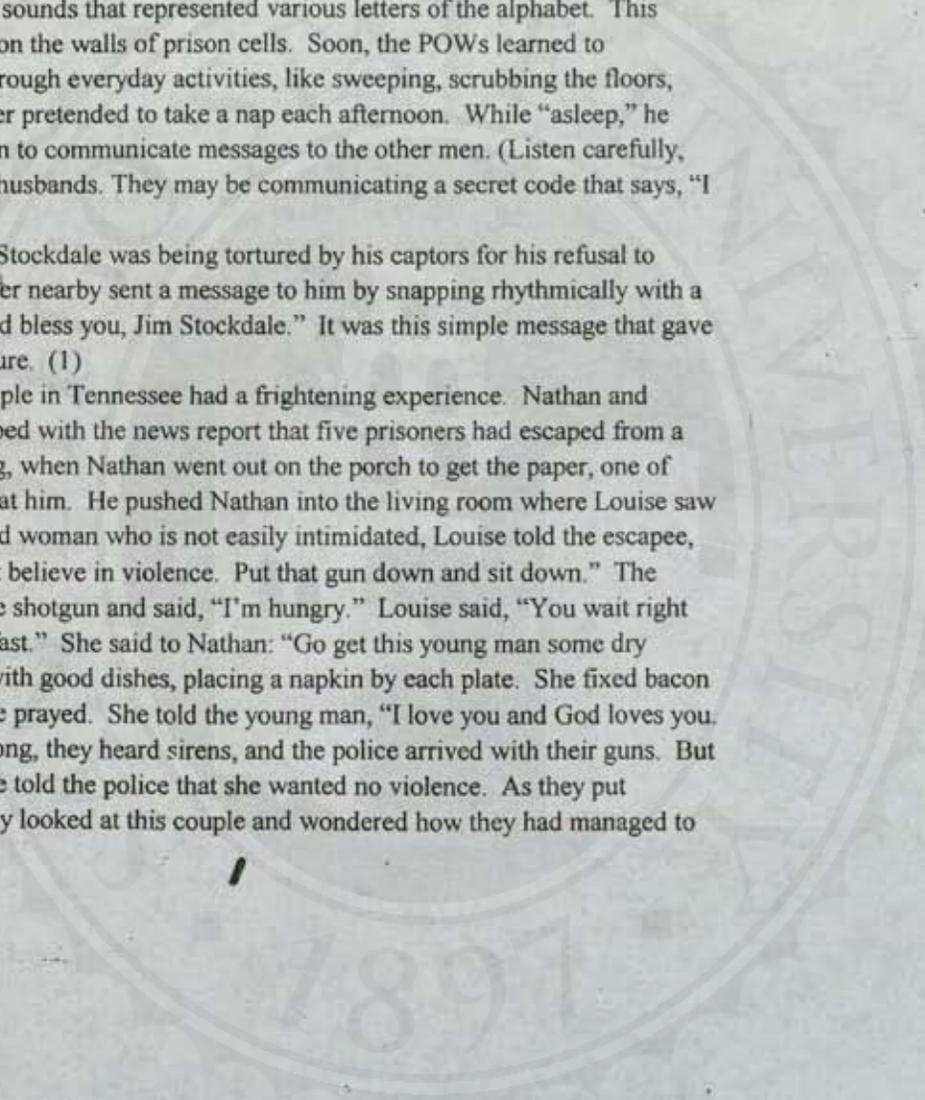
(Christ the King)

Have you ever thought how you would handle it if you were held captive? There have been endless television shows and movies about hostage situations. Have you ever thought how you would handle it if you were taken captive? Would you be the tough guy resisting your captors each step of the way? Would you be the hero looking for the opportunity to sneak up behind one of the bad guys and take his gun? Would you look for a forgotten passageway where you could escape? History is full of exciting stories of people who have been held hostage—especially during times of war, and the heroic steps they took to survive.

