In the movie *A Fish Called Wanda,* Kevin Kline plays a character who is not the sharpest knife in the drawer. For example he thinks that Aristotle was Belgian and that the central message of Buddhism is every man for himself. However when someone calls him stupid he vehemently objects and demandingly asks, “Do stupid people read Nietzsche?” -- Nietzsche being the 19th century German philosopher, who went nuts at the end of his life and was reported to be Hitler’s favorite philosopher. Now we can certainly debate whether or not stupid people read Nietzsche but whatever the case what this character did in his desire to not be thought of as stupid was to point to one aspect of his life in an effort to counter all charges against him. That is he could happily go on believing that Aristotle was Belgian because his reading of Nietzsche made him an intellectual powerhouse. The point I want to make here though is that, while perhaps not to this degree, we all tell ourselves stories about who we are and sometimes those stories can be used to hide some glaring intellectual or moral discrepancies.

I bring this up today because in our Gospel reading today we hear, “Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover.” Did you catch that? The pious Jews who are working on getting Jesus crucified on trumped up charges wait outside, because its Passover and they are clean and cannot be defiled by entering into the house of a non-Jew. Or if we want it in Kevin Kline terms, “Do bad people keep themselves ritualistically clean by staying away from Gentiles’ places of business?” This group can happily lead the plot to have Jesus crucified with no moral misgivings because they have told himself a story. And this story is about them being a good and upstanding people and part of the evidence of this is the fact that they will not go into Pilate’s headquarters.

Now of course it is Good Friday, which means you are not going to get a cheery message because part of the message of Good Friday is that we are all culpable in the crucifixion of Jesus. This is not a story to be read where we get to think what a bunch of jerks those guys were way back then. No, it is a story to be read where we also get to contemplate what jerks we are capable of being. We cannot be like the 5th century Frankish king Clovis who after his conversion to Christianity, is reported to have speculated that if he and his army had been in Jerusalem on the day the Romans were crucifying Jesus, things would have ended a lot differently. But that is not the correct interpretation because we are all sinful and therefore we all bear some responsibility. If Jesus died for the sins of the world this means all of them, not just the sins of those who were hanging out in front of Pilate’s headquarters. Every time we do something wrong but tell ourselves a story about our own virtue we are also standing outside of Pilate’s Headquarters thinking our small act of piety overrides our overt sins. When we come up with a reason for not doing God’s will while at the same time believing ourselves virtuous, we are there helping to crucify Jesus. Certainly, we may not be as overt a Caiaphas and his buddies, but there are all sorts of things we can latch onto to convince ourselves that we are pure and moral. Perhaps we think it is because we make it to church most Sunday’s unlike some people we know. Perhaps it’s because we give money to charity or only drink fair-trade coffee. And none of these are bad things, just as it was not bad for Caiaphas and his posse to try and stay ritualistically clean. The problem is if in doing things we are blinded to the will of God. If we are actively thwarting God’s will, while believing that our house is all in order.

Good Friday is a sad day because we see what our sin is capable of doing. We see how people who are seemingly moral in some aspects of their life can be capable of horrific acts in other parts. Today is a stark reminder of why God wants all of us – ourselves, our souls and bodies as we say in the Eucharistic prayer. We cannot fool ourselves by telling stories about our great and heroic deeds unless we are dong this in all parts of our life. We cannot go to church on Sunday and be jerks on Monday. As clergy I can’t say that because God called me to be a minster that this excuses me from behaving in the ways God calls me to in all aspects of my life. Good Friday lays everything bare and reminds us why God calls not just parts of us but all of us this day and forevermore.