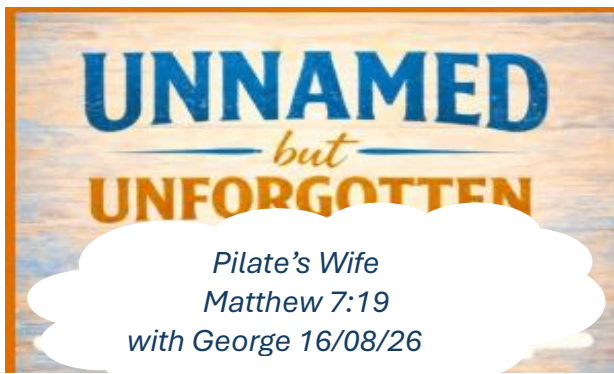




Who here had a dream last night? Who here can remember their dream from last night and wants to share it? Dreams are interesting things. Sometimes they involve events and people you have seen recently. Other times they are about something completely different. I used to have a reoccurring nightmare of shopping for toilet rolls and when I got into the toilet roll aisle at the supermarket, the toilet rolls would grow and grow and squash me. It's ridiculous but my poor parents lost a lot of sleep over the years.

Today, we are reading in the Bible about Pilate's wife who had a dream. Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who had dreams? (Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh, Solomon, Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Joseph, Magi). Often, dreams in the Bible are divine revelations given by God.

When Jesus was arrested by the Jewish leaders, they took Him to the court of the only person in their area who could sentence him to death, a man named Pilate. He didn't fly planes. He was a Roman leader and had the power to do pretty much what he wanted in Judea. He could choose whether to let someone go free, or whether they should die. He was powerful. The Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilate and said that Jesus needed to be put to death. But when Pilate asked why, they couldn't really explain. It became clear to Pilate that there were no grounds for Jesus's death, in fact, the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to die for their own personal reasons. Pilate could see that Jesus was innocent. The right thing for Pilate to do would be to let Jesus go free.

In the middle of all this (Matthew 27:19) we read about Pilate's wife having a dream. This wasn't some nightmare about toilet rolls, this was a God-given dream about his Son, Jesus. God himself in the flesh. Jesus was standing before Pilate on trial for something he hadn't done. "While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him"."

Who likes *Where's Wally*? You look at images containing thousands of insignificant people to find the only significant person in the book. That is Wally in red and white stripes. This verse is like an inverted *Where's Wally*. The passage around our verse has some very significant people. We have Jesus, God Himself, the most significant and important person in the Bible. And there is the unnamed, insignificant, Pilate's wife who is not mentioned in any of the other gospels but to whom the Lord gave this very significant dream. Women were not allowed into the court setting. Yet she was the one chosen by the Lord for this revelation. And think about this, she is the only one, in the whole of the story of Jesus's trial and death, across all four gospels, who pleads for Jesus. She is the only one. "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." She knows there is pressure to bend to the people's will and the risk of rioting but ultimately Pilate can decide for himself what to do in this situation and his nameless wife tells him to do the right thing. This can often be the case for us. There are external pressures, expectations, temptations and weaknesses that encourage us to not do what is right. And so we explain away our bad decisions and make excuses for them because of these pressures. But ultimately, these excuses don't cut it. We are responsible for our decisions, especially where we have been trusted with a position of authority, as elders of church, managers or leaders in work, as a mum, as a dad, as a friend. Whatever position we are in, we are responsible for our decisions and that is what we see in this passage. Pilate's wife tells her husband. "Don't have anything to do with [Jesus]" She also calls Jesus an "innocent man," other translations say "righteous man." Pilate's wife can see the truth about Jesus. A truth that all these seemingly significant people Pilate, the Jewish leaders and the crowd are refusing to see. They each have their own motives and are closing their eyes to the truth so they can satisfy their own plans. They were closing their eyes to the truth and by putting Jesus to death.

Pilate's fundamental motive was self-preservation and his standing with the emperor, even at the cost of knowingly condemning an innocent man. A riot would look bad for him so for the hope of personal gain, he closed his eyes to the truth of Jesus.

The Jewish leaders were happy with things the way they stood. Sure, their whole religious system was awaiting the Messiah, the very person who Jesus was!! But they didn't want him to actually come. Believing the truth about Jesus would've meant that they would lose their power, name and status. They loved their position, reputation and authority more than they loved the truth about God.

The crowd wanted rid of the Romans. Barabbas was responsible for leading a rebellion against the Roman occupation. He was released instead of Jesus. They wanted Barabbas freed so that he could lead another rebellion. They didn't care about Jesus because Jesus's agenda wasn't theirs. Each of these significant people, Pilate, the Jewish leaders and the crowd had their own reasons for Jesus's death. They refused to see that Jesus was an "innocent", a "righteous" man.

What are you closing your eyes or your ears to? Is God putting his finger on something in your life and convicting you of something that you need to confess and leave behind, an area of sin that God loves you too much to not point out and see you changed in. Bitterness? Gossip? Sexual sin? Laziness? Jealousy? This morning don't close your eyes to Jesus. Don't harden your heart against God's working in you. Is God in his love convicting you of these things. Repent, get on your knees before God while it is today. Bring a friend in on what you are keeping, or me, or another elder so that we can walk with you through this. Don't excuse your sin. Don't close your ears and eyes to Jesus.

All these significant people in our passage had their own agendas as to why they were closing their eyes and ears to the truth about Jesus. The truth that Pilate's wife was saying, as revealed in her dream, was that Jesus is innocent and righteous. He is the other significant person that I mentioned earlier. Jesus also kept quiet at this point too. Not out of fear, but out of love. He chose to walk to his death, to lay down his life, to allowed it to happen, not out of desire for personal gain like the others, but for the gain of others so that he could atone for all those who trust in him. To take the sin of all those who believe in them, nail it to the cross and deal with it once and for all. Jesus did this for all those who would believe in him, from the most significant people to the least significant people. To people whose names we can read in the Bible and to those we don't, like Pilate's wife. To people who are old and people who are young. Jesus went to the cross for you.

If you're sitting here and you feel like you are like one of the million extras in a *Where's Wally*, a life so insignificant that people don't even look at you, then know this, God looks at you. He is the most significant. He knows you. He cares for you. Really cares for you. And he's good, really good. Come to him. Trust in him. Repent of your sin, say sorry to God for what you have done and ask him to help you trust and believe in his Son Jesus. He died for you so that his innocence and his righteousness can be yours.