

Pilate was so disdainful of Jews that he rode roughshod over their most treasured beliefs.  
On one occasion, he led the eagles of Rome into the most holy place of the Jerusalem Temple.  
Blasphemy!

The holy of holies was defiled, outraged Jews opposed him.  
He threatened to kill them, and en masse, they lay on the ground, baring their necks.  
Kill us, ... the army backed off.

Pilate was no friend of the Jews.  
He hated their petty little country and had no interest in their religious views, except it might threaten the interests of Rome in any way.

He cultivated the Sadducees, who welcomed the laws of Rome.  
But the Zealots, who fought fire with fire, weren't too happy about it.  
They were all about killing the enemy, resisting at every turn and willing to sacrifice everything for freedom.

Israel's history is full of suffering, and Pilate was just the latest face of those who oppress, kill and destroy.  
He didn't expect friendship from the Jews, and theirs was only offered when it seemed to benefit them.

So, he was an ally when **the voices of a kangaroo court** dragged Jesus before him with accusations, threats and plots to kill this man.

Those who pull Jesus behind them are hungry for results.  
They've been trying to get this man during his ministry, who has claimed to act in the name of the most high God.  
Who has broken so many religious laws...  
Who is obviously a blasphemer (so they better do God's work!)  
Who needs to be quietened at any cost!

And Pilate, the voice of Rome, is silenced in the presence of this

vehement, angry crowd who claim to be acting in the name of God.  
But what does Pilate care? He's not interested in the squabbles of Jews.  
But he does represent the law of Rome.

He walks a tightrope between the man's innocence and the wrathful voices that beat on his ears.  
They are out to get the stranger before him...  
He would like to slip out of the difficulties before him...  
He could appeal to the crowds...  
*"Do you want me to set free the king of the Jews?"*  
Irony indeed.

### **The silence of Jesus in the noise and babble**

a silent man toppled from acclaim  
undeserved, a victim, a fallen hero, reviled...  
If we didn't know his name, we might ask what did he do wrong?  
Why pursue him so frantically?  
Why were people determined he should die?

But listen....  
in the roar of many voices Jesus is strangely silent...  
quietly riding into Jerusalem;  
not playing to the cheering crowds;  
keeping his peace whilst the High Priest rages accusation;  
responding enigmatically to Pilate's question.  
*"Are you the king of the Jews?" "So you say."*

Has he no protest to make about injustice?  
Is there anything we can say to defend him?  
Are the loud voices going to drown out what he's saying?

Right now, it feels like we're hearing echoes of that old prophecy about a servant who went through suffering without reason.  
Soon, this man is going to be whipped, insulted and beaten—  
nothing so reviled as a fallen hero.  
*"The Sovereign Lord has taught me what to say,*

*so that I can give strength to the weary...  
The Lord has given me understanding, and I have not rebelled  
or turned back from him.  
I bared my back to those who beat me.  
I did not stop them when they insulted me,  
when they pulled out the hairs of my beard and spat in my face."*

At the most important moment, praise turns to jeers.  
His friends disappear into the shadows.  
The faces of his enemies loom large as they punish him.  
.....he threatens them..  
.....he overturns their understanding of Messiah..  
..... without him they can get on with life...  
Suffering and Jesus are deeply connected.

### **A judgement**

Billions of people were gathered around GOD's throne.  
Many complained about injustice, the evil they had suffered.  
Each group sent forth a leader....  
Before GOD could judge they decided GOD should endure their pain.

*"Let him be born a Jew.  
Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted.  
Give him work so difficult that even his family  
will think him out of his mind.  
Let him be despised and rejected.  
Let him be betrayed, face false charges,  
tried by a prejudiced jury and convicted by a cowardly judge.  
Let him be tortured. Then let him die..."*

When the last had finished pronouncing sentence  
there was a long silence....

I invite you to affirm your voice and actions  
in company with the God who is love ...

### **Hearing Voices**

Suffering and Jesus are deeply connected.  
The 'proof' of God's love isn't that Jesus lived a wonderful life, loved and adored by everyone.  
The 'proof' of God's love is revealed in the darkest moments of suffering!  
Let's listen to some of the voices tangled in this story...

### **The crowds... they were shouting 'Hosanna'**

as Jesus entered Jerusalem, throwing cloaks and palm branches,  
cheering as Jesus quietly rode into the city.  
The prophet of God! The healer and miracle worker! His name was on everyone's lips.

He could hold them in his palm.  
He could say anything, and they would cheer and clap.  
He could do anything, and they would respond in support.  
They rumoured he was a messenger from God.  
The crowds were delirious with joy, shouting,  
'God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Their voices echo all who yearn for God, especially during the good times.  
When blessings abound and life isn't too difficult, and circumstances seem favourable, we think God is blessing us.

The crowds hoped for peace and justice...  
They were soaked in the expectation of a Messiah.  
As Jesus rode on a donkey, they were ecstatic.  
Would the Romans get their come-uppance?

### **The voice of Pilate... Rome's representative, his word was law.**

He sat as Caesar over the Jews, bringing Roman law and order to a land that seethed and chafed under their domination.  
He was the iron fist of Rome!  
The oppressor made flesh!

