

The Greatest Trial the World Has Ever Known

BY THE EDITOR
This Sermon Was Stenographically Reported

You will find my text tonight in the 27th Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew and the 22nd verse. My subject is "The greatest trial in the history of the world," and I presume you know already that I refer to the trial in the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate, as Jesus was placed on trial for his life. Picture, if you can, my brother, the scene that unfolds before your eyes. On the bench is Pilate, the personal representative of Imperial Rome. He sits there in his dignity and clothed in purple and fine linen representing the austere and tyrannical power that is slowly crushing the life out of the Jewish people. The courtroom is filled with a mad rabble, screaming and shouting in all their bitter hatred against the man who stands at the bar of justice. Look at Him. No prisoner was ever like unto Him. With bowed head He replies not to the accusations that are hurled against Him. "As a sheep before its shearers, dumb, he opened not His mouth." "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The mad mob is yelling. Urged on by the chief priests and scribes the people became more vociferous in their demands for the blood of Jesus. The judge knew in his heart, that Jesus was innocent of the charges that were preferred against Him. He knew that the Prisoner at the bar was just what He claimed to be! But with his weak, vacillating nature he endeavored to wash his hands of the whole matter and to evade the responsibility that was placed upon him. It was the custom at this particular feast, to release unto the people some notable prisoner; and Pilate was very anxious that Jesus should be released for conviction had settled in the heart of this iniquitous man. "Shall I not release unto you Jesus?" he asked the people. "Which will you have? Jesus or Barabbas? Barabbas was a notable prisoner; he was a thief! Barabbas was guilty of the crimes with which he had been charged and undoubtedly deserved the sentence that had been imposed upon him. Jesus was guiltless. On His soul there was no stain of sin, but He could not answer. As He stood there He had taken my sin and your sin to the judgment bar with Him. He was condemned because my iniquities were upon Him laid. He was condemned because He bore my transgressions and stood there in my place. "Whom will you that I release unto you?" said the judge on the bench. "Barabbas or Jesus." which will you? With one great mighty voice the venomous crowd in the building shouted. "Barabbas, Barabbas." "*What shall I do then with Jesus?*" said the judge upon the throne. What a question. No greater question has ever been asked. No matter

what your business responsibilities are, my brother, no matter what your obligations might be, the most important question confronting you now is the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" and upon the answer to this question is hanging your soul's eternal destiny. I want you to notice for a moment that word "I". "What shall I do with Jesus?" No one else can decide this question for you. No one can answer that question but you yourself. Your pastor cannot decide it, or your wife, your husband, your friends. It comes directly from the throne of God to the door of your heart. It rings through the corridors of your being. It echoes through the rooms of your soul. "What shall I do with Jesus?" Dependent on the answer of that question, my brother, is hanging the answer to another question. "What will Jesus do with me?" If you reject Him He will reject you! If you accept Him He will accept you! I am going to put this so plainly and so clearly tonight that before you leave this Arena, and before you go out into the darkness of the night every one of you will have to answer the question somehow! "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called the Christ?" *Tonight you are on the judgment bench.* Jesus is the prisoner at the bar! Tonight He stands before the bar of your judgment and asks "What will you do with Me?" but there is coming a day when Jesus will be seated upon the judgment throne and the question in that day will be "What will Jesus do with you?" There are only three things that you can do with Jesus, and I am going to discuss with you every one of them tonight. The first one is *refuse Him*. The second one is *procrastinate*, and the third one is we can *accept Him*. Refuse! Procrastinate! Accept! Which of the three will it be? One of them you must do before ever you go out of these Arena doors tonight or enter the door of your homes. You are going to decide what you are going to do with Jesus. Let us look at the first one. To refuse Jesus means that you deliberately choose the ways of wrong instead of the ways of right. There are before you two roads and two roads only upon which your feet can travel. One road leads upward! It starts on earth, but ends at a gate of pearl. It leads by way of the cross, toward the city of our God and is the road of salvation, the road that will lead you home. The other one leads downward, down into the darkened night of iniquity, down into the dismal abyss of sin. Down into the depth of despondency and heartache and woe. Yes, my brother, it goes down deeper than that. It leads you into the night of an eternity from which there is no escape. Into the night of misery and unhappiness from which there is no relief. Behold, I set before you the two ways of which the word of God speaks: the way to happiness and the way to destruction, the way of life and the way of death. If you refuse Jesus Christ you refuse all that Jesus would bring with Him. His offer of salvation and entrance into Heaven. Joys unspeakable and that are full of glory and the life that is hid with Christ in God! Some time ago a man said to me, "Do you believe in Hell? Do you believe in an eternity from which there is no escape?" and as I nodded my head, he said, "How can you believe that? I would never send a man to Hell and I am only a man. How can a God of love, and of justice, and of mercy, and of peace, ever banish people into the darkness of the night that lasts through all eternity?" I said, "My brother, *He never has*

