

Introduction (Mark 15:1-15)

This week Derek Chauvin, a Minneapolis police officer, was convicted of the murder of George Floyd. The evidence was clear, as even people in the police department testified against Chauvin's actions. If Chauvin had been declared innocent, the National Guard was already in place to try to control the expected riots. There was strong public and political pressure to find Officer Chauvin guilty. Our President, and many others weighed in on what the verdict should be. The number of riots and public disturbances were rapidly spreading, so there was a lot of public pressure for a guilty verdict. Although George Floyd was guilty of several things, including refusing to lawfully surrender to an officer, he should not have been handled the way he was, which led to his death. Our country is suffering from racial unrest, and the riots this past year in America are clear indications of that unrest. There has been strong public push towards defunding the police, and some cities have made radical decisions to do exactly that. The riots and civil unrest have caused many people in political office to make decisions to appease the crowd. Many corporations have made recent decisions out of fear of losing public support. Coca Cola, Delta, and the Major League Baseball all made recent decisions because of a voter registration law in Georgia. They did not want to be on the wrong side of public opinion.

In our passage today Jesus was brought to Pilate, and after questioning, Pilate declared Him innocent of all charges. But, because of the threat of civil unrest and crowd pressure, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. Instead of doing what was right from a judicial standpoint, he succumbed to public opinion and ordered an innocent man to death. There was public pressure in the Chauvin trial, and there was public pressure in Jesus' trial, but the people being prosecuted were vastly different. This morning we will look at Jesus being questioned by Pilate, the release of Barabbas, and Jesus being handed over for crucifixion.

Jesus Before Pilate

1. Jesus Questioned by Pilate (Mark 15:1-5)
2. The Release of a Barabbas (Mark 15:6-15)
3. Jesus Handed Over for Crucifixion (Mark 15:15)

(Mark 15:1-15) "Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. {2} Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He *answered him, "*It is as you say.*" {3} The chief priests *began* to accuse Him harshly. {4} Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" {5} But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed. {6} Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested. {7} The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. {8} The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them. {9} Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" {10} For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. {11} But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead. {12} Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" {13} They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" {14} But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" {15} Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified."

1. Jesus Questioned by Pilate (Mark 15:1-5)

On the day of the Passover, Jesus shared that meal with His twelve apostles. In Exodus 12 we saw that the Passover was on the fourteenth day of the first month, Nisan, and they were to kill the lamb at twilight. So, when Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples it was late in the evening.

(Mark 14:17-18) “When it was evening He *came with the twelve. {18} As they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me.”

(Ex 12:6) “You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.”

After supper they went to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times. Then, they went to Gethsemane to pray. Jesus came back three times and found them sleeping, so it was late at night. I cannot blame them, as I am not a late night person, and I would probably have been found sleeping also. After the third time, Jesus said, It is enough, the hour has come... get up, let us be going; behold the one who betrays Me is at hand.” They arrested Jesus late at night and brought Him before the High Priest. They questioned Jesus late at night. The Sanhedrin Council would not normally be in session in the middle of the night after the Passover, so this was a planned and well-coordinated session. They held their Kangaroo Court and rendered their desired verdict.

(Mark 14:41-42) “And He *came the third time, and *said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. {42} Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

Our text starts with “Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.” It has been a long night and it is now very early in the morning. The rooster crowed when Peter denied Jesus, and they crow just before dawn. This was according to their plan, but it was also according to God’s plan. Jesus had told His disciples on several occasions that they would deliver Him over to be crucified. He had also declared to them that they would mock Him, spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him. Jesus knew exactly what they were going to do. According to Acts 2:23, this was according to the predetermined plan of God.

(Mark 15:1) “Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.”

(Mark 10:33-34) “*saying*, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. {34} They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again.”

(Acts 2:23) “this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.”