During the Vietnam War, American prisoners-of-war perfected ingenious methods for communicating with one another even under some of the most barbaric conditions. They created an intricate system of sounds that represented various letters of the alphabet. This alphabet could be tapped out on the walls of prison cells. Soon, the POWs learned to communicate these sounds through everyday activities, like sweeping, scrubbing the floors, coughing. One young prisoner pretended to take a nap each afternoon. While “asleep,” he would alter his snoring pattern to communicate messages to the other men. (Listen carefully, ladies, to the snoring of your husbands. They may be communicating a secret code that says, “I love you.”)

When Admiral James Stockdale was being tortured by his captors for his refusal to cooperate with them, a prisoner nearby sent a message to him by snapping rhythmically with a towel. The message was “God bless you, Jim Stockdale.” It was this simple message that gave Stockdale the strength to endure. (1)

A few years ago, a couple in Tennessee had a frightening experience. Nathan and Louise Degrafinreid went to bed with the news report that five prisoners had escaped from a nearby jail. The next morning, when Nathan went out on the porch to get the paper, one of those escapees pointed a gun at him. He pushed Nathan into the living room where Louise saw the two of them. A 73-year-old woman who is not easily intimidated, Louise told the escapee, “I am a Christian lady, I don’t believe in violence. Put that gun down and sit down.” The convict relaxed his grip on the shotgun and said, “I’m hungry.” Louise said, “You wait right here while I go and fix breakfast.” She said to Nathan: “Go get this young man some dry socks.” Louise set the table with good dishes, placing a napkin by each plate. She fixed bacon and eggs. Before they ate, she prayed. She told the young man, “I love you and God loves you. Jesus died for you.” Before long, they heard sirens, and the police arrived with their guns. But there was no shooting. Louise told the police that she wanted no violence. As they put handcuffs on the prisoner, they looked at this couple and wondered how they had managed to avoid being killed. (2)



Imagine you were in this situation. How would you conduct yourself? Would you be defiant? Would you be cautious? Would you stammer around, unable to resist?

Jesus stood before Pilate. Jesus was a prisoner-of-war in the battle between darkness and light, between the forces of the status quo and the kingdom of righteousness, between the forces of evil and the reign of God. We can imagine that his hands were bound behind him. After all, he was a prisoner. His clothes were probably stained and dirty from the inhuman conditions in the primitive jail. Yet there was a dignity to him that Pilate obviously recognized.

"Are You the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked. If Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews, he could be tried for treason. If he claimed to be the Son of God, he could be tried for blasphemy. Jesus answered Pilate with a question, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about me?"

Pilate was defensive. "I am not a Jew, am I?" he said. "Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you up to me; what have you done?"

The truth was that Jesus had done nothing—unless you count making blind people see and deaf people hear and giving strength to withered limbs. It wasn't anything Jesus had done; it was **who he was** that was the threat to the established order.

Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up . . . but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

Pilate therefore said to him, "So you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." (NASB) No wonder Pilate wanted nothing to do with Jesus. Here was Someone the likes of whom he had never encountered before. He WAS a king. But the word "king" was inadequate for the role he was to play.

A pastor from Texas, Dr. S.M. Lockridge, expresses the magnitude of Jesus' kingship in his sermon titled, "Amen."

"My king was born a king. The Bible says He's the seven-way king. He is the king of the Jews. That's a racial king. He is king of Israel. That's a national king. He's a king of righteousness. He's a king of the ages. He's the king of heaven. He is the king of glory. He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Now that's my king . . . He's enduringly strong, He's entirely sincere, He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. That's my king . . . He's the wellspring of wisdom, He's the doorway of deliverance, He's the pathway of peace, He's the roadway of righteousness, He's the highway of holiness, He's the gateway of glory, He's the master of the mighty, He's the captain of the conquerors, He's the head of the heroes, He's the leader of the legislators, He's the overseer of the overcomers, He's the governor of governors, He's the prince of princes, He's the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That's my king . . . His life is matchless. His

goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light . . . Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my king. . . " (3)

That's the king who stood before Pilate that day. And that's the king who stands before us this day. There are some lessons from Pilate's encounter with Jesus that we would be well to learn.

The first is, be careful about putting people in boxes before you learn their story.

Jesus stood before Pilate in chains as a prisoner. It would have been easy for Pilate to deal with Jesus as no one of consequence, for we often pass judgement on people who are in difficult situations without knowing them as they really are.

