

Mark 15:1-15  
August 11, 2019

Our journey with Jesus through Mark is nearly complete. He burst on the scene announcing that the kingdom of God was "at hand." Further calling people to, "repent and believe the gospel."

What is the gospel?

It is the good news concerning Jesus Christ. If our story through Mark ended before the cross and resurrection of Jesus there would be no good news to report, nothing to believe in and no power in our repentance.

Without the crucifixion, without the grizzly cross there is no good news for us today. The good news of Jesus Christ centers on an implement of torture.

We started our journey with Mark to get to know Jesus 18 months ago. One of the major ways we get to know Jesus is by his death and what it means.

Odd. Right?

Think about the things we DON'T know about Jesus. Mark has told us NOTHING of—

- What Jesus looked like.
- The circumstances around his birth.
- What Jesus was like as a child.
- How old Jesus was when he walked.
- How long it took for Jesus to learn his ABC's.
- How good of a carpenter Jesus was.
- What kind of older brother he was.
- What his favorite food was.
- What his hobbies were.

We know NONE of those things from the pen of Mark but we know in great detail why he died, how he died and that he knew he was going to die.

That is a strange way to get to know someone.

Mark is either a bit deranged and macabre OR Jesus death is that important.

Have you ever thought of why his death was so important for Mark to communicate? Or in other words, why does it seem like—for Mark—if you don't know that Jesus died, you don't really know Jesus?

Why?

If you don't understand WHY Jesus died you don't really know who Jesus is. Who else is like that? No one.

Mark wants us to understand that you don't understand Jesus if you don't know WHY he died. Earlier in the book, Mark reported Jesus' very own words on WHY he had to die. He said,

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45

What we are going to see starting today is continuance of Jesus giving his life away as a ransom for many. In other words, he died for others and we all REALLY need to know that.

Jesus died for others.

Another way to say that, is—

Jesus died as a replacement for others.

Jesus died as a stand-in for others.

Jesus died as a proxy for others.

Mostly simply, Jesus died as a substitute.

You need to know this.  
You need to know this about Jesus.  
You need to know this about yourself.

PROP: Jesus died to rescue.

His death is a rescue mission. The most unexpected rescue mission ever.

Let's join Jesus in Jerusalem again. When last we were with him he was subjected to an illegal night trial at the malicious hands of the Jewish authorities—they branded him a blasphemer. And worthy of death.

One problem. Jerusalem was in Roman territory. Only Roman authorities were allowed to execute criminals.

So, we pick up at first light,

[1] And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. [2] And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." [3] And the chief priests accused him of many things. [4] And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." [5] But

Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

[6] Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. [7] And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. [8] And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. [9] And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" [10] For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. [11] But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. [12] And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" [13] And they cried out again, "Crucify him." [14] And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." [15] So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Mark 15:1–15

PRAY

*1. Jesus brought to Pilate (Mark 15:1-5)*

'As soon it was morning...' Jesus had resources at his disposal he did not use. He could have stopped the morning from coming. He did not.

As soon as dawn breaks, the Jewish authorities usher Jesus to a man that Mark calls, Pilate. His full name was Pontius Pilate. Pilate served as the Roman prefect (kind of like a governor) over Jerusalem and some surrounding territory.

His main job was to keep the peace in his little Roman corner of the world. You need to know that the Jewish authorities HATED Pilate and all he stood for, yet they are forced to take Jesus to him.

Pilate had to approve of their execution plan.

So, the Jewish authorities put the charge against Jesus in the most scandalous way possible to the Roman mind.

Vs. 2,

[2] And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Being Messiah was no crime to Rome. But a king that would challenge the authority of Caesar? Now you are talking something that spook the Romans. The only

crime Rome cared about was treachery against the state.

Do you see what the Jewish leaders are doing?

They are trying to paint Jesus with revolutionary colors. They are trying to make him sound like a subversive agent that lives to sabotage and undermine Rome. They are making Jesus out as an enemy of the state.

Pilate was no fool. He knew the Jewish authorities didn't give two figs about peace in the Roman state. Pilate knew they were trying to frame Jesus.

Vs. 2,

[2] And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Look at Jesus' response.

And he answered him, "You have said so."

What kind of answer is that? Last week when the Jewish authorities asked him if he were the Messiah he 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." Mark 14:62*

And here Pilate asks him, are you king of the Jews and he says, essentially, "That is what you just said." That is not much of an answer.

Was Jesus a king? Yes, but not the kind that Pilate could really understand. Jesus is—as we know—no threat to Rome. He had no designs to overthrow Caesar but his followers would one day turn the world upside in his name. He was absolutely a king but his kingdom would not be limited to the Roman empire—he is king over the whole universe and his kingdom would outlast Rome. He had a throne superior to all other thrones, and one day that would be clear.

Is he king of the Jews? Yes and the whole universe.