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, he began to question Jesus about whether He was the King of the Jews. The Sanhedrin council had declared that Jesus should be put to death for blasphemy, making Himself out to be God. But those were not the charges that they brought to Pilate. They wanted Pilate to believe that Jesus was a political threat so that He would be put to death. They knew that Pilate could care less about whether some person claimed to be God; that would not have been a threat. But, someone claiming to be the king was a whole different matter. Jesus answered Pilate, "It is as you say."

(Mark 15:2) "Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He *answered him, "*It is as you say.*"

Then the chief priests began to accuse Jesus harshly, but this time Jesus did not answer. Just as He had not answered their accusations at the Council meeting, He remained silent again. So, Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

(Mark 15:3-5) "The chief priests *began* to accuse Him harshly. {4} Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" {5} But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed."

Scholars have given a number of reasons why Jesus did not answer. Some say it was to show His strength, power, and authority. Some say that He did not want to defend Himself, as He knew that He was the Lamb of God that had to die for the sins of all. Others say it was to fulfil the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7 about remaining silent. When Jesus did not respond to their accusations, Pilate was amazed.

(Is 53:7) "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth."

The next verse in our passage is an explanation about a practice that they had to release a prisoner at the Passover Feast. But between verse five and six there was another scene that Mark does not address, but we find it in Luke's account. I want to quickly look at this before addressing the release of Barabbas because it ties in with remaining silent before His accusers.

(Mark 15:6) "Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested."

In Luke 23, after Pilate questioned Jesus about being the King of the Jews, Pilate told the crowd that he found no guilt in Jesus. Upon hearing that Jesus was a Galilean, and that Herod was in town, he sent him over to Herod Antipas, who was the ruler over Galilee and Perea. Herod had wanted to see Jesus for quite some time (Luke 23:8) and wanted to see a sign performed by Jesus. Herod questioned Jesus and again, He did not answer any of the questions. Jesus remained silent before both Pilate and Herod. When Jesus did not answer, Herod and the soldiers mocked Jesus and then sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11). Up until then Herod and Pilate had been enemies, but they became friends that day. Then, Pilate came before the Sanhedrin and said that neither Herod or him had found anything deserving death; both had found Him innocent of all charges. Then, the release of a prisoner at the Passover Feast was discussed. All of this happened between verse five and six.

(Luke 23:6-15) “When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. {7} And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. {8} Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. {9} And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. {10} And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. {11} And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. {12} Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other. {13} Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, {14} and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. {15} "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.”

2. The Release of a Barabbas (Mark 15:6-15)

So, after both Pilate and Herod had questioned Jesus, we have the explanation of a custom about releasing a prisoner on the Passover. This was a Roman culture and the intent of this practice was to show that they had mercy on people. A second motive was to try to gain favor and respect with the people that they ruled over. Mark tells us that Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. The Romans did not tolerate rebellion and would normally crucify insurrectionists very quickly. That tells us that this insurrection had just take place or Barabbas would have already been dead.

(Mark 15:6-7) “Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested. {7} The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.”

The crowd went up to Pilate and asked that someone be released as had been accustomed to doing in the past. Notice that it is the crowd that Pilate is dealing with now. He had been dealing with the chief priests, and he had told them that he found no guilt in Jesus. Now, Pilate is interacting with the crowd. Pilate asked them if they wanted him to release Jesus. Mark makes a noteworthy comment here. Pilate knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because of envy. He knew their motive, and He also knew that Jesus was innocent. So, he asks the crowds to request Jesus since the chief priests would not do that.

(Mark 15:8-10) “The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them. {9} Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" {10} For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.”

There is another event that happens between verse ten and verse eleven which is not recorded in Mark's account, but it is included in Matthew's account. Pilate's wife has had a dream about Jesus that night, and in that dream she suffered and she saw that Jesus was a righteous Man. Therefore, she told her husband not to have anything to do with Jesus. She wanted Pilate to release Him, not to have Him put to death. Pilate had declared that Jesus was innocent. Herod had declared Him innocent. And now, Pilate's wife has a dream about Jesus and declared Him innocent. But, Pilate was more concerned about the threat of the crowds.

