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## Luke 22:63-23:25

### The Certain Gospel: The Great Exchange

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We live in a culture based on exchange and trade. We all do it from a young age till we're elderly. You learn this system when you're just starting out.

- As an infant your parents reward good behavior with a smile or maybe a treat or your favorite toy.
- A few years in you learn that you can trade your toys for other kids toys. Like I'll give you this cool-shaped rock if you'll give me your Nintendo. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.
- When you get into school you begin to trade time and effort for grades but hopefully for learning and growth as well. You learn things like a rock for a Nintendo is not a good deal.
- When you get your first job you trade hours stocking the shelf or bagging items for an hourly wage.
- In college you trade class-time, homework, and money for a degree that enables you to live a better life.
- If you get married you give up some of the freedoms of single life for the blessings and responsibilities of married life.
- As you work you trade hours commuting and going to your job to earn a paycheck, progress in your profession, and support your family and others.

All throughout our life we are taught the importance of trade, of exchanging one thing for another. Sometimes when we trade we come out ahead. I chose a great degree and have a really great job. Other times we don't come out ahead. I got this cool rock and he got my Nintendo.

But what if I could tell you about the greatest trade every offered to mankind. It's called the great exchange. The author Paul writes in the New Testament about the great exchange in his letter to the Corinthians.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (NIV®)

At first glance this verse can seem kind of confusing, but it's talking about a trade. God the Father directed Jesus, who didn't have any sin—sin is wrongdoing before God—to take on our sin so that we can take on his righteousness—right standing before God. In other words Jesus will trade you his innocence for our guilt.

Some illustrate this great exchange with book covers. It's like Jesus' book cover is placed on your book, your life. Then your cover is placed on his life. He pays for your sin and you get his goodness. When God opens up your book cover he finds the life of Christ. Others have illustrated this using a movie. Imagine that your life, every moment of every day, is played on a big projector for the whole world to see. You would have parts you'd like and be proud of but many parts that you would feel great shame over. But Jesus always did the right thing. He always obeyed God. Imagine if instead of playing your life for all to see you could play Jesus' life for all to see. That would feel really good and it's possible through the great exchange. But this comes at a high cost. Jesus has to die so that you can live. He has to pay the ultimate price to make this trade.

Maybe you're thinking, "I don't want any of that. That sounds like an unfair trade." Well you're right. It's incredibly unfair, but it's also our only hope. It's our only way to redemption. It's our only way out of this mess we've gotten ourselves into. You and I are so broken and so sinful in our hearts that we stand guilty and condemned before God unless Jesus trades himself for us.

In today's passage we see Jesus play this story out. He stands before soldiers and rulers and crowds condemned, but completely innocent, and then trades his life for one who is actually guilty. Jesus is a willing victim of violence as he chooses to lay down his life for those he loves.

## **Jesus willingly chooses to lay down his life for us. (Luke 22:66-71)**

Jesus just spent the evening praying in the Garden of Gethsemane for his Father's will to be done. Judas comes with a band of soldiers and takes him away to be tried by those in power in Jerusalem.

66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. 67 "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

God promised a king called the **Messiah** (in the Greek "Christ") who would liberate his people. They think he will free them from political bondage but the Messiah actually liberates from **spiritual bondage first**. So when they ask if he's the Messiah Jesus doesn't answer them directly.

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, 68 and if I asked you, you would not answer. 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

Instead of claiming to be the Messiah, Jesus calls himself the **Son of Man**, a label he's given himself before. It identifies him not just with all of **humanity** but with a **special prophecy** found in the book of Daniel.

**Daniel 7:13-14** "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (NIV®)

The elders and chief priests know that Son of Man can stand for more than humanity so they ask him a clarifying question. They want to know if he is claiming to be divine, to be equal with God.

70 They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You say that I am."

71 Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

Jesus pretty much says, "You said it." They think this is **blasphemy**—that Jesus **profaned** God's name, like he has almost cursed God. But it's only blasphemy if Jesus isn't God, which he is. Do you see who is in **control** of this conversation? Jesus is. He gives them the **ammo** they need to condemn him. Jesus is intentionally giving up his life. This lines up with what Jesus tells us elsewhere (John 10:15, 15:13).

**John 10:17-18a** The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again..." (NIV®)

*Jesus willingly chooses to lay down his life for us.* What's the most amazing thing anyone has done for you? Maybe you think of your **parents raising you** and giving you an **education** or your **spouse** agreeing to

**marry** you. Those are examples of people laying down their lives for you. I mentioned this story in January but it's worth giving again because it's such a clear example of what Jesus did for us. Last year a French Police Officer exchanged himself for a female hostage and she lived but he died. What if there was someone out there who laid down his life for you? Who died so that you could live? And they didn't do it because someone forced them but willingly out of choice because they love you? That would be pretty amazing, wouldn't it? Well Jesus has done that for us and we **don't deserve it**.

