

Jesus Before Pilate

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[0 : 0 0] we turn back to Mark 15 but just as we go there again let's unite our hearts in prayer let's pray Heavenly Father we pray that you would help us now as we turn back to your word we thank you that we do so not simply out of routine we thank you that we turn to your word not simply to gather more knowledge about the Bible and about what is within it but as we open scripture and as we study these verses we seek you we seek the Lord and we thank you that you have promised that those who seek you with all their hearts will find you and so we pray Lord that as we come to you in the name of Jesus as we come not pleading our own merits but looking to the the finished work of Jesus which we which we see beginning in this chapter we ask Lord that you would that you would draw near to us that you would receive us in Christ and that we would taste more of your goodness and your mercy and your love and your grace we pray Lord for anyone here this morning who still does not know you for those who may have an interest that you have given to them and a willingness to be here but who are who are still not in the in the kingdom of God who are not part of the the flock of Christ help them we pray to hear the voice of Jesus this morning in the in the verses as we study and not to resist not to delay but to come to the one who alone is able to give eternal life we pray Lord for the the young ones who've gone through to Sunday school and we ask Lord that in their early days that you would take hold of them that they would know and remember their creator in the days of their youth and as temptations come and as they are attempted to be pulled this way and that way we pray that they would walk steady and that they would follow you closely and that their lives would bring glory to your name so we pray for them Lord we thank you for the freedom that we have to be able to open your word and to sing your praises here and we think of countries far from us where there are no such freedoms and we pray Lord for these countries and for the many people in these countries some of whom have never heard the gospel many of whom have never heard the gospel and we pray that you would break through using radio waves using the internet using your people to bring the message of the gospel to those who still have not heard of Christ so hear our prayers and enable us now to know your presence and to be directed by your spirit as we turn to your word and we ask all these things in Jesus name

Amen life is full of decisions that's one thing that all of us know there are decisions every day there's lots of decisions that we that we have to make whether we like it or not in this in this life even this day there was a decision that we had to make about the time in the morning that we would get up there was a decision that we made at breakfast about what we would eat or whether we would eat we made decisions about what we would put on what we would wear this morning we have made decisions about how we'll spend the early part of this day you've made a decision to come to church you've made a decision about perhaps what you're going to have to eat after church and whether or not you would put that in the oven and run the risk of it being created cremated but there's decisions that we have to make on various things every day in every aspect of life and I want to just highlight that word decision as we enter into this passage that we've studied that we've looked at this morning verse 1 says very early in the morning the chief priests with the elders the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin not a small minority of them but the whole Sanhedrin they reached a decision this is the whole full house of religious authorities they've come together through the night as we thought about last week which was illegal it was not right but yet they've still done it between 1 and 3am they think they pulled

Jesus in and began to press these accusations upon him and in some measure they've been making decisions as the night has progressed but in order for their decisions to be ratified they have to meet and constitute again in the morning and so we have the notification of that in verse 1 very early in the morning the chief priests with the elders the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin reached a decision and to be specific the decision that they reached was a decision that they had made about Jesus and their decision was that he was a blasphemer their decision was that he was a liar their decision was that he was not who he claimed to be he was not the Christ he was not the son of God that was their decision it's a clear brazen aggressive decision and so verse 1 says they bound

Jesus they led him away and they handed him over to Pilate it's the next step and actually the only reason that these religious authorities didn't actually kill Jesus immediately the only reason that they handed him over to Pilate was because they had to hand him over to Pilate remember the Jews were under Roman rule so they had lost these legal powers to be able to order and to action and execution such as they wanted in respect of Jesus that was a power now that the Roman authorities held and so if they were to be given that order to go ahead with the execution of Jesus they needed the Romans to give that order they needed Pontius Pilate who was the

