

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 8 February 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Silent Sovereign

Matthew 27:11-14

On an afternoon in 1975, an intense battle was raging in the heart of a young man named Avi Snyder. You see, Avi had grown up in a traditional Jewish family, in which Judaic tradition was strictly followed; yet, by his twenties, he had become an atheist. In fact, he had drifted into a philosophy called nihilism (the idea that life has no purpose or meaning). His heart was filled with burning anger on account of two things. First, he was furious on account of the wrongs done to his people in the Holocaust. Like many other secular Jews, he thought, “If there’s a God, where was He when my people were being thrown into the Nazi ovens?” Secondly, he was filled with anger because he thought that life had no purpose.¹

Well, as Avi was sitting around that afternoon, and thinking about the futility and pointlessness of life, he shook his fist at the ceiling and screamed, “How dare you? How dare you do this to me?”² No sooner had he uttered these words than a thought flashed into his mind; and this thought was so clear, that it was as if he had heard an actual voice. The thought was, “So you’re angry, Avi? Well, what are you angry at? I thought you said you were an atheist.”³ This thought caught Avi off guard; but after a few seconds he replied, in his own mind, “I *am* an atheist! Why should I believe in a God who creates a pointless universe, and puts me in the middle of it?”⁴ Then, another crystal-clear thought came back to him: “If you’re going to hold me accountable, first admit I exist!”⁵

Well, not long afterward, Avi just “happened” to come across a young man who was wearing a shirt with the words “Jews for Jesus” on it. He was handing out a tract entitled “Jews Should Not Believe in Jesus, *Unless...*”; and inside the tract was a list of messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Needless to say, Avi thought this man was an idiot; and he refused to take the tract from him. However, a friend of his, who was walking down the street with him, was curious enough to take the tract off the man; and he handed it to Avi. Strangely enough, Avi held onto that tract, and re-read it again and again; and later, through the witness of a very loving and patient Christian family that God brought into his life, Avi began to read the Scriptures with an open mind. He finally concluded that “*If* the Bible is true, then Jesus had to be who He said He was.”⁶ Of course, he didn’t want to deal with that possibility, because he knew that there would be real consequences if he were to become a follower of Yeshua; yet, the Lord wouldn’t let him alone. One day, as he was driving down the road, another thought popped into his head: “Look, you know it’s true. Why don’t you give your heart to Jesus?” That very day, Avi sat down in his kitchen, and prayed to God. He confessed his sin, and asked Jesus to save him; and immediately, God began to change his life. Ever since then, Avi has been working tirelessly to spread the Gospel to his own Jewish people.⁷

Now, in one sense, God had spoken to Avi earlier in life, through the reading of the Tanakh in the synagogue. However, it wasn't until his twenties that the Lord spoke to him in a very clear, distinct voice, in his mind; and when He *did* speak, He spoke quietly, and sparingly. God could have barraged his mind with thoughts; but He didn't. He asked Avi a few penetrating questions; but apart from that, He was quiet. God expected Avi to respond to His Word, and to His quiet call. (And thank God, he did!) So it was on the night of Christ's trial. Christ was tried three times that night; and each time, He spoke few (or no) words, depending on the *response* of His hearers. The title of this message is ***The Silent Sovereign***.

Read Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14.

I. The sovereign King (v. 11)

Back in **Matthew 26**, we read about a secret meeting of the religious rulers, just days before Christ's crucifixion. In that meeting, the chief priests, scribes, and elders determined that Jesus of Nazareth must die. However, they were very afraid of how the people would react; and so, they decided that Jesus must *not* be put to death on the feast day. That's how they *wanted* it to happen; but God sovereignly overruled their plans, and caused it to happen on the very day they *feared* for it to happen—the Passover ! Yet, to their surprise, the religious leaders were able to get the people on their side fairly easily. They underestimated how fickle the people were, and how easily they could be whipped up into an angry mob. Only days earlier, the people had shouted, "***Hosanna to the Son of David***"; but very soon they would be crying, "***Crucify him!***" The fact is that most of the people were, just like their leaders, under the power of Satan. In **2 Timothy 2**, the Apostle Paul says that those who don't know Christ as Saviour "***oppose themselves***." (In other words, they are inwardly conflicted, because they are denying truth and reality.) Paul also said that the lost are in the "***snare of the devil***," and that Satan is able to take them "***captive...at his will***." As we read through **chapter 27**, we will see how true this was on the morning of Jesus' crucifixion! Satan and his demons seized the minds of most of the people of Jerusalem, and moved them as though they were puppets.

