

Mark 15:1-15

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Preacher: None

[0 : 00] Please do grab your Bibles and turn back to Mark chapter 15.! Would you help us to receive your word and faith?

Help us to know the Lord Jesus better, not just to know him, but would we love him? Would we know what he has done for us? And we pray this in his name. Amen.

This is a courtroom drama. We are in a courtroom drama tonight. So did you see all the characters that we read about earlier? There is the accused, Jesus.

There's questioning, testimony, a cross-examination. Pilate, the crowds, the cross. That's the judge, the jury, the execution.

This is a legal trial. This is a courtroom in front of us. And that is precisely why the chief priests, did we see it in verse 1? That's why the chief priests bind Jesus and take him here to Pilate, the judge.

[1 : 29] Before, Jesus was taken in front of the Jewish courts, the Sanhedrin. And he was in front of the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he was questioned to see if he was the Christ. And he said he was, and they charged him with blasphemy.

But they couldn't really do anything about it. But it wasn't a legal court. They didn't have the authority to sentence him to death. But they wanted to. So they delivered him to Pilate.

Which is where we are tonight. We're in a courtroom. But actually, we need to see tonight that there are two courtrooms in this passage.

There are two trials going on here. There are two judges in two courtrooms. In this passage, there is the earthly courtroom.

But there's also the heavenly courtroom. This earthly courtroom with Pilate and the priests and Jesus and the crowds. All this is a reflection, a picture, an earthly version of the heavenly courtroom of God's justice.

[2 : 37] So just like the events of Peter last week, Peter's denial, just like that was a red carpet moment, showing us what's going to happen at the main event on the cross, well, we're still on the red carpet.

And we see a courtroom. And this earthly courtroom tells us what's going to happen on the cross. This courtroom shows us what's going on in the heavenly courtroom as Jesus dies on the cross. So have you ever wondered, when Jesus was crucified, what was going on in heaven at the crucifixion? As God looked down on his son being slain, as the salvation of the world took place, what was going on in heaven?

What was going on in the divine courtroom of God's justice as God looked down on the cross? Well, as we look at this earthly courtroom, we can see what's going on in heaven.

As we look at this passage, we're actually peering into the legal courtroom of heaven. And as we peer into it, we see something.

[3 : 56] And this is the first thing to see. We see that Jesus was an innocent sacrifice. Jesus was an innocent sacrifice. So if this is a courtroom, what is the charge?

What is Jesus being accused of? Well, look at verse 2. Pilate asked him, are you the king of the Jews? Here's the accusation. The chief priests, they've clearly set this charge up.

They've said to Pilate, take this man, he's claiming to be the king of the Jews. And that would have been a dangerous claim at this point. Any threat to Roman rule, like another king, that would have meant the death penalty.

So the Jews know what they're doing. But Jesus never actually said that. He said he's the Christ, which does then mean he's the king of the Jews.

But he never actually said the king of the Jews. This is a setup. And so how does Jesus respond? Well, look at verse 2. He answered, Pilate, you have said so.

[5 : 06] Jesus doesn't deny it. But he doesn't affirm it either. He kind of just lets it happen. This is kind of a yes but no answer.

It's a way of saying, yes, I am king of the Jews, but not in the way that you think. I'm the king of the Jews in a way that you can't quite grasp. And so the charge doesn't really stick.

And so in verse 3, the chief priest accused him of many things. The accusations just keep flying at Jesus. They're doing all that they can to condemn him.

You can imagine them saying, well, Jesus said this and he did this as well. Pilate, just hear us. Take your pick. Just do something with this man.

But nothing is really sticking. Pilate isn't convinced. Look at verse 10. He perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priest had delivered him up.

[6 : 08] He knows something isn't adding up here. So Pilate probes further. He tries to expose the true Jesus in verse 4. Have you no answer to make?

See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further answer. So that Pilate was amazed. In the face of all these accusations, Jesus is silent.

No answer. But why? All these accusations are untrue. This is a setup. This man is innocent. Even Pilate knows he's innocent.

In verse 14, as the crowds condemned Jesus, Pilate said to them, why? What evil has he done?

He's innocent. So why is Jesus silent? Why doesn't he speak up?

Well, Jesus is silent because he knows he must let these events unfold. He needs to let this happen. If he speaks, he can defend himself.

[7 : 12] And he can stop this trial. But he can't let this trial end. He needs to let it happen. Because if this trial ends, there's no cross. And if there's no cross, there's no salvation.

Salvation hangs on this silence. It's interesting. We often mark history-changing events by important words, don't we?

So what words mark man's exploration into space? On the moon. One small step for man, isn't it? Words can so often signal history-changing events. I have a dream. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall. We mark history-changing moments by words, but we never mark it by silence, do we?

Well, we should. And this silence changed the world. This silence saved the world. Because look when all this takes place.