Roman governor to become involved he was the man who could give the thumbs up or the thumbs down to their plan and to their progress and so they very early in the morning head in the direction of Pilate they had made their decision and now as they meet with Pilate Pilate has to make his own decision about Jesus now let me say before we really get into the substance of this properly today you too must make your own decision about Jesus we've seen the religious authorities they've made their decision Pilate is now in the uncomfortable position of having to make his decision but we don't look in on this from a distance you must make your decision about Jesus and before you walk out the door this morning you will have made your decision about Jesus even as you sit in the chair just now you are making a decision about Jesus so as we step through the verses this morning remember that remember that in a very real sense we are standing in the same place that

[9 : 09] Pilate stood on that day and we are being asked through scripture as the Holy Spirit takes it and presses it in in our hearts we are being asked this question what will you do with Jesus what is your decision four things I want to look at this morning if we have the time first of all we see the sovereignty of Jesus secondly we hear the silence that comes that comes from Jesus thirdly we see the substitution of Jesus and finally we see something more of the sufferings of Jesus so that gives us the structure the first thing we come to is the sovereignty of Jesus and Pilate comes in verse 2 as he meets with Jesus as this meeting begins in earnest Pilate opens this with a question and he says to Jesus in verse 2 are you the king of the

Jews and you might wonder where does that actual question come from because it seems to come out of nowhere if we're having a first reading of this but it comes from one of the charges that the religious authorities were pressing upon Jesus the Jews claimed that he was guilty of blasphemy we saw that clearly last week you can look at that in the previous chapter that was their verdict when Jesus answered the high priest remember he tore his clothes he says you've heard this blasphemy but why do we need to hear anything else why do we need any more witnesses we don't let's go ahead let's charge Jesus let's progress with this let's rule him out that was their verdict that was what caused the greatest offence to the to the Jew but the Romans like Pilate they had no interest in that see the

Romans didn't care about the the peculiar beliefs of these strange Jews so for the Romans to be interested there actually had to be some perceived threat to the empire so what the religious authorities do as they they cook up these charges is they come to Pilate with the charge of high treason they say to Pilate this Jesus he has claimed to be the king and if he's the king he's a threat to Caesar if he's the king he is giving himself a position of authority that even is over above your head Pilate and that's the approach that they took and so Pilate asks the question of Jesus are you the king that's what they're saying about you are you the king of the

Jews asked Pilate and Jesus replies as we have it in the verses yes it is as you say I think the more literal translation there in response from Jesus is you have said so and in doing this Jesus affirms that he is the king he affirms his sovereignty and we know from a wider reading of the Bible that Jesus claims not just to be the king but he claims to be the king of kings Jesus claims in many places in scripture and the whole of scripture testifies to the fact that he is the one who rules over all creation he is the ultimate sovereign and not just then on that day when

Pilate asks this very specific question but now and always in all ages at all times in all situations Jesus is the sovereign king we see here the sovereignty of Jesus remember in Revelation when John the apostle is given a vision of various things in chapter 19 in Revelation John as he sees the resurrected Christ he gives us this picture in Revelation 19 19 16 and he says on his robe and on his thigh he has this name written king of kings and lord of lords we see and we hear snippets just now about an impeachment trial in the

[14 : 27] US people attempting to remove the president from the position of power that he currently holds you know Jesus will never be impeached from his position of sovereign supreme power power we see a fracturing we head closer to home we see a fracturing in the royal family in the UK at this minute as royals lose their titles and they lose their powers there will never be a fracturing within the trinity father son and holy spirit Jesus will never be stripped of his title and the sovereign power that he holds as king so we see here even in the opening line here the sovereignty of Jesus and even as we try and visualize the scene here as Jesus is bound before

Pilate we have the impression we get the sense in the scene as we read these words that although Pilate is the Roman governor he's not he's not holding the power here Jesus is that's what made Pilate so uneasy we don't have a picture here in Pilate of a man who has any kind of composure and assurance he is uneasy he's jumpy Pilate's wife is kept up at night over this Mark doesn't tell us that but Matthew does in chapter 27 and she saw something in her dreams of the sovereign power of Jesus and so let us consider this question for ourselves do you and I see something of the sovereign power of Jesus this morning we live in a world that will trample the name of Jesus constantly the name of Jesus is fodder for almost every comedian that makes it onto our