With that, the Jewish authorities lunged at Jesus full of invectives and accusations. They unloaded all their verbal ammunition on him in front of Pilate to make Jesus sound like a vulgar outlaw.

Vs. 4,



Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” [5] But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Pilate is amazed NOT at what Jesus says to silence the Jewish authorities BUT that he was silent in face of their taunts. 800 years before Isaiah said this is how it would all go down,

“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

At this point Pilate is faced with a dilemma. He knew the Jewish authorities had no case against Jesus. He knew they were trying to use Pilate to get rid of Jesus. Pilate knew that if he released Jesus outright he could have some trouble. The last thing he wanted was trouble.

So, Pilate appeals to a higher court to gain amnesty for Jesus—he tries to go over the head of Jewish authorities by—appealing to the crowd.

## *2. Jesus brought to the crowd (Mark 15:6-15)*

At the Passover each year Pilate would liberate one Jewish prisoner. So a crowd of people came to Pilate and asked for this annual favor. Pilate addresses the crowd in vs. 9,

[9] And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

Surely the crowd would agree. But the Jewish authorities were in crowd and encouraged the mob to demand a man named Barabbas. Mark tells us about him in verse 7,

"And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas."

Who is Barabbas?

A rebel to Roman authority.

A murderer.

A bona fide insurgent.

Again, remember the only crime Rome takes seriously are crimes against Rome. In the eyes of Rome, Barabbas was guilty and worthy of capital punishment. Barabbas was a rebel against Roman

rule. He was a Jew and he fought murdered trying to throw off Roman rule.

It comes down to a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. What had Jesus done? He was accused of being a rebel without actually doing anything against Rome. Barabbas was a revolutionary that wanted to throw off Roman oppression. If he had to murder—so be it.

Who should be chosen between the two?

The Revolutionary or the Rabbi?

The Murderer or the Miracle worker?

The Rebel or the Redeemer?

Easy, right.

When Pilate asked the crowd they DON'T want Jesus released. The Jewish authorities saw their chance.

[11] But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. [12] And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"

Even in the age before social media there were mobs, they were just in real life and not virtual. This is a mob.

Look at their answer,

[13] And they cried out again, "Crucify him." [14] And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him."

It was the Revolutionary INSTEAD of the Rabbi.  
It was the Murderer INSTEAD of the Miracle worker.  
It was the Rebel INSTEAD of the Redeemer.

Interestingly, Barabbas translated into English means Son of the Father.

So we might say,

Barabbas son of the Father INSTEAD of Jesus THE son of the Father.

Jesus became the substitute, the stand-in for Barabbas. The Son of the Father Most high would die instead of Barabbas the son of the Father.

Jesus substituted for a criminal.

Pilate appealed to the court of the mob to get Jesus off, but the plan backfired.

[15] So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Pilate's powerplay against the Jewish authorities backfires. He played to the crowd and they were turned into a mob. We don't know what the Jewish authorities said to the crowd, but we do know how they responded to Pilate.

What about Jesus?

"Crucify him!"

"Crucify him!"

We don't know for sure the make-up of the crowd but we do know that just a few days before as Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd was shouting something very different.

"And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! [10] Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"  
Mark 11:9–10

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord becomes, "Crucify him!" Hosanna becomes Crucify him!

Away with Jesus.

Crucify Him!

Crucify Him!

We are not told what the Jewish authorities did to stir up the crowd that day before Pilate. We know that Barabbas was arrested for insurrection against Rome. The Jewish authorities probably said to the crowd—at least Barabbas fights against our Roman enemy.

The crowd expected a king that would deal with Rome. What was Jesus doing, exactly. What kind of king, is he really?

At least Barabbas fights our common enemy. The crowd chose Barabbas over Jesus.

So we hear,

Crucify Him!

Crucify Him!

And that was what Pilate would do. Jesus' fate was sealed. He was off to be beaten and to be crucified.

But Jesus was doing more than anyone on that day could see. He was offering himself as a substitute.

Everyone in our journey with Mark this morning desperately needed a substitute. Of course they were ignorant to their need, but Jesus was not.

- The Jewish authorities needed a substitute but they wanted Jesus to validate all their religious activity.

Someone to do and be what they wanted him to be.

They could not imagine a Messiah who did not agree with all their expectations. Jesus could not be Messiah because he didn't view, the law, the nation and the Roman occupation the way they did. They expected Jesus to uphold their traditions and expectations.

Instead, they got Jesus the substitute. He would not submit to their will and desires, he served at the good pleasure of the father. What they could not understand or see was they needed a substitute to rescue them from all their confidence in their religious traditions.

They did not understand what Jesus was doing. They thought they needed the Messiah to do for them what they wanted.

They had constructed the expectation of a Messiah in their own image and yet Jesus came as a substitute, not as one who would do and be what they wanted him to be.

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to be who they expected, but Jesus was busy becoming a substitute for people like these Jewish leaders. For people who put confidence in their own religious activities.

