

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 15TH–16TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

KING OF THE JEWS (MARK 15:1–5)

JESUS HAS JUST BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH BY THE SANHEDRIN BECAUSE OF BLASPHEMY.

The only problem was that the Jewish council couldn't carry out death sentences. Only the Roman government had the authority to execute a person for a crime.

- The late night "trial" was technically illegal, so to justify their actions the group had another official meeting in the morning (v. 1).

At this meeting, the council likely discussed their strategy for approaching Pilate, the Roman governor of their area, concerning the charges brought against Jesus.

- Romans didn't consider blasphemy, which was a religious offense, to be a punishable crime, let alone a capital offense.
- So, their charge against Jesus had to be changed to treason against Rome.

WE ACTUALLY KNOW QUITE A BIT FROM HISTORY ABOUT THE ROMAN GOVERNOR PILATE.

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea from A.D. 26–36.

- Pilate had secured his position as governor with help from his associate Lucius Sejanus, who was executed in A.D. 31 for plotting to overthrow the emperor Tiberius.
- Pilate and Sejanus didn't respect or like the Jews.

When Sejanus was executed for his plot against Emperor Tiberius, Tiberius ordered hostilities against Jews in the Roman empire to cease.

- We can understand why Pilate seems so hesitant to accept the charges against Jesus at face value and have Him crucified.
- Pilate doesn't want any more attention from Rome at this point.

So instead of accepting these charges, Pilate asks Jesus if He's guilty of declaring Himself to be king (v. 2).

- Jesus's response, "you say so," amazed Pilate because accused men usually argued back to defend themselves.
- Jesus was accused of many other things as well—things like inciting riots, opposing taxes, and other false charges (v. 3–4, Lk. 23:2).

Despite Pilate's persistent questioning of Jesus in an almost desperate, pleading tone, Jesus didn't answer.

- Here was Jesus, standing before the man who could condemn Him to death and a mob who wanted to kill Him, completely calm, composed, and at peace.
- We often talk about the peace of Christ and Jesus being our "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).

PEACE (SHALOM) IN SCRIPTURE ISN'T PRIMARILY EMOTIONAL SERENITY; IT IS WHOLENESS, RIGHT RELATIONSHIP, AND TRUST IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, EVEN AMID SUFFERING.

- The peace of Jesus isn't necessarily the absence of conflict, trials, or trouble but a rootedness in the perfect will of the Father. Jesus' peace is relational, not circumstantial. The peace of Christ is a non-anxious presence, rooted in abiding trust.

N.T. Wright interprets Jesus' silence as an expression of His messianic identity: He's the true King whose kingdom is "not of this world," demonstrating the true *shalom* of God amidst turbulence and unrest.

- Martin Luther often wrote of the "the quiet heart of faith," noting that Jesus rested in the Father's will though surrounded by the raging of men.

"YOU KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON YOU" (IS. 26:3A).

Jesus said He'd give us His peace that would look different from the world's (Jn. 14:27).

- When we have received and are walking in the peace of Christ, we're rooted not in results, recognition, circumstances, or situations but in who we are as children of the Father.
- Our hearts and minds are guarded by peace!

JESUS OR BARABBAS (MARK 15:6–15)

We have no mention in ancient literature of the practice of releasing a criminal during Passover, so this must have been Pilate's own custom to keep the peace with the Jews.

- Pilate tries this approach to get Jesus released: He offers the gathering crowd the release of Jesus, but instead, the crowd asks for the release of a prisoner named Barabbas.
- Barabbas was not a good man at all.

BARABBAS WAS AN INSURRECTIONIST, MURDERER, AND THIEF (V. 7; JN. 18:40).

The choice of which prisoner to release seemed so clear: Jesus, the miracle-working Rabbi or Barabbas, the stealing, killing, insurrectionist.

- But the chief priests and elders stirred up the crowd and persuaded them to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus (vs. 9–11).
- Pilate seems exasperated and perplexed.

"THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO WITH THE ONE YOU CALL THE KING OF THE JEWS?" (V. 12)

The rabble and mob cried out in one voice, "Crucify him!"

- Execution by crucifixion was the most painful, humiliating, and brutal death imaginable.
- It was only given to slaves, enemies of the state, pirates, and terrorists for things like treason, murder, sedition, and rebellion.

"WHY? WHAT HAS HE DONE WRONG?" (V. 14)

Jesus did not fit the profile for someone who could be reasonably sentenced to crucifixion, yet the mob cried out even more.