TV screens they don't see the sovereignty of Jesus but do you and I as we look in on this scene see something of the sovereign power of Jesus he is the king before whom we will all one day bow but is he your king is he ruling in your life and mine do we bow before him we sang that we do we sang in the first praise thou and thou only first in my heart high king of heaven my treasure my treasure thou art that trips off our tongue very easily but is that seen in your heart and mine is

Jesus our king or is there a wrestle going on at present in our hearts is there a contest for who will be king different hobbies different pursuits different people self wrestling with Jesus over kingship OG anos one of the most comforting assuring things to know is that this king is in control of our lives.

He's steering us. There are people here, even this morning, who think about the next few weeks with a great deal of anxiety. But what a comfort it is to know that Jesus here is the one who offers to be king.

[18 : 52] And he is king over all creation, over all circumstance, over every power, every authority, every scenario. And he works for the good of his people, but you have to bow before him.

You have to accept him as king if you're to have that comfort, the sovereignty of Jesus. Secondly, we see here, or we hear the silence of Jesus.

Verse 3. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again, Pilate asked him, aren't you going to answer?

See how many things they are accusing you of. High treason was one of the charges, but we know from the frenzy that these religious leaders were in, they were trying to pin anything and everything on Jesus.

They were just in a state of madness trying to be sure that Jesus would be killed. So they come with all their charges, and Pilate says to Jesus, see how many things they are accusing you of.

[20 : 04] Aren't you going to answer? What is your defense lawyer? What is your plea? How are you going to maneuver out of this? But Jesus, verse 5, made no reply.

And Pilate was amazed. Silence of Jesus. Sometimes there is a whole lot more said in the silence than can be said through many words.

And in the silence here, Jesus was speaking. So what was he saying? Two things. The first thing is he was saying that he was the Christ.

And all through Mark's gospel, from Mark chapter 1, verse 1, that is the message that has been pushed through, that Jesus is the Christ. And Jesus has been saying, through this whole gospel, that he is the Christ, that he is the Son of God.

Through the miracles. Jesus was saying he is the Christ. The healing of the sick. The raising of the dead. The feeding of the 5,000.

[21 : 11] The stilling of the storm. All these signs and wonders and miracles were pointing to the fact that Jesus was and is the Christ. And through Jesus' words, as well as his miracles, Jesus was gathering his disciples around him.

He's teaching them. That he was the Christ. And he would suffer. Because he was the Christ. And now through the silence, Jesus is saying that he is the Christ.

In Isaiah 53, 600 years before this happened, Isaiah, as God spoke through him, was prophesying about the Christ.

He was giving us this picture of the Christ and what the Christ would go through. And in that chapter, Isaiah 53, that is so full of the sufferings of the servant of God, the Christ, Isaiah says, he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before a shearer's is silent, so he did not open his mouth. And here we see Jesus before Pilate.

[22 : 42] And he is oppressed. And he is afflicted. He is the lamb of God who is moving close to the point of slaughter.

Yet he did not open his mouth. And that silence was definite in its testimony to the fact that Jesus was this Christ, this Son of God.

So in the silence, Jesus, he said, he was the Christ. And in the silence, Jesus, he's also saying that he was in control.

And we keep having to see that in these verses. Jesus was in control. There is a majestic poise and dignity that is communicated in the silence here.

You know, when we're under pressure, when we think about this, when you and I are under pressure, when we're cornered in the workplace, when we find ourselves in hot water of different kinds and different places, and we suddenly realise we're in difficulty, when we're under that kind of pressure, we tend to talk.

[24 : 09] We babble. We go into panic mode. We use lots and lots and lots of words. We say anything to try and get us out of this trouble that we find ourselves in.