[8 : 20] Look at verse 6. Now at the feast, this trial is happening at the feast of the Passover. The Passover feast, it comes from the Exodus when the Israelites sacrificed a lamb and spread its blood on the doorpost of their house.

And this blood, this sacrifice, it would protect them from God's wrath. God's wrath would pass over, pass over their house, avoid it, and it would land on the Egyptians instead.

And so it's no small thing that this trial is happening during the feast. The Passover is in the air of this courtroom. So as this trial begins, we should already have a sense that this courtroom is bigger than just an earthly courtroom.

There's more going on here. This is to do with the Passover. So this isn't just about Roman law and human legal code.

No, this trial is dealing with divine law and sin and forgiveness and God's wrath and redemption.

This is what's really going on in the heavenly courtroom.

[9 : 39] So this isn't just a man going on trial. This is a lamb going on the altar. His silence is Jesus offering something.

He's offering a sacrifice. He's offering himself. Jesus stands in this courtroom as a sacrifice. And not just any sacrifice.

He was an innocent sacrifice. There was no wrong in him. He's put on this trial and he's proven innocent. He didn't go to the cross having actually done something wrong.

He didn't fall under true accusations. No, Jesus is in this room as an innocent sacrifice. As God looks down on this trial, this is what's going on.

He sees a perfectly innocent man, his beloved son. And he sees a sacrifice, a lamb. It's a Passover lamb to deal with sin.

[10 : 38] This is what was going on in heaven at the cross. Jesus was an innocent sacrifice. But God sees something else in this trial.

There's something else present in the heavenly courtroom. And this is the second thing to see. In the heavenly courtroom, there's a sinful people. Now this trial could have been a bit of a stalemate.

Going nowhere, just accusations, but nothing going on. But look what happened next in verse 6. Now at the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. A criminal, Barabbas is introduced. He's not just any criminal. Did you see what he is? He's a rebel. A murderer. Someone who plotted to overthrow the government and murdered his way to get there. And at the Passover, Pilate would release for them one prisoner.

[11 : 45] You might ask, why did he do that? It's kind of like a political tactic to keep the Jewish people happy under Roman rule. It's kind of a little token to keep them at bay. And so, Pilate asks in verse 9, do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?

And implied in that question is, what's the other option? Or do you want me to release for you the murderer? Pilate presents before the people a choice.

A clear choice between two men, Jesus and Barabbas. And when faced with Jesus in this murderer, look what the people choose in verse 11.

The chief priest stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. They choose the murderer. This hatred for Jesus, it escalates and spreads to the people.

Maybe the crowds were a bit undecided before, but the chief priests stir everyone up to hate Jesus and choose Barabbas. And all the people rallied together and look who they choose.

[12 : 57] They loved the murderer more than Jesus. And not only that, when Pilate asked, then what shall I do with Jesus? The crowd don't say, well, just throw him out of the city.

They don't say, put him in prison. They don't say, well, just flog him. No. They cried out again, crucify him. And Pilate said to them, why, what evil has he done?

But they shouted, all the more, crucify him. Just notice how sin escalates here. Jesus' crucifixion was the greatest sin committed in all history.

This is the peak of human sin. And all the people just get caught up in it, don't they? Swept along. And this sums up sin's humanity against God.

It began with eating some fruit and it ends up with crucifying the Son of God. Sin always wants to escalate. And just look at these events.

[14 : 05] It wasn't enough we had to ignore Jesus, we had to put him on trial and question him. And it wasn't enough to question him, we had to lie about him. And it wasn't enough we had to lie about him, we had to protest him.

And it wasn't enough we had to protest him, we had to choose a murderer over him. And it wasn't enough to choose the murderer, we had to crucify and pierce and bury him and seal the tomb and guard it.

What we have here is the super concentrated, summed up picture of the sinful human race. So we mustn't think that we're just seeing the sin of a crowd 2,000 years ago.

No, we're seeing all our sin. The sin of the whole human race displayed before us. This is us. This is what we did to God. We all loved the murderer instead of the Son of God.

Jesus says these words in John 8. You are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires.

[15 : 14] He was a murderer from the beginning. This is the sin of the world. We've loved the devil. We've loved the ultimate murderer. We've cheered for the devil and we've said God we don't want you as our king.

That was the sin in the garden and that is the sin of the world right now. We've loved the devil more than Jesus and it was this very sin that sent Jesus to the cross.

In the earthly courtroom what sent Jesus to the cross? It was a love of a murderer Barabbas more than Jesus and in the heavenly courtroom as God looked down on the cross what is the spiritual reality?

What sent Jesus to the cross? It was the love of a murderer Satan more than Jesus. God sees the human race love Satan more than Jesus and the heavenly reality is Jesus is going to the cross because of that sin.

But remember he's doing it willingly he's silent to let this happen he's the sacrifice and he's offering himself up for this sin.

[16 : 29] we see here in his silence the love of Jesus for sinners. He loved the sinner so much he offered himself instead of the sinner.