(Matt 27:18-20) “For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. {19} While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him *a message*, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." {20} But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.”

While Pilate is having this conversation with his wife, the chief priests are stirring up the crowds to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus. Barabbas is a compilation of two words. Bar means son and abba means father, so it is the son of the father. They asked for the son of the father, who was guilty, to be released. They asked that the Son of the Father, who was innocent, be put to death.

(Mark 15:11) “But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead.”

Pilate went back to the crowds and asked again about what to do with Jesus, the King of the Jews. The crowd shouted back, “Crucify Him!” Jesus asked the crowd what evil He had done, and they did not answer his question; they just kept shouting for Jesus to be crucified. Then, we have a very telling statement about Pilate. “Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them. Pilate was a crowd pleaser. He was not concerned about doing what was right. He was not concerned about justice. He was not concerned about putting an innocent man to death. He was concerned about satisfying the crowd. If he kept the crowds happy, he felt his own rule and future was secure, so keeping the crowds satisfied was important to him.”

(Mark 15:12-15) “Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" {13} They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" {14} But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" {15} Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.”

3. Jesus Handed Over for Crucifixion (Mark 15:15)

So, wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. This was the outcome that Jesus had told His disciples would happen. Jesus was the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world.

(Mark 15:15) “Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.”

I want to make a few comments about leadership. First, God is looking for leaders who do things to please Him. Real leaders are not crowd pleasers. Pilate tried to satisfy or please the crowd. He was willing to put an innocent man to death just to please the crowd. Jesus did not live to please the crowds, He lived to please the Father. The crowds gathered around Him to listen to Him, be healed by Him, and to be fed by Him, but He did not try to please the crowds, He lived to please His father. In John 8:29, Jesus said, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” Pilate did the things that pleased the crowd, not what would please God.

(John 8:29) “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

Paul is another great leader, and notice what he told the Galatians about pleasing men or pleasing the Father. “Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond servant of Christ.” Paul was not a crowd pleaser; he always sought to please God. Real leaders seek God’s will in every situation, and always seek to do the things that will please God, not necessarily what will please the crowds. I believe this is an important word for pastors today. They are scared to talk about money in church because it might offend the crowd. We need leaders who will more concerned about honoring God with offerings than offending men for dishonoring God. We need leaders who will speak the truth in love about all things, and are more concerned about pleasing God than pleasing men.

(Gal 1:10) “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

The second lesson about leadership is about being self-willed or doing the will of the Father. If you are a leader in an organization, you should do things that help or advance the organization, not what benefits you personally. When Jesus was praying about all the things that were about to take place, He told the Father that it was not His desire to go through what He was about to suffer through. But, He said, “Not My will, but Thy will be done.” Jesus did everything to please the Father. Pilate was not seeking God’s will, but his own will.

(Mark 14:36) “And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

When Paul gave Titus the qualifications for overseers in the church, one of the qualifications was that they could not be self-willed. God is not looking for leaders who are following after their own will, but are seeking His will in all matters.

(Tit 1:7) “For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,”

The third lesson about leadership is about selfishness. There was no selfish motivation in Jesus, but Pilate and the chief priests had envy, power, control, and all kinds of selfish motivation. They were seeking the things that would benefit them the most. Notice what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3-5. He said do nothing from selfishness and not to look out merely for our own interests. He said, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Jesus did nothing from selfishness. We need leaders today that will do nothing from selfishness.

(Phil 2:3-5) “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; {4} do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus;”

The fourth lesson about leadership is about fearing God. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. Pilate’s wife knew He was innocent. Herod knew He was innocent. Yet, Jesus was turned over to be crucified. They were willing to compromise in order to win favor, control, and power. Jesus never compromised. Pilate had no fear of God or he would not have done evil by turning Jesus over to be crucified. Notice what kind of leaders Jethro counseled Moses to put over the nation of Israel. He said, “you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth,

those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders..." God is looking for leaders that will fear Him and do what is right before God. One of the things that I pray every week for the leaders of our country is that they will fear God. We need national leaders, state leaders, city leaders, and church leaders that fear God.