Pilate would have been used to that. Pilate would have been used to seeing people who were facing the death sentence, standing before him with one last opportunity to dissuade him from going that direction.

Pilate would have been used to hearing many words from people persuading him to let them go. And yet, Jesus says nothing. And it says, Pilate was amazed.

And again, we have this growing sense of unease coming from Pilate. and we see the composure and the control of Jesus.

He is no victim of tragic circumstance. He is in control. He is the Christ.

[25 : 20] He is the Messiah. He is the Lamb of God who has come as was promised to take away the sin of the world. Do you see him?

Can you hear what he is teaching us through the heavy silence? The sovereignty of Jesus, the silence of Jesus.

Thirdly, the substitution of Jesus. Pilate, if we look at him for a moment, Pilate was a weak man.

Pilate was a coward. I don't want to go much into the sort of history of the character of Pilate, but you can read up on him yourself and you'll see that he was a shrewd political operator.

He stopped at nothing to make sure that he got to the top. He didn't care who got trampled on his ascent to power.

[26 : 41] But we see here, and we see even in history that he, in history, that's non-biblical, that he's a weak and he's a selfish man.

And he is feeling the pressure of this decision that he has to make about Jesus building in him. And then in this moment, he sees a loophole.

There was a custom that he was aware of here that actually he could use to his advantage. Verse 6, Now it was a custom at the feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested.

A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

And we can almost hear Pilate in this moment breathing a sigh of relief. He has a way out. This was his chance to avoid having to come to a decision about this Jesus that's unnerving him before him.

[27 : 55] So Pilate progresses in verse 9 and Pilate says to them, Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? Knowing that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

See, Pilate could see through the reasoning and the alleged logic of the religious leaders. He knew why they were coming with Jesus.

And so, Pilate asks the question, Do you want me to release? He asked the crowd, Do you want me to release this Jesus? The alternative is a dangerous man called Barabbas.

Pilate? And Pilate clearly doesn't want him out of the prison cell. But he wants to be able to be absolved of making this decision about Jesus.

And Pilate's wife was desperate that he would not make this decision about Jesus. But everything backfires here.

[29 : 02] Religious authorities, they will not have the crowd call for the innocence and the absolution of Jesus. And so, they are stirred up into a frenzy by the chief priests and the teachers of the law, etc.

Verse 11, the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. What shall I do then with the one you call king of the Jews? Pilate asked him. Crucify him!

They shouted. Why? What crime has he committed?

Asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder. Crucify him! What's going on here?

We step back from this for a moment and look at the stripped down facts of this. What's going on here?

[30 : 08] Well, what we're seeing here is a guilty man was about to walk free Barabbas. He was a murderer, insurrectionist.

in our minds we could view him as a terrorist of that day. There was no question over his guilt.

He was deserving of punishment. And yet he was about to walk free. And an innocent man, Jesus, was about to be punished.

And Pilate's wife, she knew that Jesus was innocent. Matthew 27, 19, in his parallel account of what's going on here, says, While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message.

Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him. Pilate's wife, she knew that Jesus was innocent.

[31 : 24] Pilate, through his wife's message and through his own perception, we can see it here, he knew that Jesus was innocent. That's why he shouts in verse 14, Why?

What crime has he committed? And yet, in spite of Jesus' innocence, he would suffer the most awful, brutal, painful punishment.

And you know, this is the gospel in one scene. This is an encapsulation of the gospel message. We sometimes sing that hymn, What kind of love is this that gave itself for me?

I am the guilty one. Yet I go free. Now that was a hymn for Barabbas, but not just for Barabbas, that's a hymn for us.

Because this has everything to do with us. When our girls were smaller, they'd be out playing games with dolls and that kind of thing.

[32 : 39] and I'd occasionally sit there and I'd be listening into the game. And you'd hear them, one of them would be saying, right, okay, they've got all the dolls there in the house and there's this scenario that they're playing out.