He was the substitute for the sinner. And this is my final point and the final thing to see in the heavenly courtroom Jesus was our substitute.

Jesus was our substitute. All of our sin can be summed up in one character in this earthly courtroom Barabbas. We are all Barabbas deserving death and offense before God but look how it ends for Barabbas verse 15 so Pilate released for them Barabbas and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus took the place of Barabbas. The innocent sacrifice is swapping places with the guilty sinner. Jesus is a substitute.

Now a substitute it just means a swap so in football you have substitutes don't you? One player comes off the pitch and another one comes on and that's the substitute. Well that's what's happening with Barabbas and Jesus.

[17 : 56] Jesus is taking the place of Barabbas taking the punishment destined for him and instead Barabbas is released and gets to go free.

Jesus is a substitute here and you can think of Barabbas as Jesus' church. All the sinners he came to save his bride it's all pictured in this one man.

This was what was going on in the heavenly courtroom. As God looked down on this earthly courtroom where Barabbas stands he sees his church his people the bride of Christ and what does that bride look like?

It's not a beautiful bride. It's not a lovely people. It is murderous rebels who hated the son of God and just like Barabbas there's guilt.

There's punishment needing to be paid and it's not the demands of Roman law that hang over us it is the demands of God's law needing to be paid and it is hanging over all his people.

[19 : 08] It's the demands of death eternal death and divine anger. So what is Christ doing on the cross? What is going on in the heavenly courtroom of God's holy justice?

Jesus is taking the place of sinners he's substituting himself for them taking their divine punishment. This earthly courtroom is showing us the heavenly one and Jesus was our substitute.

And we see this in the judge too. Pilate knows Jesus was innocent. He knows that there's no evil in him. In the mind of the judge Jesus is innocent but what is Pilate's official judgment?

What is Jesus declared publicly? Guilty. Condemned. God and that's what's going on in heaven too. God looks upon his son and God knows his son is perfect, innocent, sinless.

But on the cross God declared Jesus guilty, condemned and all the demands of divine law fall on him and the real sinners go free.

[20 : 32] We see here Jesus is both sinless and condemned at the same time. Jesus was our substitute and that is how Jesus saves us.

This is what the cross is all about. If you're not a Christian here today and you're wondering what is Christianity all about or if you've ever wondered why is the cross so important? Why is the cross on top of churches and above pulpits?

Well this is why. The cross is where Jesus became a substitute for sinners. Where he takes the place of his people and bears all their guilt and their punishment and all the weight of divine wrath on himself.

So that what happens to the sinner? They go free. That is what happened to all those in Christ here today.

All your guilt and sin has been laid on Christ. And just like Barabbas you are now free. There is no condemnation there is no guilt there is no wrath you stand before a holy God free.

[21 : 42] Released from the burden of your sin Christ has completely set you free. And if you're not trusting in Christ today please don't ignore the heavenly courtroom in this scene.

The demands of God's justice those demands still hang over you and your guilt before God needs to be dealt with. And there are only two ways two options either you can try to deal with your guilt on judgment day as you stand before the judgment seat of Christ but that will not go well or your guilt can be laid on Jesus.

The demands of justice can be dealt with on the cross and if you come to Christ today and bow before the king your guilt will be no more. There will be no judgment for you you need a substitute and Christ is the only one that can set you free.

as we watch this trial unfold there's an overwhelming sense of injustice and unfairness isn't there? Why is the innocent one going through all of this and the murderer is free?

There's definitely that feeling in the air isn't there? But do you know what that unfair feeling actually is? That's grace. As we look at our salvation we can sometimes ask ourselves why me?

[23 : 15] Why did Christ suffer and I go free? Why me? And there's one answer grace. Why did Jesus stay silent and take the place of Barabbas?

Why did he take our judgment? It's grace. In this earthly courtroom we see this substitute and we see unfairness but what is the reality in the heavenly courtroom?

It's grace. It's the grace of God. Christ loving unworthy sinners and being their substitute reconciling us to God's.

So as we see this earthly courtroom it looks like justice is being abused here but do you know what's really going on? Justice is being satisfied.

justified. He's ending the guilt of his people. When Jesus took his last breath the heavenly judge gave his final verdict.

[24 : 17] The wrath of God has fallen on this man and now there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. And this is your verdict brothers and sisters and this verdict will never change for you.

This verdict stands for all eternity. We confessed the Nicene Creed earlier and of all the things you could confess about the fundamentals of the Christian faith it's interesting what's included.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Well can you see why that's so important now?

The judgment of God it just wasn't hidden up in heaven up there up in the heavenly courtroom and we don't really know what happened up there what's going on no it played out in this earthly courtroom that Jesus was so condemned by God in heaven that he was condemned by man on earth and it was public for all to see to see his innocence to see our sin to see our substitutes and what did we confess?

It was all for our sake it was all for you brothers and sisters that he did this he stood condemned and now we are free let me pray to see a ending!

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