

Mark 14:53—72

August 4, 2019

Have you ever heard someone refer to a pivotal moment in their lives as their 'crowded hour'? The term comes from an 18th century poem entitled—"The Call."

Most of the content of the poem has been forgotten in our day except for that expression.

"One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."

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Is worth an age without a name.

From that point on, you will read about people who call pivotal life moments their "crowded hour."

The most famous person to pick up that expression was Theodore Roosevelt. When on July 1, 1898 he received the order to charge up Kettle Hill. He said, "The instant I received the order I sprang on my horse and my crowded hour began."

He considered his charge up Kettle Hill leading his vaunted RoughRiders his "crowded hour." He said, "I would rather have led that charge...than served three

terms in the United States Senate. It makes me feel as though I could now leave something to my children..."

Roosevelt fashioned a legend from his 'crowded hour' that would that would lead him to the White House.

Today we read of another crowded hour, Jesus' crowded hour. His crowded hour will not seem glorious it won't seem as impressive as a military charge but it is far more important.

His crowded hour seems like a parade of humiliating loses, reversals, snags and setbacks. His crowded hour seems like an undiluted failure.

But it is not.

His crowded hour is glorious.

- Not for how he was treated.
- Not for how he was lied about.
- Not for the way they spit on him.
- Not for the way they mocked him.
- Not for the way they hit him.

Why was it glorious?

Because from that courtroom the high cost of grace echoes forth.

Do you know what grace is? Christians throw that word around a lot and I wonder how often we think about what it means and more than that, how lavishly expensive it is.

Grace is God's goodness given to undeserving people. The glorious thing about grace for us that follow Jesus is that it is wondrously, astoundingly free. We receive God's love and affection not as wages paid but as a gift.

Grace is free to you and I, but there was a purchase price. Going back to the courtroom and Jesus' crowded hour shows how very costly grace is.

The ground of his crowded hour is as he takes the stand to be prosecuted. We join Jesus at his trial.

In our section today, Mark will escort us to not just one trial but three.

We find ourselves with him on the most important Friday morning toward the end of the most important week ever. As we join Jesus, we will remember that he was arrested and the disciples so recently had pledged allegiance to Jesus all ran off.

Trial #1: Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-61a)

“And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ ” ⁵⁹ Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” ⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer.”

You can't tell by the way that Mark tells it, but these proceedings are outrageously illegal. The Jewish authorities who purported to be the upholders of the law are officiating a grossly immoral trial.

How were they violating the legal code?

First of all, all night trials were outlawed and yet the authorities are trying Jesus early Friday morning.

Secondly, any questions of capital crimes against the state required two full days to process—they are working in hours not days. Thirdly, No capital crimes could be heard on Sabbath Eve, they should have been postponed until Monday. But they could not wait and Jesus was placed on the stand in this criminal trial.

The supposed law-keepers were the arch lawbreakers.

If all of that was not bad enough, they are openly looking for testimony that to incriminate Jesus.

Vs. 55,

Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.

Their standard, like ours, was innocent until proven guilty but that is anything but what is happening here.

So, the Jewish authorities called many witnesses speak against Jesus but none of their false witnesses could agree. If you are going to conduct a kangaroo court, you should at least get the false testimony to agree. They could not even do that.

Finally, the charge they stick on Jesus is detailed in verse 58,

“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ ”

Even this is disingenuous, Jesus never said that he would destroy the temple he said that the temple would be destroyed. These witnesses made it sound like Jesus was planning some kind of terrorist treachery.

Dishonest people are adept at twisting the truth to make it sound dreadful.

Jesus said that he would built another not built by hands but he was talking about his on resurrection.

Jesus was wise enough to let the circus play on without him jumping in. This was Just like Isaiah said it would be 800 years before.

[7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is
silent,

so he opened not his mouth. Isaiah 53:7

He was silent.

All attempts to discredit him were failing spectacularly.

Further, it is beyond remarkable to see Jesus respond the way that he did to these bundle of false accusations. He could have shouted them down or taken them apart with piercing logic. Instead, he was silent.

Do you know how hard it is to have people lie about you and conspire against you in an illegal trial to keep silent? Our Lord suffered all this injustice in silence.

This is one element in the purchase price of grace. He bore the shame of extreme injustice at the hands of sinful men; so we might experience the gift of grace.

Trial #1 is going no where fast.

The Chief Priest (Caiaphas) knows that he is getting nowhere. Jesus does not even respond to the false accusations piling up against him. So, Caiaphas decides to question Jesus, directly himself.