And I would hear things like, right, you be Cinderella and I'll be the queen. Lois, you're the servant, get the brush out. And there's all these scenarios being painted and they're all playing a part in the game.

Now if you and I are looking in on this, and if we're trying to see where you and I fit in, which part we play in this drama that was history, we are Barabbas.

We are the guilty ones. And yet just as Jesus took the punishment that Barabbas deserved, he takes the punishment for us.

He is our substitute. We see here the substitution of Jesus. J.C. Ryle says, we are all by nature in the position of Barabbas.

[33 : 54] We are guilty, wicked, and worthy of condemnation. But when we were without hope, Christ, the innocent, died for the ungodly.

We sang last Sunday, bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he, Jesus, stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. What a Savior. substitution of Jesus. Finally, and very briefly, the sufferings of Jesus.

We will continue seeing the sufferings of Jesus as these weeks go on. Just as last week we began to see the sufferings of Jesus in Gethsemane, as he looks into the cup of our sin and begins to taste something of the horror of what it would mean for him to drink it.

He suffered. And the sweat, like great drops of blood, flowed from his head as he suffered, as the father turned his face away from his son.

[35 : 21] Jesus began to enter into that sin forsaken state and he suffered. And here we see the sufferings continue.

The anguish that Jesus suffered as the crowd that he so loved chanted in that diabolical frenzy, crucify him. Crucify him.

Can you imagine the suffering of that? We suffer when somebody puts a negative comment about us on Facebook. We perceive that as suffering.

Imagine the suffering of Jesus, the God man who feels what we feel, standing before this crowd that he loved and hearing them.

foaming at the mouth in a frenzied cry of crucify him. And then Pilate verse 15 wanting to satisfy the crowd released Barabbas to them.

[36 : 42] He had Jesus flogged. And one of the commentators gives us an insight into what one of these floggings looked like or these scourgings as it says in the older translation.

Hendrickson says, the Roman scourge, that was the instrument that was used, consisted of a short wooden handle to which several thongs were attached, the ends equipped with pieces of lead or brass, with sharply pointed bits of bone.

the stripes were laid especially on the victim's back, bared and bent. Generally two men were employed to administer the punishment, one lashing the victim from one side, one from the other side, with the result that the flesh at times lacerated to such an extent that deep seated veins and arteries, sometimes even entrails and inner organs were exposed.

Such flogging often resulted in death. And Jesus suffered this.

But his death would not be by means of a cruel Roman flogging. His death must be on a cross.

[38 : 15] That symbol of God's curse for our sin. And so Jesus, verse 15, was handed over to be crucified.

Battered, bloodied, suffering. And now he is handed over to be crucified. The sufferings of Jesus, it was all foretold Israel.

Isaiah gave us the detail and he gave us the reason. And he tells us again, it was for us.

Isaiah 53, he was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.

[39 : 31] Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And by his wounds we are healed.

the sufferings of Jesus. And just as Pilate looked upon Jesus on that day, we look upon Jesus on this day.

And just as Pilate, even though he didn't want to, had to come to a decision about this Jesus, so do we. So what is your decision?

What do you say about this Jesus? What will you do with this Jesus?

[40 : 55] He is the sovereign king, but is he your king? he's the Christ, he's the son of God, he's the suffering servant that Isaiah points us to, but did he suffer for your sin?

Is he your substitute? Is he your savior? In the gospel he offers to be, but you must make your decision.

let's pray. Heavenly father, we pray that you would help us as we go from here, not to have the seed of your word snatched away, not to lose these pictures as uncomfortable as they are for us, but enable us to keep on seeing Jesus.

and enable us, we pray, to come to a decision to trust him so that we would know that we have been forgiven, that we have been healed, we have been set free, we have been cleansed through all that he did for us.

We know that without faith, all that we read of today will simply be used in judgment against us. But we thank you that this morning we have the opportunity once more to come to Jesus, to trust him as our Savior and our Lord, and to know the assurance of all that he has done, being done for us.

[42 : 55] Help us, Lord, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.