done and never will. God has never sent any man to Hell and never will. If you go there you go there because you want to go there; because you choose to go there, not because God ever sent you there.” He looked at me in amazement, and his face blanched for a moment. His eyes dilated as he said, “Just what do you mean by that,” and I said, “Brother, I will tell you a story.”

“Some years ago in a large home in a city in Connecticut an old man was pleading with his boy. They were standing in the hallway and the boy was endeavoring to brush past his father and go out into the night. Tears were glistening in the old man’s eyes as he tenderly placed a restraining hand upon the shoulder of his son and said, ‘Son do not go out tonight. The old home is lonely and I feel I cannot stay here by myself. I know where you are going. You are going to meet your old friends down in the pool hall. You are going to mingle with the old crowd that brought such misery to your mother’s heart. Please don’t go.’ The boy shook his father roughly off and said, ‘Dad I have to go! I have got a date with the gang tonight; and unless I go now, I am going to be late! You are not strong enough to stop me, father! I am old enough to take care of myself! I have reached my majority and if I want to go out I am going out, when I want to go and where I want to go.’ ‘Don’t go,’ the old man pleaded. ‘Stay in tonight, ‘you remember it is only a few weeks since we laid your mother ‘neath the green sward and the turf. You promised her by the side of the bed, in which she died, that you would give up your wild living and have nothing to do again with any of those evil companions. Have you so soon forgotten? Are you not living up to your word given to your mother who has gone to Heaven?’ The boy felt the words of his father! Conviction seized him, but he was obdurate! ‘Get out of the way,’ he said, ‘*I am going out.*’ As a last resort the old man laid himself down in the hallway and said, ‘Well, you go my son, you will have to step over the body of your father.’ The boy looked at the old man in amazement and then stepped over his father’s body and passed out into the darkness of the night. As I finished my narrative I looked at the brother and said, ‘Did his father make him go? No brother, he went out against his father’s expressed wish and against his father’s desire. He went out because he wanted to go out and because he would go out, and in going he stepped over the body of his father.’ My brother, if ever you are lost, if ever you go to an eternity without hope and without redemption, **YOU MUST STEP OVER THE DYING, EMACIATED, BLEEDING BODY OF THE SON OF GOD.** For that is the obstacle that God has placed in your way. That is the impediment that you have to meet with as you go on the downward trail. Every one of you in this building tonight can have your names written in the Lamb’s book of life within the next half hour. Every one of you can surrender to the Lord! You need not reject Him, but mark my words and let them burn deep into your consciousness—*If you reject Him He will reject you!!* Jesus Christ is your only hope of salvation—your only doorway to Heaven!

The second thing that we can do is to *procrastinate* and to put off until some more convenient time the settlement of this very important question. How foolish we