Columnist Bob Greene was passing an evening at a Chicago supper club. The place was almost empty. No one much noticed when the washroom attendant, a middle-aged Black woman in a plain uniform, approached the microphone and began to sing. For the next fifteen minutes, this anonymous woman filled the dining room with beautiful music. Then, she abruptly walked back into the ladies' room and resumed her duties. Bob Greene followed her, intent on learning her story.

The woman's name was Millie Gay. Years ago, she and her sister had been professional singers. In the 1950s, they had been the first gospel singers ever to perform at Carnegie Hall. But they had been cheated out of their money by unscrupulous agents and managers. Now, she spent her evenings cleaning the ladies' restrooms at a fancy supper club. And when no one was around, she would sing. (4)

Just a cleaning lady? Not hardly. Life had been cruel to Millie Gay. She had a story to tell, if only someone would listen. There are people around us like that. We see them on the street. The rough, unshaven homeless man, and we get to know him and we discover he was once a university professor with a wife and family, but he started having mental problems and his world fell apart. Be careful about putting people in boxes without knowing their story.

In the second place, be careful about putting Christ in a box. We like a Christ who is like us—who holds the same values, treasures the same traditions, embraces the same politics. We are horrified at the Christ that other people in other places worship—because he is different from our Christ. Friends, Christ is more than the sum total of all the theologies that have ever tried to understand Christ. How can our little brains ever contain the fullness and the splendor of the triune God?

Ben Kinchlow once talked with author Margaret Mitchell about the frame of mind in which she wrote *Gone With The Wind*. "It was going along pretty well," Miss Mitchell said, "until somebody sent me a new book called *John Brown's Body*, by Stephen Vincent Benet. When I finished reading that magnificent Civil War epic," Ms. Mitchell declared, "I burst into tears and put my own manuscript away on a closet Shelf. *John Brown's Body* gave me such a terrible case of the humbles that it was months before I could find the necessary faith in myself

and my book to go on." (5)

That's how you and I should feel in the presence of Christ. We should have "a terrible case of the humbles." Certainly Christ is our friend. Most assuredly, Christ is our big brother. But we cannot appreciate the grandeur of saying that Christ is our friend and our brother without first acknowledging that he is our Sovereign, our Savior and our Lord. Be careful about putting other people in a box without knowing their story. Be careful about putting Christ in a box without acknowledging his authority over life. **And be careful about putting yourself in a box concerning your relationship with Christ.**

Many people have only a tepid, timid, fearful relationship with Christ. They have never let Christ truly be king of their lives. Why? Multiple reasons. In their hearts some people feel they've made too many mistakes. Christ could never accept them as they really are. Some people feel it's too late because they're too old. What could Christ do with them? Others feel they're too young or too shy or too limited in their education or abilities. Friend, Christ can do amazing things through you if you give him the chance.

There was an interesting article in *Reader's Digest* recently about a new ministry to young people in street gangs. Many street gangs have their own customs, slang words, and codes of conduct and dress. Gang members can also identify one another through special gang symbols tattooed on their bodies. But what if a young person wants to leave a gang and start his life over again?

In Detroit, Michigan there's a program called, appropriately enough, GRACE—Gang Retirement and Continued Education—that helps young men and women get out of gangs. They assist these young people in getting jobs or finishing their education. And one of the most important aspects of GRACE's program may be the removal of tattoos. Tattoo artists like Bill Pogue volunteer their time and services to remove old gang tattoos from former gang members. GRACE's founder, Alex Montaner says, "It's like they're reborn when they get that negative stuff off. They're not branded anymore." (6)

Some of you may have a tattoo that needs to be removed—not on your skin but on your soul. It is a tattoo that says, "I'm not good enough, I'm not young enough, I'm not old enough, I'm not outgoing enough—for Christ to use me."

That tattoo is wrong. Be careful about putting other people in boxes, be careful about putting Christ in a box. Be careful about putting yourself in a box that keeps Christ on the outside looking in. Let him be the king of your life today. ■■

Are you
able to Drink
the cup
that I

Drink?



MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

November 5, 2000

10:30 AM



PREPARATION OF OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

"Let the people be in silent meditation and prayer upon entering the sanctuary."

WE PRAISE GOD

PRELUDE

Organist

CHORAL INTROIT

"Surely the Presence of the Lord Is In This Place"

Chancel Choir

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

§HYMN OF PRAISE *"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"*

#143

¡CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We have come together from different places.

People: In all our places, God is with us.

Leader: We have come together out of our different experiences.

People: In every experience of life, God is there.

Leader: We have gathered in this time and place because we are God's people.

People: Let us worship the God of all times and all places...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(In Unison)*

Eternal God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sin. Daily we awaken to a new journey of life; yet, we fail to be thankful for the opportunities that lie before us. Moments await our decision to serve you; yet, time passes away as we think only of ourselves. Our routine gives us the chance to share your love with others; yet, we are absorbed with our own self-improvement. The day soon passes. It has been much the same as other days. Forgive us for casting aside the precious time you have given. Grant us the faith and excitement of walking with you into the future days, in the name of Christ of all time. AMEN.

DECLARATION OF PARDON

§AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Page 14

The Presbyterian Hymnal

...

WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

ANTHEM *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"*- Dale Wood

Chancel Choir

...

¡PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: Let us pray.

PASTORAL PRAYER

CHORAL RESPONSE *"Standing in the Need of Prayer"*

Chancel Choir

BAPTISM *Leon Kelly & Michelle Kelly*

Colston Benjamin Kelly & Lamon Krace Kelly

RITUAL OF FRIENDSHIP *Walk-a-Thon - \$2500*

Congregation

(Passing The Peace - Say "The Peace of Christ Be With You")

STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT

Gene Moore

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS *See sure to vote*

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Chancel Choir

"I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands On Me/Over My Head" Dorothy Smith, Soloist

DOXOLOGY *"Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow"*

Congregation

OFFERTORY PRAYER

THREEFOLD AMEN

GOD SPEAKS TO US

SCRIPTURE Olivia Gilliam

John 18:33-38

MUSICAL SELECTION *"When He Calls Me I Will Answer"*

Chancel Choir

COMMUNION MEDITATION

Rev. George W. Smith

"Held Hostage"

WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

§HYMN OF APPROACH *"Let Us Break Bread Together"*

#513

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

SERVING THE BREAD & THE CUP *(Say - "This Is the body of Christ broken for you" and "This is the blood of Christ shed for you.")*

THANKSGIVING AFTER THE SUPPER

§INVITATIONAL HYMN *"Just As I Am"*

#370

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION *"The Lord Bless and Keep You"*

Chancel Choir

§Congregation standing

¡Congregation sitting

...Worshippers will be seated

TO OUR GUESTS: You are welcome to our worship service and all activities of the church. Please help us to know you by filling out a visitor's card from one of the Ushers. You are invited to meet with others in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments following the Worship Service. Please come again and invite your friends and neighbors to come with you.

USHERS FOR TODAY are Payton Cook, Joe Littlejohn, William Ponder, Rufus Purdie.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR, We invite you to come to the front of the sanctuary during the Invitational Hymn. Elders Danny Eaton and Louise Fowler will be at the front of the sanctuary to greet you.

PREPARING FOOD FOR THE HOMELESS TODAY will be **THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN.** If you are asked to help prepare or purchase food, please do it with a smile! We love your time and talent. Thank you.

HOSTING THE FELLOWSHIP HOUR TODAY will be **Olivia Gilliam and Loma Johnson** in honor of their birthdays which were in October.



CHRIST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

3025 Fir Street
San Diego, California 92102

Phone: 239-2346/2347
FAX: 239-8830

MINISTER: Rev. George W. Smith
CHANCEL CHOIR DIRECTOR: Mrs. Dolores E. Stevens
ORGANIST: Ms. Juanita Dentham
YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR/PIANIST: Ms. Delores Fisher
CHILDREN'S CHOIR Dr. Dorothy Smith
CHURCH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS: Dr. Robert Matthews
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COORDINATOR (Vacant)
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: Mrs. Zee Griffith
SECRETARY/BOOKKEEPER: Ms. Cathy Ramsey