

Text: Mark 15:1-15

Title: "You Said It"

Introduction: Over the past few weeks we have been studying the last 24 hours of Jesus' life here on earth. Now, Jesus knew what his purpose in life was. He knew that he was to come and teach people how to live for God. He knew that he was going to reveal God's power through his teaching, healing and miracles. He knew that he was to show people Who God is and Who God wants people to be in this life. THEN, Jesus knew that he was going to hang on a cross and die for the sins of the world.

So, as we go through these last hours of Jesus' life, please recognize that Jesus is, at no point, surprised at what is going on or taken off guard; nor does Jesus try to get out of it. If Jesus wanted to get out of dying on the cross, all he had to do was quit teaching the things of God, stop healing people, quit drawing attention to himself, and/or just not go to Jerusalem. Avoid the Church leaders!

He didn't. Leading up to the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Passover Feast, still celebrated by Jews today to commemorate the Hebrew people being spared from the last plague in Egypt and their ultimate release by Pharaoh, Jesus and his followers dutifully traveled to Jerusalem.

On Sunday he was welcomed with shouts of Hosanna and waving of palm branches. Monday he ransacked the Temple because it was being used by merchants and money-changers to rip people off who were coming to the Temple to worship and sacrifice to God. Tuesday Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, Sadducees and Teachers of the Law with questions to trick him. They thought that Jesus was just another man that they could outsmart and show all of His followers that He wasn't worth following. Jesus answered all of their questions and made the Church leaders look foolish. The religious leaders vowed not to ask Jesus any more questions. Instead, they decided to just get rid of Jesus!

Thursday night was the Passover Feast where Jesus met with His disciples for the last time. In the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, He prays and then is betrayed by Judas. Jesus is arrested by the Temple guards and taken to the High Priest's house for a night trial in front of the political/religious High Council (Sanhedrin). They found Jesus guilty of blasphemy because Jesus said clearly, in a number of ways, that He was God in human form!

For the night, Jesus was held in a pit, like a cistern, for at least a couple of hours. The High Council had to wait for daytime to condemn him according to their law.

Let's Pray!

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today...On the other an outline of how we are going to approach the Scripture. Fill in the blanks provided and take whatever other notes you think will help you on your journey or the faith journey of others you care about. Please take this home and hang it up where you can see it. Read this Scripture more than once this week and think about what it means to you and your relationship with God through Jesus. For those of you listening on line or IPODing this, you can download the notes off of our website and you too can fill in the blanks! We are glad you are with us.

So, Jesus has spent the night in a pit prison cell. Now he is pulled out with ropes (picture?) and here's what happens next: (Mark 15:1)

I. Daybreak Verdict

- A. So, here's what they do. Because they are supposed to, by their Law, have trials and judgments during daylight hours, they had to wait until daybreak to "discuss their next step."
- B. Their next step, after declaring Jesus guilty of Blasphemy and that the punishment should be crucifixion on a cross, was to take Jesus to Pontius Pilate.
 - 1. The Jews did not have the power to choose who they could execute ... they were under Roman power. Only the Romans could decide who would be crucified.
 - 2. So, for the Jews, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy by calling himself God.
 - 3. But, the Jewish leaders used what he had said the night before to make it an offense against the Roman Empire.
- C. Jesus called himself the "Messiah" or "anointed one" ... also translated as "king".
 - 1. In the Roman Empire, there was only one King and that was Caesar. If one claimed to be a king; that was treason against Caesar and the Roman Empire.
 - 2. The Jewish leaders knew that Jesus was not going to lead a military rebellion against the Roman Empire, but their charges against Jesus would either force Jesus to deny that he was the Messiah or, if he didn't, force Pilate to put him to death for attempting to lead a revolution.
- D. So, Jesus is bound and led through the City of Jerusalem from Caiaphas palace to the Antonia Fortress (MAP).
 - 1. This was the Roman Headquarters that overlooked the Temple (PICTURE).
 - 2. Built in 35BC by Herod the Great, Antonia Fortress was an eyesore for the Jewish people. It was a constant reminder to them that the Roman Empire overlooked the Jewish people and their faith.
- E. Jesus is bound like one would bind a lamb getting ready to be sacrificed.
 - 1. Jesus is walked through the streets of Jerusalem in the early morning (5-6am).
 - 2. Tradition tells us that this was on April 3, 33AD.

Let's read on... (15:2-5)

Now, as we bring Pilate into the story, let's remember that Pilate was not a nice guy. Pilate was a governor over Judea who spent most of his time in a palace by the Mediterranean Sea (Caesarea), but was called to Jerusalem during Festivals to help keep peace. Pilate was only afforded so many soldiers from the Empire (Judea was not a dangerous place or a danger to revolt), so one way Pilate kept peace was through violence. Historically, Pilate is described as a man of "inflexible disposition, harsh and

stubborn”. He did not hesitate to kill some Galileans that he thought might be leading a rebellion, who came to the Temple to offer sacrifices ... he mixed their blood with the blood of the sacrifices (Luke 13).

II. Jesus and Pilate

A. A Sheep to Slaughter

1. Pilate knew that the only reason Jesus was before him was because of the jealousy of the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus was becoming more popular than they were and they were insecure.
2. But, why wasn't Jesus defending himself?
3. Pilate asks Jesus if he is going to answer the charges brought against him ... and is surprised that Jesus stays quiet!
4. Remember, Jesus knew what was happening. Jesus knew why he was there and he wasn't about to defend himself.
5. See, Jesus silence wasn't about ignoring the charges; it was about his determination to die! Jesus had no desire to get out of the death penalty! Maybe Jesus was remembering the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 53:6-7:

⁶ All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.¹

6. Yet, Pilate, a ruthless governor who did not shy away from violence or crucifixions had a hard time being convinced to crucify Jesus ... even though Jesus had clearly challenged the Kingship of Caesar.
7. I wonder what Pilate recognized in Jesus ... was it his silence that took Pilate off guard?
8. Why was Jesus so determined to die?
9. Why? Because Jesus understood the cost of GRACE!