Jesus is proving his mettle during his crowded hour. Then Caiaphas appoints himself as cross-examiner. And he asks Jesus the only question that really matters. Who really cares about plans for the destruction of the temple? Who are you?

We've trial #1, Jesus before the Jewish Authorities, now comes the second trial.

Trial #2: The Jewish Authorities before Jesus (Mark 14:61b-65)

"Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows."

Did the you hear the question?

"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Jews then and now don't invoke the name of God—so the high priests referred to God as 'the Blessed.' After his response to this question, things devolve fast. The Jewish authorities go from this question to condemning Jesus, to spitting on Jesus, to hitting Jesus in the face, to mocking Jesus.

Why?

Because of the answer that Jesus gives to Caiaphas the High Priest. Remember, Caiaphas asked,

"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Jesus could have just said, "Yes." But with his answer he said much, much more.

Vs. 62,

⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Do you see what he says?

Essentially he says, "Yes I am the Christ the Son of God and you will see me at the right hand of God one day as I come down out of heaven. Just wait."

The flipped when he said that he would be coming from the clouds and even more because Jesus did not just pull that out of thin air. He took two of the most famous OT passages about the coming Messiah and applied them to himself.

Let me show you,

I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power

[1] The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool." Ps.
110:1

You guys know Psalm 110, that is talking about me. I'm the one that is invited by God to sit at his right hand. Jesus is saying he is the ONE who exercises the prerogatives of God AS God sitting at the right hand of God.

If that wasn't enough he also says he is the one who will be coming with the clouds of heaven. Where is that from?

and coming with the clouds of heaven."

“As I looked,
thrones were placed,
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
 and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
 its wheels were burning fire.
[10] A stream of fire issued
 and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
 and ten thousand times ten thousand stood
before him;
 the court sat in judgment,
 and the books were opened.”

We can see the context with the books open is judgment of the world.

“I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
 there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
 and was presented before him.
[14] And to him was given dominion
 and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
 should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,

which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:9-
10,13–14

In defense of the Jewish authorities, Jesus did not look like much as he stood before them. He sure didn't seem like the son of the blessed or destined to come down in any clouds from heaven. The Jesus that stood before them seemed delusional.

Let's be real, it does seem a bit delusional. Jesus of Nazareth did not seem like the one who shared equal authority with the Ancient of Days.

- He had no position.
- He had no court.
- He had no political power.
- He had no throne.
- He had no army.
- His followers scattered.

Not too impressive. He does not appear to be much.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? I'm the one who has been given dominion and a kingdom and all the earth is going to serve me. I am the one who is setting up a

kingdom that cannot be destroyed. I am the 'one like a son of man' from Daniel.

- He did not seem powerful or authoritative but one day they would all see him coming in the clouds with the Ancient of Days.
- He might not seem like much with his hands in irons but one day all peoples from everywhere would come to him and serve him.
- He did not seem impressive standing alone on trial, but one day he would be given a kingdom without end.
- He did not seem so mighty captured and constrained, but one day he would have an everlasting dominion.
- He seemed like an ordinary criminal but one day he would be arrayed in glory.

Do you see what else Jesus is saying?

I am the exalted one. You will see me coming in the clouds in power with the Ancient of Days. You think you judge me? I will judge you! Not just you but the whole world.

You are sitting in judgment of me right now, but I WILL judge you and the rest of the world. I will open great books and judge you based on all that you have done. You will have no illegal proceedings to hide

behind. You will have no trumped up defense to offer. You will stand before me alone, and I will judge you.

All this power you think you have will be evaporated.

How does this connect to us? Here is how--He is the great judge that allowed himself to be judged.

More than that—he was the sinless judge who was sinfully judged by sinful men.

Why?

That is part of the purchase price of grace. Jesus was judged at the hands of sinful men—but also his Father—the Ancient of Days passed judgment on him too.

Why?

So that sinful men and women would not face judgment. Grace is free but it is so very costly.

See the price of grace. The life of Jesus.

It wasn't just that he died it was that he died in our place so that we might live forever. See the price of grace.

No wonder we sing Amazing Grace. It is amazing NOT just because of the favor we receive from God—but because of the staggering price of grace.

Grace is amazing because of the cost to Jesus.

- See him allowing himself to be arrested: grace.
- See him before an illegal trial: grace.
- See him standing absorbing the false accusations: grace.
- See him accused of blasphemy: grace.
- See him spat upon: grace.
- See him mocked: grace.
- See him hit: grace.

There is a danger for those of us who are used know about what Jesus did and have heard about it for years.