Now, here in the book of **Matthew**, Matthew doesn't explicitly tell us what the Sanhedrin told Pilate when they brought Jesus into his court. However, it's plain to see that they accused Jesus of claiming to be the King of the Jews. Pilate asked Him, "***Art thou the king of the Jews?***"; and Jesus' answer was very simple: "***Thou sayest***" ("You said it")! Now, to get the full scope of what was said in Pilate's court, let's look at the record in **Luke** and **John**.

Read John 18:28-33.

In these verses, we find the people outside the judgment hall of Pilate, where they are making their charge against Jesus. At first, they didn't make any specific accusation: they beat around the bush, and said, in a general way, that "Jesus is worthy of death: just trust us." However, Pilate wouldn't accept this. He needed an actual charge.

Now, remember: what was the charge the Sanhedrin made against Jesus? They had charged Him with **blasphemy**. However, they knew that the charge of "blasphemy" wouldn't sit well with Pilate. Yes, the Romans did allow the Jews to be governed by their own religious laws, *to an extent*. However, Rome would not allow anyone to be put to death without their sanction: and matters like "blasphemy" against the Jewish God were not considered to be death-worthy by the Romans. That's why they tried not to name the charges against Jesus. Finally, though, Pilate *forced* them to name a specific charge; and this is the charge that they made.

Read Luke 23:1-5.

All of a sudden, the Sanhedrin's charge against Jesus changed from "**blasphemy**" to "**insurrection against Rome.**" The Jews accused Jesus of stirring up the people against Rome, and of claiming to be the King of the Jews. Now, they knew very well that Jesus had never tried to make Himself king. On one occasion, the people tried to make Him king by force; but He had refused to let them do so. This charge was a brazen lie! They also charged Jesus with teaching the Jews that **they shouldn't pay tribute to Caesar**. This was also a brazen lie. When Jesus was asked about taxes only a few days earlier, Jesus commanded the people to render to God that which is God's, and to Caesar that which is Caesar's. Jesus' accusers weren't concerned about truth: they just wanted Jesus out of their lives.

You know, many people today are just like Jesus' false accusers. Embittered against the Lord for one reason or another, they hurl false accusations at Him; and they want Him out of their lives. They accuse the Lord of being uncaring or unloving, because He allowed this thing or that thing to happen to them (just as Avi had done before he was saved). They blame every problem in their lives on God and His Son Jesus Christ, because they want to justify their rejection of Him. They act as though they were God, and as though God were a criminal, whom they have the moral right to condemn. Yet, they are quite willing to overlook the glaring wickedness in their own lives. They are quite willing to overlook the countless lies they have told; the people they have hated, cursed, and virtually murdered in their hearts; the people they have used and trampled in order to get their own way; the things they have stolen, or the people they have defrauded; the innumerable acts of adultery that they have committed in their hearts (if not also in deed); the countless promises they have broken; and the

innumerable times when they have cursed God's and Jesus' name, and mocked His Word. They don't care whether Jesus really *is* God; they just want Him out of their lives, because they love their sin. In their hearts, they crucify Him. They never stop to consider that perhaps the misery in their lives is *precisely because of* the fact that they have pushed Christ out of their lives! The Bible says, ***“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”***

And so, the official charge had been made against Jesus; and the question had been asked: ***“Art thou the king of the Jews.”*** Now, in three and a half years, Jesus had never actually uttered the words, “I am the king of the Jews.” He had *intimated* it in His parables, and in His message that ***“The kingdom of heaven is at hand,”*** and in His promise to the disciples that upon His return, they would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; yet, He had never actually said, “I am the King of Israel.” Jesus wasn't trying to hide anything: He was simply showing the people that they first needed to have an *inner transformation of heart*, by repenting of their sin, and believing on Him as *Saviour*. There had to be a complete *heart change*, through the forgiveness of sins, before people could *enter* the Kingdom of Heaven. Yes, Jesus spoke much of His coming Kingdom; but until people actually believed on Him, and had a new heart and mind, they would never truly receive Him as their King (just as *Judas* never truly received Him). They had to *believe and receive* His words, so that they could have the spiritual sight to *see* Him as their King. Once their eyes were opened, they didn't *need* to hear Him say, “I am the King of Israel”: they *knew* that He is the King, because they now had ***“ears to hear.”*** No, Jesus had never actually said, “I am the King of Israel”; but now that Pilate was directly asking Him the question, He calmly, authoritatively confessed, ***“Thou sayest it.”*** With that confession, the issue now became: ***Is Jesus really the King?*** That morning, Pilate would have to make that decision; and it would affect his destiny.