B. The Cost of Grace

1. Remember at the Last Supper how Jesus said that the wine was the Blood of the New Covenant and the bread was His Body and that the sacrifice he was about to make was for the forgiveness of sins?!?
2. Jesus was determined to die because He knew that's what it was going to take to forgive the people of this world throughout history...
3. It's kind of hard to understand how the death of Jesus brings you and I Salvation, but we're going to try.
4. There are a lot of theories about how this works, but if we listen to them, we find a very powerful picture of Jesus suffering and death for us...

¹*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. 1997. Tyndale House: Wheaton, Ill.

5. The theory that we are going to focus on is called the Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement. It says that Jesus died in the place of all of humanity. Scripture tells us that the cost of SIN is DEATH...
6. Anyone here ever SIN? So, every one of us deserves to die because we have disobeyed The Almighty, Creator God!
7. This theory says that on Judgment Day, Jesus will stand between you and God and say, "Because this person has asked for forgiveness by my suffering and death, they have no sin..." Thus, we are right with God and can experience heaven for eternity.
8. We have a pretty good picture of what that looks like in this next part of our Scripture....

(15:6-15)

III. Jesus of Nazareth vs. Jesus Barabbas

- A. It was the custom for Pilate to release one prisoner back to the Jewish people during the Passover Festival. This was an act of mercy by Pilate to try to appease the Jews and quell their desire to rebel.
- B. That day, Pilate had two prisoners before him: Jesus of Nazareth and Barabbas. Both were charged with leading rebellions and claimed to be the king of the Jews. Pilate asked, "Which would you like me to release to you?"
 1. Jesus Barabbas (from John) = Convicted of leading a revolt against the Romans ... robbed people to fund his cause ... murdered those who had sided with the Romans or actual Roman citizens in an attempt to physically overthrow the Roman stronghold in Jerusalem/Israel.
 2. Jesus of Nazareth = did nothing wrong. Jesus loved poor and lost people, taught them about the Kingdom of God, healed the sick, fed the hungry and turned death into life.
- C. I think Pilate assumed they would ask for Jesus, and it sounds like Pilate wanted to release the carpenter from Nazareth. BUT, they ask for Barabbas instead and in the end, Barabbas is released without charge!
- D. Watch this from Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*... (show film clip, 50:30 – 51:10)
 1. Did you see that look? It's portrayed that Barabbas actually might have understood that Jesus was taking his deserved punishment for him...
 2. The substitutionary theory of Atonement (At-One-Ment) is like this: Every one of us has sinned or gone against God's way of living life and because of that we have pushed God away. God's justice calls for punishment for sin and our Scripture says that the cost is death (Romans 6:23) ... eternal separation from God ... BUT, God loves us like parents love their children and does not want us to be apart for eternity.

- God wants us to receive GRACE. An ordinary person could not die in our place, but Jesus was God in the flesh; He can!
3. Jesus paid a price that He did not owe to give us GRACE that we do not deserve. This is what we see in Barabbas walking away from prison and Jesus hanging on a cross.
 4. Who deserved the punishment, Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus Barabbas? This is probably easier for societies to understand that sacrificed animals to appease the gods than for us to understand...
- E. Here's the problem: Most people don't recognize that they are that bad that they need Jesus to die on a cross for us. Some of us don't feel like we need to be made right with God at all, much less this way.
- F. Here's what is supposed to happen: We are supposed to look at the cross and see God's amazing love for us and that GRACE cost Jesus suffering and death that we deserve; not Him. We should find our hearts changed by what God has done for us. In response to that understanding, we are to serve God's Kingdom humbly and strive to never, as we see Jesus suffer, sin again. But, we will...

IV. Pilate and the Crowd

- A. I wonder how we would have reacted had we been a part of that crowd. Here were two men called 'Jesus', which means 'savior'.
1. One was willing to confront the Romans with physical force and lead a fight for political freedom.
 2. The other was a man who drove Jewish people who were making a buck out of the Temple, taught the people to turn the other cheek and carry a Roman's pack two miles instead of just one. He loved and hung out with the scum of society and invited others to do the same...
 3. Who would you have chosen, knowing that you were tired of being oppressed by the Roman Empire?!? Who would you have chosen as a 'savior'?
- B. And how many of us have been like Pilate? We can tell from the Scripture readings that he knew the right thing to do. He was troubled by the understanding that Jesus of Nazareth was only before him because the Jewish religious leaders were jealous ... Jesus hadn't done anything wrong.
- C. Yet, when it came down to it, "So to pacify/satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them."

V. Who Am I?

- A. Which one are you?
- B. Are you like the religious leaders who were jealous and it didn't matter that someone else was doing something good for the society; you were going to take them down no matter what?

- C. Are you like the crowd who wanted what they wanted and how they wanted it, so they chose Barabbas to be released because Jesus way seemed too hard?
- D. Are you like Pilate, who turned his back on Jesus just because he didn't want to go against the crowd? Do you, like Pilate, get caught up in your desire for acceptance or your fear of ridicule and being rejected?
- E. Or, are you like Barabbas, who maybe had an understanding, but certainly experienced, that he just got off scot free even though he deserved to die! Are you like Barabbas in the knowing that Jesus took the place you deserve?

Next Week: Torture and Humiliation of a King.

Let's Pray!