- Pilate is at a loss. Crucifying an innocent Jewish man could get him in trouble with Rome, but not satisfying the crowd could incite a riot.
- Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas and led Jesus away.

"...AFTER HAVING JESUS FLOGGED, HE HANDED HIM OVER TO BE CRUCIFIED."

The instrument Romans used was a short whip with several leather lashes on the end.

- At the end of each leather piece were usually small iron balls or sharp pieces of bones or shell.
- For flogging, a man was stripped of clothing and his hands were tied to an upright post.

The back, buttocks, and legs were usually flogged by two soldiers in tandem.

- This was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of death before crucifixion.
- As the victim's back was struck, the metal and bone fragments on the end of the whip would cut the skin and tear into the underlying skeletal muscles.
- This was more painful than we can imagine.

WHO WAS SCHEDULED TO BE FLOGGED AND CRUCIFIED THAT DAY?

Two other criminals (who were on either side of Jesus, v. 27), but also probably Barabbas.

- The guilty man went free, and the sinless one was condemned; He went to the whipping post and cross in his place.
- Barabbas means "son of the father"—the guilty son goes free, but the innocent Son dies.

YOU ARE BARABBAS. AND SO AM I.

- Because of our sin, we stand on death row, guilty before God and condemned to die as punishment for our sin (Rom. 6:23).
- Jesus (the innocent) willingly gave His life for us (the guilty) so we could be set free.
- The gospel invites you to trust the reality that Jesus got what you deserved, and you get what He deserves (2 Cor. 5:21).

BLASPHEMED AND MOCKED (MARK 15:16–20)

Jesus is led away to the governor's residence in Jerusalem (the "praetorium"), where He is presented in front of a company of Roman soldiers (v. 16).

- Roman soldiers apparently had great disdain for Jewish customs and sensibilities. Conflict and riots were frequently caused by the Romans' insensitivity to Jewish laws, customs, and prohibitions.

Receiving orders from the governor to crucify the "King of the Jews" must have seemed like a welcome opportunity to break up the monotony of the day and take out frustrations against the Jewish people on their "King."

- To mock His claims of kingship, Jesus is clothed in a purple robe and given a crown of thorns.
- The plant *Ziziphus spina-Christi* is native to Judea and has long, piercing thorns 1–2 inches long.

These sharp thorns are certainly capable of puncturing skin and even bone.

- If pressed onto the scalp (one of the most vascular and sensitive parts of the body), thorns like that would have caused profuse bleeding, severe nerve pain, and added agony as soldiers beat the thorns deeper into the scalp with a stick (v. 19).
- All this was done to mock and shame Jesus.

John Calvin connected the thorns with the curse of sin (Gen. 3). Jesus literally bore the symbol of sin's curse upon His head.

- The soldiers cruelly mocked who they saw as a pathetic, impotent king. But the true King, the suffering servant who reigned through sacrifice, was conquering the curse of sin itself.
- He was not only bearing the curse of sin; He was bearing our shame (v. 20).

SIN IS QUITE SHAMEFUL, WHICH IS WHY THE BIBLE OFTEN CONNECTS IT WITH NAKEDNESS AND EXPOSURE.

Many of us fear that if people really knew who we were when no one was watching or knew the things we've done, we would be shamed, exposed, mocked, and condemned.

- But Jesus was condemned, stripped, mocked, and exposed for the things you've done. He knows, and He stood in your place.

WE ARE GUILTY, BUT THE INNOCENT ONE TOOK...

- Our full penalty of sin (1 Peter 2:24).
- Our shame and regret (Hebrews 12:2).
- Our guilt (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Our condemnation (Romans 8:1).

PEACE IS ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN IT STARTS VERTICALLY.

- Romans 5:1 says, "since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Before true peace is ever felt inwardly, it must be secured eternally through faith in Christ.
- Jesus ended the hostility between God and humanity; through Him we're no longer enemies of God but children of the Father.

IF OUR PEACE IS FROM CHRIST, IT'S SECURE.

- Romans 8:31 says, "If God is for us, who is against us?"
- No opposition we'll ever face in life can overcome the reality that we have peace with God through Christ. No circumstance, power, or accusation can undo what Jesus has accomplished.
- We can have a calm, non-anxious presence rooted in abiding trust in God's sovereignty.

PEOPLE OF PEACE THROUGH THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

- Philippians 4:7 says, "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- Jesus' peace guards us from ruminating, catastrophizing, and daydreaming about a future where He's not in control or good.
- The same peace that held Jesus can hold you. Receive the promise that He's in control.