

No Basis for a Charge

Scripture Reading — John 18:33-38

He went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him." — John 18:38

Historical sources outside the Bible inform us that Governor Pontius Pilate did not hesitate to suppress any threat to Roman rule in his imperial province of Judea. Pilate likely had a network of informers looking for signs of rebellion, no matter how insignificant.

That might explain his perplexity when Jesus of Nazareth was presented to him as a dangerous man worthy of execution. Jesus' name was not on any "most wanted" lists.

If there had been any report, it might have noted these things: Jesus was a friend of tax collectors (Luke 15:1; 19:1-10). He had stated publicly that people should give to Caesar what they owed to Caesar (Mark 12:17). As a healer, Jesus had drawn crowds of mostly down-and-out (and politically unthreatening) followers. One of the persons Jesus had healed was the servant of a Roman centurion (Luke 7:1-10). These were not crimes!

From the biblical record of Pilate's legal interrogation of Jesus, we can sense that Pilate's evaluation of Jesus might have checked off this way: "Delusional, misguided—maybe; pitiful—certainly; but criminal or dangerous—no way!"

So Pilate came back with the most obvious finding from the accumulated evidence: "I find no basis for a charge" against this man.

Prayer

Father God, we give thanks for principles and systems of justice that seek the truth, protect the innocent, and stop crime. Make us hungry and thirsty for righteousness, we pray. Amen.

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Printed on July 9, 2020

