WHO DONE IT?

Scripture Reading: Read Matthew chapter 27

Based on the number of mystery novels written, spy movies produced, and television crime shows created, most folks must love a good mystery. As the plot develops, we try to figure out the clues, piece the puzzle together with the hope of discovering, "Who done it?

Through the millennia, folks have tried to determine "who done it?" in terms of Jesus' death. Who was responsible? For a few centuries following Jesus' death, it was fashionable in some Christian circles to blame the Jewish people for Christ's death. Citing the Jews' declaration in Matthew 27:25: "Let his blood be on us and on our children!", some called Jews, "Christ-killers," and, tragically, went so far as even to call for their deaths. Others have laid the blame at the feet of the Roman empire in general and Pontius Pilate in particular. The Jewish people did not have the right of capital punishment for that right was reserved for Rome. Pilate, therefore, had the power to release Jesus and did not even though he knew he was innocent.

Unfortunately, the blame game of "who done it?" misses the reality which Scripture proclaims. It wasn't someone else's fault that Jesus was nailed to the cross. It was my fault…and your fault. It was all of our faults. He was crucified to pay the penalty for your sin and for mine. The Scripture teaches that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). So, who done it? We did! It was our sin that nailed him there. He took the punishment we deserved and he paid the price for our sins.

Yet, we must also keep in mind that no one was able to take Jesus' life from him without his permission. Remember Jesus' words in John 10:11, 17-18: "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep… The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. 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."* Notice the repeated reference to his laying down his life. Jesus willingly laid his life down for us so that we could know God's salvation and he did it because he is a good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

The Jewish leadership indeed turned Jesus over to Pilate and Pilate did order Jesus to be crucified and our sin ultimately was the cause but, bottom line, it was submission to the Father's plan, out of God's amazing grace and love, which caused Jesus to go through with the cross. Who done it? He did…for you and for me.

Action Step: Have you ever accepted responsibility for your sins or have you blamed someone else? Now is the time to be honest with God and with yourself and own the fact that it was your sin that nailed Jesus to the cross.

Prayer Focus: Thank the Lord for his willingness to die in your place for your sins

Take-a-way: *It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the tree but it was his love that kept him there.*