II. The silent King (vv. 12-14)

(Read Matthew 27:12-14 again.) The Roman trial of Jesus had begun; and Jesus was now standing before the man who had the earthly authority either to condemn Him to death, or to spare Him. Pilate now asked Jesus the question of the ages: ***“Art thou the king of the Jews?”***; and Jesus plainly answered, ***“Thou sayest.”*** Yet, there is something else that Jesus said *just before* He confessed that He is King of the Jews; and it wasn't a statement: it was a question. Let's go back to **John 18** again, and see what *Jesus* asked *Pilate*.

Read John 18:33-38.

Pilate had asked *Jesus* a question; and now *Jesus* asked *Pilate* a question. He asked, “**Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?**” In other words, “Are you asking me this question out of a sincere desire to know the truth for yourself? Or are you trying to find a reason to condemn me, because you are bowing to pressure from my enemies?” As *Jesus* so often did, He was asking *Pilate* a question in order to prick his conscience. *Jesus* loved this man who had been reared in paganism; and even though He knew very well that *Pilate* would soon condemn Him to death, He was, nonetheless, quietly reaching out to him.

Jesus was always ready to explain truth about Himself to those who were seeking the truth to any degree; but to those who were casual, indifferent, or who just wanted to be amused, He had little or nothing to say. *Jesus* is meek, merciful, longsuffering, and willing to save; but He will not be trifled with. And so it is today. My friend, are you double-hearted and pretentious in your search for the truth? Are you seeking for something other than Christ, even though you *profess* to be seeking Him? Or are you genuinely seeking the Lord? The Bible says, “**Seek the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.**” The Bible also says, “**And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**”

Now, at this point, *Pilate* was agitated. You can hear the contempt in his voice as he responded to *Jesus*’ question. He said, “**Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?**” I don’t know what *Pilate* was expecting to hear *Jesus* say: but what he was *expecting* to hear was probably not anything like what He *did* hear. Let’s look again at *Jesus*’ answer. **(Read John 18:37 again.)**

Jesus confessed that He is a King; but He was quick to add that His Kingdom is *not* of this world. What did *Jesus* mean by this? Was *Jesus* saying that He will *never* sit down on a throne here on this earth? If so, that would be a clear contradiction of what He had promised His disciples. He had promised the disciples that when He returns to earth, they will sit on twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. (Clearly, this meant that they would administrate in Christ’s Kingdom.) *Jesus* had spoken of an earthly Kingdom *many* times. This physical, visible Kingdom is called “**The Kingdom of heaven,**” because it will be of heavenly origin. One day, *Jesus* Christ will descend from heaven, with His army of angels and resurrected saints, and will destroy all kingdoms of earth at the Battle of Armageddon. He will then set up His Kingdom of perfect righteousness for 1,000 years.

Yet, all these things are still in the future. The Kingdom of Heaven *will* be established one day; but in the meantime, Christ is now reigning over a *spiritual* kingdom—one that cannot be seen. *This* is the Kingdom that *Jesus* was talking about when He said, “**My kingdom is not of *this* world.**” This invisible Kingdom is called “the Kingdom of God”; and its citizenry is made up of all who have been born again into God’s family by placing their faith in *Jesus*

Christ, and who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You aren't born into this Kingdom by physical birth, but by a *spiritual* birth. (By the way, on the morning of Christ's trial, the Kingdom of God hadn't officially begun yet: it was still days 53 days away from being ushered in. However, there were already many people who were destined to be birthed into that spiritual Kingdom, as soon as it commenced. Those who had believed on Christ during His ministry already had their reservations in the Kingdom of God; and on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to live inside them, the Kingdom of God officially began.) The citizens of the Kingdom of God do not take up arms to fight against their enemies: instead, they lovingly *tell* others how they can become a part of the Kingdom of God, too!

Read John 3:1-8, 14-16.

Read Luke 17:20-21. (The "Kingdom of God" does not come "with observation." It is invisible.)