Grace begins not to be so amazing.

Grace doesn't seem amazing because in the deepest parts of our hearts we don't think we need it. We think we are good and that God owes us a thing or two.

This is the great danger for those that have grown up in the church or have been Christians for any bit of time. Grace ceases to be amazing because we:

Have our devotions
Go to church
Pray
Worship
Give
Go on mission trips
Help the needy

And we think we have earned something. We would never admit that, but grace isn't as amazing as it once was. There is a disobedience in obedience. We think we earned something. Like the older brother we think that we shouldn't have to put up with trouble of any kind.

Signs that you could be an older brother—
You think—how could this happen to me?
You think—I don't deserve this.
Why would God do this to me?
You don't forgive easily.
You hold bitterness.
You think the worst of people.
You say: He/she doesn't deserve my forgiveness.

You don't easily forgive because you have forgotten how much you have been forgiven of. Sure, you can sing Amazing Grace but it hasn't been amazing for years. You are indifferent to grace. And if you are honest you are indifferent to the love of Jesus.

Because you believe you deserve it.

There is a great danger for those who grew up in church or religion. You can think you are good, but you are not. You need Jesus and his love each and every day whether it seems like it or not.

Only grace. You need to remember that your best efforts are not enough. You need to remember that Jesus died for your obedience because it wasn't good enough.

We've been with Jesus in the first and second trials, now we are going to join Peter in his trial.

While Jesus is facing this tortuous crowded hour, Peter is out in the courtyard. He is in the vicinity of Jesus but not so close as to be in any danger.

Remember, It wasn't but a couple of hours before Peter had loudly crowed his allegiance to Jesus expressing even his willingness to go and die with him. Let's check in with Peter and see how he is doing.

Trial #3: Peter before the Servant Girl (Mark 14:54, 66-72)

⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.

⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. ⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." ⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." ⁷² And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept."

Peter is put on the stand not by the high priest but an anonymous servant girl. As people huddled around the fire to ward off the early spring chill, a girl got a glance at Peter's face in the firelight.

She accuses him of being an associate of Jesus,

“You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”

And Peter responds, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.”

And with that response he moves from around the fire to the edges of the courtyard by the gateway to the complex. The servant girl’s mind is whirring thinking back and wondering if she could possibly be mistaken and she knows she is right. Time to involve others,

⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” ⁷⁰ But again he denied it.

Now a growing crowd of people were deputized in this cross-examination of Peter. They are trying to decide if they remember if he was with Jesus the Galilean. The bystanders probably mumbled amongst themselves and agreed that they indeed HAD seen Peter with Jesus.

It is now their turn to ask a question.

“And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” ⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.”

Notice, Peter does not just say, “No, I don’t know him.” He invokes a curse on himself. Essentially he says something like, “May God make me burn in hell forever if I am lying and know this man you are talking about.”

He does not just say no. He curses himself.

Ironically, the curses he calls down on himself are highly deserved. Even from Peter’s mouth he should have been cursed to a forever death.

But he wasn’t.

Peter said he would never leave Jesus—he left him.
Peter said he would die before he left Jesus—he ran.
Peter said he would never deny Jesus—he denied him three times.

Peter failed his own standards. He couldn’t follow through with what he promised.

Here is the truth, not only do we fail to live up with God at the center of our lives—we fail even to live up to the promises we make to ourselves.

Aren’t we the same—how quickly we say, I will
NEVER,

Do that again
Say that again

Drive there again
Be there again
Drink that again
Smoke that again
Eat that again
Think that again
Want that again

And again and again we go back to it again and again.
Here is the dirty little secret: We fail even the standards we set up for ourselves. If sin was just measured by the promises we make to ourselves—we fail there too.

Grace from Jesus ensures that failure is not permanent.

Would this failure be permanent?

What about those of us who have:

Failed at motherhood?
Failed at fatherhood?
Failed at friendship?
Failed at loving and being loved?
Failed at loving your parents?
Failed at living a meaningful life?
Failed at being kind?

Maybe you feel like you have failed at life.

Is there any hope for those who have failed at life?
Here is the honest truth—we all have failed in some ways even if it is not total and complete.

Can Jesus do anything for failures?

Oh yes. Here in his crowded hour we see our savior purchasing grace.

Grace that covers our ALL our failures.

See Jesus standing accused so that we can go free.
See Jesus bearing up under false testimony.

Why?

So that when we face our crowded hours full of failure and sin—so that when we face them we might receive grace.

PRAY

May we all,

'that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17–19
(ESV)