The Jewish leaders needed a substitute.

Pontius Pilate needed a substitute too.

- Pilate needed a substitute but he wanted Jesus to defend himself to make his life easier.

Pilate's main job was to keep peace and not to let the zealous Jews rock the boat. His life would have been a lot less complicated if Jesus just defended his own innocence. That way, Pilate would not be put in the awkward and challenging position of defending Jesus.

That was a losing proposition.

What Pilate did not understand was Jesus would be defended but only after he was a substitute. He would not defend himself, but his father would defend him.



How?

After dying as a substitute, the Father would give the ultimate defense of Jesus by calling him back from the dead. Jesus was content to let his defense wait.

Pilate wanted Jesus to make his life easier, but Jesus was busy becoming a substitute for people like Pilate who just want Jesus to make their life easier.

The Jewish authorities wanted Jesus to validate all their religious activity.

Pilate wanted Jesus to make his life easier.

For both he was busy being a substitute.

- The crowd need a substitute but they wanted Jesus to be a revolutionary and overthrow Roman oppression.

They wanted a someone to fight and throw the yoke of Roman oppression. They wanted Jesus to be a David-like figure to restore their nation to past glory.

Instead, Jesus was a substitute.

What they did not understand was that Jesus was dying a revolutionary death. It appeared he was about

to be conquered, but by dying he would stand in for sinners as a substitute.

And by that means, he would destroy the yoke of a far more deadly oppression than Rome, sin and death. Those foes were far more perilous to mankind. Jesus method of conquering was to be conquered.

The Jewish authorities wanted Jesus to validate all their religious activity.

Pilate wanted Jesus to make his life easier.

The crowd wanted Jesus to be a revolutionary.

The only person in our text this morning that was exactly who Jesus wanted him to be was Barabbas.

- Barabbas was a murderer and he wanted Jesus to die in his place as a substitute.

And that is exactly what he did. The news that Jesus the Nazarene would die as a substitute for him must have been the best news he had ever heard.

The son of God the Father SUBSTITUTED for the Son of the Father. Jesus stands in for Barabbas. The innocent condemned. The guilty set free.

Jesus the substitute the Son of God the Father died as a substitute so that sons and daughters of any father might go free. The innocent condemned, the guilty set free.

Jesus IS exactly who YOU need him to be. We who follow Jesus know this. Some of us were like—

- The Jewish leaders: confident in our religious activity.

As if we did all the right things we could earn good things from God. No.

Jesus' substitution tells us that he needed to die as a substitute for all of our religious activity. You might not be used to thinking this way, but those who grow up religious or are spiritual you probably understand that Jesus needed to die for your sin.

What the religious/spiritual rarely understand is that Jesus had to die as a substitute for your good, religious deeds. They are not good enough.

Some things Jesus had to die for—

- Good deeds
- Prayers
- Confessions

They were insufficient. Even at our best, we need as substitute.

Others of us were not spiritual/religious—others of us were like Pontius Pilate.

- Pilate: just wanted Jesus to make his life easier.

Jesus does not promise that when he enters your life it will immediately get easier. It won't. We are not free to have a little bit of Jesus in our lives like a seasoning to make things better for us.

Jesus substitution tells us that he is about much more than just making our life easier. He is about killing death and destroying our sin. That is not just a little improvement, his substitution changes everything.

Following Jesus is hard. He calls us all to take up our cross and follow him. To live a life of constant death. Of dying to self, preferences, comforts, conveniences, leisure and living to him.

Others of us were not spiritual/religious or looked to Jesus to make our lives easier. Some of us were like the crowd.

- Crowd: just wanted Jesus to fix their biggest problem.

You see, they thought their greatest problem was their nation was occupied by Rome. Jesus knew better. Their greatest problem was sin. Not Rome.

Sometimes life is so hard that people come to Jesus and say here is my biggest problem, I need you to fix it.

We can think our problems are—

Money  
Marriage  
Kids  
Wife  
Husband  
Single  
Disease  
Discouragement

Jesus can help with those challenges, but Jesus did not die primarily to fix any of those things. Don't get me wrong, following Jesus revolutionizes those areas of our lives but he is first a substitute.

Not only do we need help fixing ourselves, we are more broken than we thought. That is why Jesus died as a substitute.

I as one of the many, needed him to die as a ransom for me. You as one of the many, needed Jesus to die as a ransom for you.

We all need a substitute. Jesus is that substitute. Only Jesus is that substitute.

What kind of person are you?

Follower of Jesus—

He is YOUR substitute.

He saw your great need and stepped in. We did not know what we needed but he did.

Not a follower of Jesus—

You can have a substitute.

Even though he died centuries ago, you can claim him as your substitute too.

We remarked at the beginning that if you don't know why Jesus died, you don't really know Jesus.

He died as a substitute.  
Is he your substitute?

PRAY

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." 1 Peter 1:2