Can you imagine what was going on in Pilate's mind? Standing before him was a man who claimed to be the King of a Kingdom that is "*not of this world.*" What did he think of all this? Did he laugh in scorn and contempt? No. Strangely enough, he didn't. Let's look at **verse 37 again.** (Read **John 18:37.**) Think of this! Here is the Roman governor of Judaea—the man who is supposed to sniff out any hint of rebellion against Rome, and crush it; and what is he doing? He is looking into the face of a lowly carpenter from Galilee, and *seriously* asking Him the question, "*Art thou a king then?*" Pilate could see that there was something truly other-worldly about Jesus of Nazareth; and the flippant attitude that he had had toward Jesus at first now seemed to be softening. The fact that Pilate went out from the judgment hall and told the angry crowd, "*I find in him no fault at all,*" shows that he was under conviction. Under normal circumstances, he would have immediately condemned anyone who claimed to be "the King of the Jews"! Yet, amazingly, he said, "*I find no fault in him!*" When you consider the fact that Pilate was jeopardising his position as governor (or worse) by defending a man who claimed to be "King of the Jews," it is plain to see that God was working on his heart.

Yet, despite the fact that Pilate was under conviction from God, he did not repent and believe on Jesus. Perhaps he looked on Jesus merely as a fanatical, but harmless man, who wasn't really trying to overthrow Rome, and who didn't deserve to die. But whatever his reasoning was, he rejected Christ. And make no mistake about it: Jesus *was* challenging Pilate *personally* about his need to believe on Him. Jesus told them, "*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness of the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" This was a direct challenge to Pilate! If those who are "*of the truth*" listen to Christ's voice, then those who are *not* "*of the truth*" do *not* listen to His

voice. Those who heed His call, and earnestly begin to seek Him, *will* find Him; and they will continue to hear His voice. On the other hand, those who choose not to hear the truth will *reject* Him, and will *not* listen to His voice. Sad to say, Pilate chose *not* to hear Jesus' voice.

Now, Pilate did acknowledge that he could find no *fault* in Jesus. In our day, many people would express it this way: "I believe that Jesus was a good man." But believing that Jesus is a "good man" is not enough! In fact, believing that Jesus is the pure, sinless Son of God is not even enough. Merely accepting, *intellectually*, certain biblical facts about Jesus will not save your soul. You must personally respond to Jesus' voice, and receive *Him*. You must respond to His call to come to Him for salvation. Jesus said, "***I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.***" Jesus also said, "***Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.***" You must *repent* (change your mind about your sin, agree with God that you are deserving of eternal death in hell, and be willing to allow Jesus to take your sin away, and to be your Lord). At the same time, you must *believe the Gospel*—the message that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again to pay for our sins in full. If you truly repent and turn to Christ, you will also trust in this Gospel message. You will stop believing that you can make it to Heaven by your own good works and clean living, and will instead put your complete trust in Christ's sacrifice on the cross. My friend, have *you* heeded Jesus' voice, and come to Him for salvation?

Probably the saddest thing that Pilate uttered that morning was that cynical question, "***What is truth?***" Pilate had started to listen to what Jesus was saying; but then, he put up a mental "block" to the conviction that he was feeling, and cracked a cynical joke. The faint sincerity that He had had at first evaporated away like dew. If he had *really* desired to know the truth, he would have waited to hear the answer from the One who is Truth incarnate. But he didn't. He got up from his throne, and departed from the judgment hall.

Now, when Pilate emerged from the judgment hall and declared, "***I find in him no fault at all,***" he hoped that the people would accept his acquittal of Jesus. To say the least, they did *not* accept it. They vehemently shouted at him, and demanded that he crucify Jesus. Now, Pilate's conscience had been pricked. He knew that Jesus was innocent, and he didn't want to condemn Jesus; so he tried to find some way to rid himself of the responsibility. Soon, the opportunity presented itself. He heard that Jesus was from Galilee; and this was, technically, the jurisdiction of King Herod. So, Pilate sent Jesus over to King Herod (who just happened to be in Jerusalem at the time). Let's take a look at this record, in the book of **Luke**.

Read Luke 23:6-12.

