

Who Killed Jesus? – Suspect #4 (God)

1. Warm-up Question: Jeff began Sunday’s sermon with some funny, but tough questions kids asked their parents. Asking tough questions is an important part of learning and growing, for both kids and adults. What’s one of the toughest questions you’ve ever asked someone or someone has ever asked you?
2. Growing up, we soon learn that there are certain questions you dare not ask, especially at church, lest people start to label you a doubter. But that’s not how it should be. Doubt is healthy; questions are good.
 - a. Henry Drummond once said, “Doubt is the prelude to knowledge.” What do you think he meant?
 - b. Rev. Richard Baxter once said, “Nothing is so firmly believed as that which has been sometimes doubted.” What do you think he meant?
 - c. Why do so many churches take a dim view when people ask tough questions?
3. On Sunday we dared to ask whether God is ultimately responsible for the death of Jesus. After all, the Bible tells us that, God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son. . . .” John 3:16. In other words, God sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins. Sunday’s Scripture reading made the same point, but even more explicitly. There, the Apostle Peter said, “Jesus of Nazareth [was] a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know. This man [was] handed over to you according to **the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**, [and you] crucified and killed him. . . .” Acts 2:22.
 - a. AskBible.org poses the question this way: “**Was it God’s plan from the beginning for Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of humanity?** Yes, it was God’s plan from the beginning to send his Son to die on the cross for the sins of humanity.” What do you make of that? Has the idea that the Father deliberately sent the Son to earth to die a cruel death ever bothered you? Why or why not?
 - b. If a child is ever in danger, most parents will risk their life to protect their child without a second thought. Did your parents ever risk themselves to save you? Or, if you’re a parent, have you ever risked yourself to save your child?
4. In light of all the foregoing, it’s fair to ask: If someone had to die to save us humans from our sins, why didn’t God the Father offer himself, instead of sending his Son? In response, Jeff shared two lines of thought. First, we need to ponder what it means to say that God and Jesus are one with each other.
 - a. Right before Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord told Joseph, “‘Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins, and they will call him Immanuel,’ which means ‘God with us.’” Matthew 1:21. What does it mean to say Jesus was “God with us”?
 - b. Jesus said, “The Father and I are one.” John 10:30. What does that mean?

- c. Jeff said, “When we think of God the Father and God the Son, we tend to think of two separate beings. And yes, the Father and Son are, in a sense, separate beings, but in another very real sense, they are one and the same. So it wasn’t like God said to Jesus, ‘I’ll send you while I stay here in the comfort of heaven.’ Instead, it was almost as if God was breaking off a part of Godself and sending that part of Godself to us in the form of Jesus. So it’s like God was fully present in two places at once.” What are your thoughts about this statement?
 - d. To better understand what it means to be an infinite creature like God, try to imagine what it would be like to be present in more than one place at a time. If you could be fully present here now and simultaneously fully present somewhere else, what other place would you choose? Do you think God can do that?
5. Although the “oneness” of God is relevant to what we’re discussing, it doesn’t get us all the way home. If the Trinity is real – if there’s truth in the proposition that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and if the Son is the person of the Trinity who came to face the cross, and if the relationship between the Son and the Father is in anyway analogous to the relationship between human parents and children, that still leaves the question: Why didn’t the Father-part of God say to the Son-part, “No, I’m going to earth; you stay here.” So, if we really want to understand, we have to dig deeper and consider what might motivate a parent send a child into grave danger.
- a. Imagine you were a parent during World War II and your 18 year old son asked permission to join the arm to fight Fascism. Could you see yourself sending off your son with your blessing? If so, why would that be the loving thing to do?
 - b. Jeff told about an episode of “The Andy Griffith Show” where Andy learned that Opie was being bullied, but decided to resist that powerful parental impulse to intervene, believing Opie needed to learn to face situations like this if he was ever going to grow into all he was meant to be. Have you ever experienced something similar – either as a child (when your parents stepped back and let you face something alone) or as a parent (when you stepped back and let your child face something alone). How did that feel? Was the decision to step back motivated by love? Was it ultimately better or worse for the child?
 - c. Jeff share the story of Welles Crowthers, a 9/11 hero who had always dreamed of being a firefighter, then became one on 9/11, as he donned his red bandana and led many people out of the South Tower before it collapsed on him. Afterward, Welles father said, “It’s no accident that our son died doing exactly what he’d always dreamed of being,” i.e., a firefighter. Jeff asked us to imagine God saying to Welles parents, “If you want, I’ll let you turn back time, so you can keep Welles from going into the office that day. It’s up to you.” If you were Welles parents and given that option, what would you do – and why?
 - d. Suppose someone were to ask you, “Why did God the Father send Jesus the Son to die, instead of sending himself? How’s that love?” Based on all we’ve discussed tonight, how would you answer?

Remember, our Annual Church Picnic is Sunday Sept. 25 at 12:30 pm at the church!