## **Jesus is completely innocent but we are not. (Luke 23:1-5)**

Once the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law have enough evidence to condemn Jesus according to the law they lead him away to be judged by Pilate, the Governor of Judea (Matt 27:2). But when they bring charges against Jesus they don't bring up their **religious accusations** because they know Pilate **won't** take those accusations **seriously**. So they lie and make up **three false charges**.

1 Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king."

The first charge isn't true. Jesus isn't leading a **rebellion** against Caesar. He has come in peace but he is **subverting the religious leader's power** and **false teaching**. The second charge isn't true either. That very week they tried to trap Jesus by asking if it is lawful to **pay taxes to Caesar**, but Jesus had asked for one of their coins and asked whose image was on it. They said Caesar and Jesus said, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Luke 20:20-26) But there's something about the **third charge** that **rings true**— Jesus is the Messiah. He is a king.

3 So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

Jesus answers like before, "You said it." He is the king of the Jews, but not just the Jewish people, all people, the whole world, the whole universe. But he's a different kind of king than they expect, **not a military conquerer** but one who brings **grace** and **forgiveness** for sins—peace with God.

4 Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

5 But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

Jesus is innocent but those who accuse him are not. They're willing to lie to condemn him so they can regain power. Have you ever **lied** or said something that **wasn't quite true** to make you look good and the other person bad? We might not have wrongly condemned a man to death but Romans tell us **we've all sinned**.

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NIV®)

Anytime we say, think, or do anything that is **contrary** to God's good character we're sinning. This includes anytime we know we should do something good but don't do it. That's sin too. A pastor friend of mine shared an article, "Most Sinful States in America." According to the article, "**WalletHub** compared the 50 states across seven key dimensions: 1) Anger & Hatred, 2) Jealousy, 3) Excesses & Vices, 4) Greed, 5) Lust, 6) Vanity and 7) Laziness." They studied things like murder rates, thefts per capita, obesity, and more.

They found that Mississippi, Minnesota, Kansas, and New Jersey all have the worst **gambling problem** but Michigan much less so (8x less). New Mexico, Alaska, and Louisiana have the **most jealousy**—problems with theft—while **New England** suffers from that the least. But even though New York might not be very jealous they are number one for **vanity**, which is measured by **most beauty salons per capita**. The top four most sinful states are Nevada, Florida, California, and Texas and the least two are Maine and Vermont. Massachusetts is 33rd.

But here's the thing about this study. **Every state is on this list**. No state is innocent. We're all sinful in some way, whether it's clear to others or not. None of us are innocent. We've all sinned and elsewhere the Bible warns us the consequence for sin is **eternal spiritual death** (Romans 6:23). We each need to receive forgiveness and only Jesus can offer it because only Jesus is innocent. He's the **only human** who **wouldn't register** on this **chart** because he never sinned once but he can also forgive because he is **God too**.

What happens next is that when Pilate hears Jesus is from Galilee he sends him to Herod who rules that region, but Herod finds him to be innocent as well despite the **intense accusations** of the religious leaders (Luke 23:6-12). Jesus doesn't even say anything because he is intentionally laying down his life (Isa 53:7).

### **Jesus allows himself to be condemned to set us free. (Luke 23:13-25)**

Pilate tries to do the right thing and set Jesus free but only until he meets **resistance**.

13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. 15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. 16 Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.”

18 But the whole crowd shouted, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” 19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

Now it's not just the chief priests, and the rulers, but **the people too**. The **crowd** that welcomed him in on Palm Sunday now begins to shout “Crucify him!” And instead of asking Jesus to be released they ask for Barabbas, a **murderer** and a **rebel**, the one who is actually guilty of those **earlier charges**. It's incredibly **unfair** and **unjust**. The Gospel of **Matthew** tells us it was Pilate's practice to release a prisoner during the **Passover festival** (Matt 27:15), but instead of setting Jesus free they set free the worst of criminals. It's like setting the **Boston Marathon Bomber** free but **condemning your favorite elementary school teacher**. Pilate can hardly believe his ears.

20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

22 For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.”

23 But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed.

24 So Pilate decided to grant their demand. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will. (NIV®)

This is the **great exchange**. Jesus is condemned and Barabbas is set free. This is the exact same thing Jesus does for you and me. *Jesus allows himself to be condemned to set us free*. Today Jesus offers you his righteousness and holiness for your guilt and sin and shame. That's why Jesus went to the cross, so that if

you repent of your sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ you'll receive his holiness and he'll pay the penalty for your wrongdoing. You're right, **it's not fair, it's mercy**.

***Jesus allows himself to be condemned to set us free.***

Jesus traded his life for ours and he never regrets it. He did it intentionally, willingly, graciously. He died to set us free. Will you accept this gift? Will you believe and be saved? There are so many ways to get **ripped off** in life and so many ways to **come out ahead**, but there's only **one trade** that will get you **eternal life**. Come before Jesus and ask him to exchange his life for yours. And if you take him up on the offer you become innocent just like him. This doesn't mean you won't ever sin but that God will see you as **holy** and **pure** like Jesus and will give you the gift of **eternal life**. *Jesus allows himself to be condemned to set us free.*

*Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above. Click to listen to [sermons](#) or to read [our story](#).*