

# Crown of Thorns

## The Making Group : Lent 2024



This Lent we are looking at incidents during the week leading up to Jesus' Crucifixion, and some of those who were involved in Jesus's trial, and on the hatred and violence of which human beings are capable. We shall respond by creating images which will be painted onto large hangings, and by creating a Crown of Thorns, reflecting both the torment Jesus endured and the troubles and conflicts of our own world today.

## **1 Annas**

### **John 18:13–14, 19–24**

*First they led him to Annas; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had given counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

*The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them; they know what I said." When he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.*

The preliminary interrogation by Annas, the High Priest, is informal. Annas is probing Jesus about the possibility of his teaching being politically subversive, but Jesus protests that he has nothing to hide. Jesus stands up for himself, and when an aggressive officer strikes Jesus for being disrespectful, he objects with dignity. Annas then sends the prisoner, still bound, to Caiaphas.

## **2 Caiaphas**

### **Mt 26:57, 59-68**

*Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. Now the chief priests and the whole council<sup>8</sup> were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.' " And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"<sup>9</sup> But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"*

The Court of the Sanhedrin seems already to want Jesus convicted, because they have found witnesses ready to provide false testimony against him. Caiaphas invites Jesus to respond to these charges, but he remains silent. Caiaphas challenges Jesus with the question "Are you the Christ?", but Jesus gives an indirect and enigmatic answer, which is taken by the judges as an admission of blasphemy. Caiaphas tears his robes, and the court condemns Jesus, and proceeds to mock and abuse Jesus. In all likelihood the ill-treatment of Jesus continues by the guards who hold Jesus during the night.

### **3 Pilate**

#### **Mt 27:1-2**

*When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.*

#### **Lk 23:2-5**

*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." And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."*

Jesus is taken from Caiaphas to the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. According to Luke's account the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of sedition and of claiming to be the King-Messiah. Jesus gives his customary non-committal answer and refuses to reply to further accusations.

### **Herod**

#### **Lk 23:6-11 -16?**

*When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 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. 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. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.*

*Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him."*

The fact that Jesus is a Galilean gives Pilate the excuse to hand him over to the ruler of Galilee, Herod Antipas, who was apparently eager to meet him. Jesus remains silent throughout the whole episode, and Herod in frustration allows his soldiers to mock him and clothe him in "royal" garments. He then returns him to Pilate, who proposes to flog him and release him.

## **4 Crown of Thorns**

### **Mk 15:12-20**

*And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "Crucify him." And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

*And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.*

Pilate gives in, against his better judgment, to the anger of the Jewish crowd, and having flogged Jesus, hands him over to be crucified. Further mockery and torture ensue, as the soldiers put on Jesus a purple cloak, and ram a crown of thorns on his

head. They hit him, spit on him, and finally lead him out to crucify him.

It is likely that the thorns were those of the date palm tree, which contained toxins which cause intense pain, tissue damage and inflammation.