

family at all"; upon which to condemn Him. His duty now was to release Jesus; but he lacked moral courage to face the anger of the Jews. He might forfeit his popularity and therefore his governorship.

The priests, enraged at the thought of losing their prey, repeat the charge of sedition (Luke 23 : 5). Pilate, to get out of the difficulty, sends Jesus to Herod (Luke 23 : 7). Herod sends Him back without any accusation, and Pilate proposes to release Jesus after he has scourged Him (Luke 23 : 16). This failed. He then appealed to the people. (See also "Teaching Hints.")

Va. 39, 40. "*Ye have a custom.*" Nothing is known of the origin of the custom. "*The King of the Jews*"—sarcasm at the expense of the Jews. It was ill-timed for Pilate's purpose, "*Not this man, but Barabbas.*" He counted on the popular feeling to save Jesus; but the priests had won the people (Mark 15 : 11) and they chose Barabbas. "*A robber*"; a bandit or brigand. They would have put Christ to death on the false charge of sedition; and oh! the cruel irony of their madness; they succeeded in setting at liberty a real mover of sedition (Luke 23 : 19, 25).

ILLUSTRATION AND APPLICATION

"*It was early,*" v. 28. Never did sun rise on a sadder exhibition of human frailty. "Sin," says one "is always a kind of temporary madness." The rulers of the Jewish nation had pronounced their own King—a King, who, before their very eyes, had manifested the Godhead that was in Him—worthy of death as a common malefactor, and now, in their frenzy, they are set on having the sentence carried out with all speed. They are on the scent of blood, and all else is forgotten. His wonderful words and works, the matchless dignity of the Man, the possibility that they may be making a blunder, the shame of calling in a Gentile to put one of their own nation to death. They remember nothing except that through envy they want His life. It is one of the terrible things about sin, this hellish power that it has of making us blind and deaf to all else. To be in the grip of a strong evil passion is as when the cyclone strikes. Very carefully should we guard ourselves against the first stirrings of evil in our hearts. When the storm comes on us in its fury, there is but one sure way of safety. David had made trial of it and his cry to God was out of experience of deliverance. "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me and a strong tower from the enemy." (Ps. 61 : 2, 3.)

"*Let thy should be defiled.*" "Afraid of heaven," says Farrar, "though not afraid of innocent blood." It was the Passover time, and to touch leaven or to go into any house where there might be even a crumb of leavened bread would be to be defiled and so shut out from the sacred observances of the Feast. Our judgments of our

fellows should always incline to charity, but we can make no mistake here. The infallible One had already given His verdict of them—"Ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23 : 27.) They were sanctimonious, but false and murderous, sanctimonious, but by no means sanctified, counting not a little, indeed, on their outward observance of every jot and tittle of the sacred law to cover up the malice of their hearts. Their generation are not all dead yet. Alas! It is too easy to be like them. A show of holiness is so respectable. It is a wide cloak for wrong doing. And we so readily deceive ourselves into reckoning that because we go diligently through the forms of worship, we may take liberties with the actual observance of God's commandments. Satan has a multitude of wiles, and this is one by which he makes many captures.

"*That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled,*" v. 32. It is said that, at the battle of Sebastopol, a shot from the enemy's guns opened up a spring of water in the British trenches, when water was much needed. Little did the frenzied mob fancy that they were carrying out Jesus' prophecy or God's plan when they clamored for Christ's blood before Pilate's judgment seat. If Pilate shall order Christ's death, it will be by crucifixion, and that will be as He had said (ch. 12 : 32). The Almighty uses many sorts of instruments to carry out his designs. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee," said the Psalmist (Ps. 76 : 10). How calm this should make us when exposed to injury from our fellows. They can only hurt us as God may permit, and He, the wise and