are to act like that! Life is hanging by a brittle thread. We do not know what a day may bring forth! We do not know whether or not the sun will ever rise in the eastern skies in the morning for you and for me, and when we think that upon the answer to this question rests our *eternal destiny*, it makes me shudder to think of the attitude of the one who procrastinates. If I could leave this pulpit tonight and come down among these seats to you personally and say to every one of you, "My brother, my sister, do you intend to give your hearts to Jesus and go to Heaven when you die?" everyone would without hesitation reply, "Oh sometime, Mr. Price, sometime I intend to be saved, —I intend to give my heart to the Lord." Not one of you would say, "No sir, I prefer to go to hell. I desire to be lost and I never want to see the inside of the Gates of Pearl." The road to perdition is paved with good resolutions and I am absolutely sure that the vast majority of the people that have gone from this town unsaved, knowing nothing of the cleansing power of the precious blood that flowed on Calvary, intended some day to give their hearts to the Lord. They put it off and they found it was *too late!* Oh, my brother, why do you play with the baubles of three score years and ten when God is offering you the blessings of *eternity*? Why do you hang on to the sordid, beggarly elements of time when the Lord is giving you a chance to enter the Heavenly gates and to dwell in the mansions in my Father's house? Do not wait until you die, like the thief on the cross; until you have robbed God of the best of your life, and take from God that that really belongs to Him, and try to sneak in through the gates in the last moment! Do what is right. Do what in your heart you feel you should do. Give yourself to Jesus now before it is everlastingly too late.

Some time ago, outside the Golden Gate that leads to the beautiful and wonderful harbor of San Francisco Bay, a vessel was in deep distress. It had been facing the storms and was doing its best to plow through the ragging torrent. In the darkness of the night and thickness of the fog it had struck a rock. It has been stated that the captain had gotten off his course and the helpless vessel seemed doomed to go down. All night long Father Neptune was rubbing his hands in fiendish glee thinking of the prey that would soon be in Davy Jones' locker in the bottom of the sea. But no, through the darkness of the night there came a vessel to the relief—a messenger of salvation and an ambassador of hope. The vessel on the rocks moaned and groaned in its anguish, as the seas were pounding against its wooden sides, and the relieving vessel signaled to the captain to let all the passengers come aboard. There would be an element of danger during the transfer, but it was worth trying. The seas were running mountains high and the waves were dashing themselves into foam against the sides of the old ship. "Send us your passengers," signaled the ship that had come to the relief of the disabled vessel! "Not tonight," answered the procrastinating captain. "Stand by until the morning and we can see better what we are doing." "You had better send them aboard now," answered the captain of the relieving vessel. "No," replied the man on the doomed ship, "stand by until the morning." So through the long hours of the night the relieving ship stood by and as the gray dawn of early

morning crept over the seas he looked anxiously to where the disabled vessel had been last seen, but not a trace of her was to be found. Father Neptune had dragged them below. Passengers and crew were lost together, and the engineers who assembled the sunken hulk with its dead cargo after the tragedy was over, said that she had gone to pieces very suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly. To procrastinate is a foolish thing. To put off until tomorrow what you should do today is a tragedy especially when it pertains to all eternity. Mark my words, brother, let no man deceive you! No mere sentimentalism will avail when once the grave has claimed you. None of this wishy-washy, easygoing kind of preaching will do you any good. Then “as a tree falleth so shall it lie” and I believe with all my heart that if you sin away your day of grace, and refuse and refuse, and refuse to accept Jesus Christ, or procrastinate as some of you have done in the past, you are going to wake up and find that it is too late. You have slipped from time into eternity without Christ and without hope of salvation!

But there is something that we can do. Hallelujah, to the Name of the Lord! *We can accept Jesus Christ.* Oh brother, will you follow Him out of the judgment hall? Will you watch Him with me for a moment as with His cross on His back He goes down the way of weeping on His way to the place of a skull? Beneath the weight of that load, He falls time and time again until weary and worn and bleeding He arrives at the brow of the hill. The mad rabbles are held back by the soldiery of Rome, and they take Jesus and throw Him on His back on the tree of wood. The nails are driven through His hands and the spikes are driven through His feet, and then that cross is lifted until it falls with a sickening thud into the hole in the ground that has been prepared for it! When Jesus died on Calvary He died to save you! When His precious blood flowed from the open wounds, He provided then and there your *only means of salvation.* How I want to impress this upon you tonight! How much do I by the power of the Holy Spirit want to burn this truth into your soul? THERE IS NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE BLOOD! There is no doorway to Heaven, but Jesus Christ Himself. Sometimes people say to me I do not need to be born again. I am just as good as any Christian in this town. A woman told me just the other night that she had never done anything in all her life that she was ashamed of and she did not think it necessary to come to the altar and pray before the Lord. In her own self-righteousness she was being deceived and in the satisfaction of some hearts we can discover nothing but the opiates of the devil. Listen to this— if there was one of you in this building that could lift yourself up out of the mud by your own bootstraps or find salvation because of a Christless morality, then there was no need of Jesus to die upon the cross! No need of the Son of God to suffer upon the tree! If one of you could do it, two of you could do it, the whole city could do it and the world could do it. That would make the tragedy of Calvary a farce and the death of Jesus Christ unnecessary. No, brother, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All need salvation from sin and there is only one Saviour. His name is Jesus, the Son of

