

Low Friends in High Places

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When we remember the first Easter, we tend to focus on either the cowardice and pettiness of Jesus's enemies as they plotted His death, or the mercy He showed toward his murderers.

But buried in the midst of it all is a strange story about two political enemies who became friends as a result of their roles in Jesus's death. A strange story indeed!

All of the Gospels include details about the "trial" of Jesus, but this story is told only in Luke 23:1-25. Matthew 14 and Mark 6 provide additional details.

We tend to forget that, when the Jews brought Jesus to trial,
 Pilate, the ruler in Jerusalem, didn't want to kill Him.
In fact, he made several political moves to avoid doing so—
 any of which, had they been successful,
 would have given Jesus His freedom.

It's amazing to realize that, in Jesus's darkest moment,
 the only man who tried to help Him
 was a politician more concerned about his own career
 than about saving the innocent.

But at least Pilate tried.
 He tried every tactic that might let him set Jesus free,
 even though they all failed.

Of course, he did try ONE THING that might still have resulted in Jesus's death.
 Perhaps he was frustrated.

 Perhaps he just ran out of ideas, so late at night.
 At any rate, he decided to give this problem to someone else.
It's hard to believe that he thought this man
 would set Jesus free;
 for the man, Herod, was Pilate's political enemy
 and unlikely to do anything that might help Pilate out of a jam.

 But he didn't have many options left...
and, to be fair, Jesus should have been Herod's problem anyway.
 Rome had divided Israel into jurisdictions,
 each under the authority of a different ruler.
 Jesus was from Galilee,
 Galilee was under Herod's rule...
and, conveniently enough, Herod was in Jerusalem that very night!

So once Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean,
he decided that *Herod* should make this decision
and promptly told his guards to take Jesus to him.

You might think
that Herod would resent being awakened in the middle of the night
to deal with a simple criminal trial...

but you'd be wrong. *Oh, so wrong!*

Because Herod had heard about Jesus and His miracles, and wanted to meet Him.

You see, John the Baptist, who was considered a miracle worker himself,
had condemned Herod for marrying his brother's ex-wife.

Even so, Herod had not dared to hurt John,
but his wife had no such problems

and she tricked Herod into chopping John's head off

Then Herod heard that Jesus was doing miracles.

He thought that maybe John had come back from the dead!

So, being a superstitious man,

Herod was curious about this Jesus person.

And now, in a pleasant turn of events,

Pilate had sent Jesus to him, chained and under guard.

Herod would finally have a chance to find out

if this was John reborn or just another troublemaker.

He asked Jesus question after question,

but Jesus wouldn't even answer him...

and that told Herod all he needed to know.

If there was one thing he knew about John the Baptist,

it was that John couldn't keep his mouth shut!

So Herod and his guards had some fun ridiculing Jesus

before putting a purple robe on Him

and sending Him back to Pilate.

Imagine Pilate's surprise when his guards brought Jesus back

with a personal "thank you" from Herod

and word that he would *support* him

if Pilate decided to free Jesus.

The two political enemies became friends from that day forward,

all because of Jesus.

Now, as we all know,

Pilate finally allowed Jesus to be crucified.

The Jewish leaders were against Him,

they convinced the people of Jerusalem to turn against Him,

and that turned Jesus's trial into a political battle

that Pilate knew he couldn't win.

But we also know

 how many people can be hurt
 when political rivals attack each other in a power struggle.
I sometimes wonder how many lives were saved by Jesus when,
 even in the midst of His own trial and death,
 he made peace between two enemies
 with the power to hurt so many.

Even in His darkest hour,

 Jesus reminded us Who *really* has the power in this world.

And when life gets hard, that's definitely something we need to be reminded of.