As you can see, Herod's reaction to Jesus was quite different from Pilate's. What kind of man was he? Well, to get an idea of Herod's character, it helps to know a little bit about his dad. Herod's father, **Herod the Great**, was the Roman king over all the provinces of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth; and he certainly made his mark on history. He was an incredible architect and builder. Not only did he build the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, but he built beautiful cities, seaports, palaces, baths, pools, and theatres all over the region. Yet, this great builder was also an incredibly wicked and immoral man. He often went into violent, jealous rages. This was the man who slaughtered all the babies in Bethlehem to try to kill Jesus when He was a baby. Herod executed many of his own closest friends, loyal servants, and family members (including three of his own sons). This was the character of Herod the Great; and his son, Herod Antipas, before whom Jesus was now standing, was just like his dad. Herod Antipas basked in sexual pleasure, sensual comforts, and entertainment; and life was cheap to him. This was the very man who had beheaded John the Baptist to appease his mistress, Herodias.

This is who Herod was. This was his character. In light of this, it's not hard to understand why he reacted to Jesus the way he did. Pilate was pricked in conscience at least a little bit; but Herod's conscience was seared. He looked at his meeting with Jesus as an opportunity to see a kind of "magic show." He wanted Jesus to do a miracle for him.

Many people today are just like Herod. They aren't interested in having a *relationship* with Jesus Christ: they just want to see a nice "show." They want Jesus to "entertain" them. They want Him to make them rich, or provide comforts or pleasures of this world for them. Perhaps they go to a church for a while, expecting to get something from Jesus; but when the things they wanted aren't forthcoming, they have nothing more to do with Him. They shrug Him off and say, "Yep. Been there, done that. I've done the 'Jesus thing,' and it didn't work." Like Herod, they never truly wanted Jesus: they just wanted Jesus to give them their worldly, selfish desires. Perhaps this describes *you*. Perhaps *you* have something you want out of Jesus; but it isn't salvation from your sin. If so, I urge you to repent and believe on Him!

Now, let's return to Jesus. What was Jesus' response to Herod? His response is that He said absolutely nothing at all. Why? Was Jesus being rude? Did He not care for Herod's soul? Yes, Jesus did care for Herod's soul; however, we mustn't forget that Jesus is God. He knew Herod's heart: and He knew that Herod had not even the slightest desire to hear the truth. Jesus will not force Himself on people who do not genuinely desire to hear His words. Also, Jesus made not even the slightest attempt to defend Himself against His accusers. All this was prophesied by Isaiah. Before we close this message, let's look at Isaiah's prophecy.

Read Isaiah 53:7-8.

In **Isaiah 53**, Christ is compared to a lamb—not only because He was the *spotless sacrifice* for our sins, but also because He was *silent* before His oppressors. Just as a lamb is “dumb” (silent) while going to the slaughter, or to shearing, so Christ was silent and non-resistant. Jesus did say a few brief things at first, in answer to Pilate’s direct questions; however, He did not complain about His fate, or lash out at His false accusers. He didn’t even try to defend Himself. He didn’t point out the fact that His accusers were telling blatant lies about Him. He didn’t point out the fact that they were breaking every law in the book in order to put Him to death. When He did speak, He spoke softly, and with the intent to challenge Pilate about his lost spiritual condition. However, after a certain point, Jesus said nothing more to Pilate. As for Herod, Jesus said nothing to him at all. Jesus had spoken the truth for three and a half years; and there was nothing more to say. Just as Isaiah prophesied, Jesus “***opened not his mouth.***” Though He is the Sovereign Lord of all, He remained silent to those who would not hear His voice.

Conclusion: Are *you* hearing Jesus’ voice? I’m not asking if you’ve ever heard a strong, clear, nearly-audible voice in your mind, as Avi Snyder did. (You don’t *have* to have that kind of experience.) I’m simply asking, “Are you *listening* to Christ, as He speaks to you from the Scriptures?” This morning, Christ has been speaking through His Word, and drawing you to Himself; but will you answer? **Will you repent of your sin** and place your faith in Christ? If you are not saved, I would say (as God said to Avi), “Why don’t you give your heart to Jesus?” He is the King of Israel; and He wants to be the King of *your life*. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved! If you are saved already, I would ask, “Are you listening to Christ’s voice in your daily life? Is there something He is commanding you to do: yet, you are not submitting to Him, and obeying Him?” If so, don’t harden your heart anymore. Obey His voice!

¹ Shocking Truth That Made Jewish Men Believe in Jesus -Avi’s Testimony (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPFN9xkjIUw>)

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*