the living God. He came to this sin—cursed. Did world to save His people from their sins and I praise His Holy name that everybody in this building can find salvation at the foot of the cross. Sometime ago during the Welsh revival, the evangelist was pleading with the people to give their hearts unto the Lord. A gray-headed Welsh mother was sitting by the side of her son, fervently praying during the service that he would give himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the evangelist told the story of the matchless Man of Galilee, conviction deep and strong seized the heart of the boy. “Not tonight, mother,” he cried, “Not tonight.” I know I ought to come, but I cannot go to the altar now. Some other time will suffice. Please do not ask me again tonight.” The evangelist, noting the pained look on the mother’s face ran down the pulpit steps and pleaded with the boy. He showed him what folly it was for him to procrastinate. Now is your accepted time. Now is the day of your salvation. The boy looked into his eyes and said, “If you will pray for me, I will come, and I will come tonight.” A minute or two later the joy bells of Heaven were ringing and the angels were singing, for there is joy in the presence of angels of God over one sinner that repents. He went home happy in the Lord, glad and friendly and bright and gay for the sunshine from Heaven was flooding his soul and God had spoken peace to his troubled heart. He was a coal miner, and after breakfast was over the following morning and he had led in prayer for the first time at the family altar, he went away to work for the day in the mine. His mother had prepared his meal for the noon hour and as she kissed him good-bye she said, “God bless you and keep you.” Just before noon when it was time for the cage to come up from the bottom of the pit, there was a trembling of the ground, followed by an explosion, and a great belching of smoke that emanated from the mouth of the pit! Women screamed and ran from their homes and men turned pale as they started to do the work of rescuing the men. In a few moments with helmets adjusted, the brave rescuers were making their way down the mouth of the pit. An hour sufficed to clear away the debris and then the bodies were being stretched out side by side. They were all black, covered with coal dust, most of them bleeding and some of them dead. Mothers and wives picked out their loved ones and among the searchers was the dear old mother whose son had found Christ the night before. At last she came to where he was lying. She bent over him, wiped with her handkerchief the dust and blood from his face; and, thinking he was dying, leaned over to say good-bye. He too thought the Lord was taking him home, but praise His name, He did not. He is preaching the gospel today in faraway Wales and lives to tell the story of a Christ who can save. But that day brought to the mother’s heart the feeling that she was seeing her son for the last time! As he was in the center of that long line of prostrate figures that had been hurt and injured during the explosion, she listened to the words that came faintly from his lips. “Mother dear, I am glad I settled it last night. I am glad I settled it last night!” Yes, brother, there is coming a day when you will be glad that you settled it. A day when you will be happy that you answered the question, “What shall I do with Jesus?” by saying, “I will rake Him. I will throw

wide open the door of my heart. I will let Jesus in.”

As I invite you to this altar tonight, come, as you ought to come, feeling in your hearts your need of salvation and knowing in your soul that only Christ can save you. What are you going to do with Jesus? Turn from Him if you will. Procrastinate if you wish to, but I pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will convince your heart until your answer will be, “I will serve Him. I will give Him my life. I will surrender my all.” Come along, sinner for whom Christ died, and as surely as you come Jesus will come to you! Kneel at His blessed feet and ere you leave this auditorium the joy bells of Heaven will be ringing and clanging and pealing through the corridors of your soul.