(Ex 18:21) "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens."

The fifth lesson on leadership is about taking responsibility for your actions. This one is not found in our text, but comes out of Matthew's account. When Pilate saw that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." While Pilate may say that, the crowd did not have authority to have Jesus crucified. Pilate had that authority, and used that authority to have Jesus crucified. He could wash his hands symbolically and tell them that he was innocent, but the truth is that he was guilty of putting Jesus to death. Pilate did not take responsibility for his actions. Real leaders take responsibilities for their actions. There is a saying that "the buck stops here."

(Matt 27:24) "When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves."

Conclusion and Applications

In our text today, Jesus appeared before Pilate and remained silent. He was taken to Herod, where He also remained silent. He was declared innocent by both of them. The chief priests wanted him put to death, and they stirred up the crowd to ask for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate tried to satisfy the crowds and ordered Jesus to be crucified.

There are three applications that I want to highlight as we end. We are to fear God, love people, and take up our cross. Let's look at these three applications.

1. Fear God

Pilate was a man-pleaser, not a God-pleaser. One of the requirements that Jethro gave Moses in Exodus 18 was to fear God. We need leaders who will fear God and do what is right before God, not what the crowd wants. We are God's servants and we must seek to please God. We must have a fear of God over a fear of people. We may not be large in number, but God can use a group of people who fear Him and do what is right before Him at all times.

2. Love People

We need to love people. Pilate had no regard for the life of an individual. He was after his own interests and was willing to sacrifice people for his own gain. In contrast, Jesus was willing to lay His life down so that we could live. Love does not seek its own. Love is not selfish. Love is not provoked. Love bears all things. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Jesus is the perfect example of love. He did not seek His own will, and His own interests. When Jesus was viciously accused by the chief priests, He was not provoked in the least. He remained silent.

Jesus was willing to bear all our sins on the cross. Jesus' actions in our text today are the ultimate examples of love for us to follow.

(1 Cor 13:4-7) "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

3. Take up your cross

Jesus was ordered to be crucified. In Mark 8, Jesus told the crowd that if anyone wished to come after Him, they needed to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. Jesus is still looking for people who will deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ..." When we take up our cross and are crucified with Him, we die to sin and to our flesh and are raised up with Him to live a new life. When we take up our cross, we live transformed lives. God is looking for people who will take up their crosses and be His representatives here on earth. He is looking for servants that will seek to do His will, and to please Him in all respects. He is looking for people that will be the salt of the earth, and lights set on a hill. It begins with taking up our cross.

(Mark 8:34) "And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

(Gal 2:20) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

(Rom 6:5-7) "For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, {6} knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; {7} for he who has died is freed from sin."

Final statement

Radical servants can have a tremendous impact today if they fear God, love people, and are willing to take up their cross.

Introduction (Mark 15:1-15)

1. **Jesus Questioned by Pilate** (Mark 15:1-5, 14:17-18, Ex 12:6, Mark 14:41-42, 10:33-34, Ac 2:23, Is 53:7, Luke 23:6-15)
2. **The Release of a Barabbas** (Mark 15:6-15, Matt 27:18-20)
3. **Jesus Handed Over for Crucifixion** (Mark 15:15, John 8:29, Gal 1:10, Mark 14:36, Tit 1:7, Phil 2:3-5, Ex 18:21, Matt 27:24)

Conclusion and Applications

1. **Fear God** (Ex 18:21, Gal 1:10)
2. **Love People** (1 Cor 13:4-7)
3. **Take up your cross** (Mark 8:34, Gal 2:20, Rom 6:5-7)