

Gospel of Mark Chapter 15A
“Lead Me To The Cross”

We have arrived this morning at the most holy place in the entire Gospel of Mark. With that in mind we approach today’s text with great reverence, with humility and awe.

With every step that Jesus takes toward the cross we draw closer and closer to the Holy of Holies where the blood of the sacrificial lamb will be poured out on the mercy seat to obtain grace and eternal life for the People of God.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the most crucial event in all of human history. Evidence of its impact was seen in 525 when the Roman world adopted the Julian calendar declaring that the appearing of Jesus Christ brought a new beginning of all of mankind.

- It was then that the calendar was reset to the year 1. (Jesus - 2nd Adam New Start)
- FOR ALL OF US who BELIEVE, He has done the very same thing. He provided each one of with a New Beginning! The **old is gone** and the **new has come!**
- The Cross has become the pivotal point, the focal point of our lives

- The cross was the focal point of the prophets as they penned the scriptures. David saw it from a distance and prophetically penned the very words that Jesus would speak. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” Psalm 22:1

Isaiah 53:3 **He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

- The cross of Christ is the central focus of the New Testament writers as well. 1 Corinthians 1: **For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

- Throughout all of eternity the worship of God will be cross centered worship: Revelation 5: 11 **Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”**

- Take note: In his glorified state Jesus, the Lamb of God continues to bear the marks of his passion.
- When we see our blessed Savior, when our eyes gaze upon the Lamb, we will behold for ourselves the nail prints on his hands and feet. Like Thomas we will fall at his feet and cry out “My Lord and my God!”

For those who believe, those whose eyes the Lord has graciously opened, the cross of Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for sinful man.

John Piper, “No one ever deserved suffering less, yet received so much. The stamp of God on this perfect life is found in two words, “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The only person in history

who did not deserve to suffer, suffered most. He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth.” (1 Peter 2:22)

- This morning we enter the Holy of Holies. So we approach the cross of Calvary with reverence and fear: Jesus our great High Priest offered himself as the only atoning sacrifice for sin.

Leading up to the Cross we will find:

- A Surrendered Savior
- A Substituted Savior
- A Scorned Savior

1. A Surrendered Savior

Mark 15: 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.**

- In Mark’s narrative we see the Chief Priests and the Leaders of the Jews exerting tremendous pressure on Pilate, and on the crowd to fulfill their murderous intentions.
- Remember, they are the ones who paid Judas to betray him.
- They totally ignored their own civil and religious laws in order to convict him.
- They invented the fraudulent charges that were brought against Jesus.
- From the Temple treasury, they paid false witnesses to testify against him.
- Their jealousy and envy drove them to destroy him.
- And after their Kangaroo Court they delivered Him Over to Pilate to be put to death

The phrase “**delivered him over**” appears 3 times in the first 14 verses of this chapter.

- The willful handing over of Jesus combined with his notable silence paints a very clear picture for us of a sacrificial Lamb being led away to slaughter.

Isaiah 53: 7 **He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.**

- In silence he yielded to the will of the Father.
- This is the same Jesus who spoke to the wind and it stood still.
- He spoke to the Demons and they obeyed.
- Those who heard him speak said, “No man ever spoke like this!”
- His silence reveals his perfect submission to the will of the Father.

Mark 15:2 **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.**

- Pilate questions Jesus regarding the accusations that have been brought against him: **Are you the King of the Jews?”**

- And Jesus' short but frank answer: **"You have said so."** Might be better translated, **"You said it."** With these words Jesus affirmed his rightful position as Sovereign King. But his kingdom is not of this world and he assures Pilate that he will offer no resistance.
 - THINK ABOUT THIS: (those of you *who have studied* the O.T.)
 - Jesus is the same King, the same sovereign ruler of Israel who was rejected by them in the time of Samuel more than 1000 years ago.
 - Once again we find the sinful heart of man rejecting and rebelling against the sovereign rule of God.
- BUT that should not surprise you rebellion is the natural state of fallen man. It is as natural to us as breathing and begins the moment we come forth from the womb.

BUT Jesus is different. He is the Surrendered Savior. He has lived for 33 years in perfect obedience to the Father. 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."**

His perfect obedience in the face of suffering was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 50: 5 **The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.**

- In obedience to the Father Jesus becomes our substitute. He is the Substituted Savior

2. Substituted Savior

In an effort to enjoin the favor of the people Rome initiated a gracious tradition. During the Passover Feast the Governor would grant full amnesty to a prisoner of the Jew's choosing.

- Pilate knew Jesus was innocent so he presented Him to the people along side of a renowned criminal. He thought for sure the people would ask for Jesus.

Mark 15:6 **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.**

- There is an interesting irony that is being played out in front of us.

Barabbas was a rebel who **"had committed murder in the rebellion."** He was an insurrectionist who had taken up arms against Rome in one of the nationalistic uprisings.

- Barabbas was actually his last name. Believe it or not, his first name was Jesus. So here we have Jesus Barabbas standing alongside of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - One of them would be set free and one of them would die.
- The scene becomes even more ironic when we realize that the name "Barabbas" literally means "Son of the Father."
- IN bringing these two men out to the people Pilate offered them a choice between Jesus the son of the father or Jesus of Nazareth, who was the TRUE Son of the Father.

I believe that Pilate thought this was his way out. Barabbas was a renowned criminal and Jesus was only there because the Chief priests were envious of him.

- We see yet another irony in this scene. Pilate offered the people a choice between Barabbas, who fought to bring about temporary political freedom and Jesus Christ who would provide eternal spiritual freedom.

BUT the Chief Priests knew how to manipulate the crowd. They persuaded the people so that with one voice they all cried, “**Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us.**”

We can say with absolute confidence that Jesus of Nazareth died as a substitute in the place of Barabbas. The innocent one put to death in the place of the guilty one.

- I can only imagine what was going through Barabbas’ mind. He knew he was guilty and yet he received a “Get out of Jail Free” card. His chains were dropped and Jesus was taken away.
- Jesus of Nazareth TOOK HIS PLACE on the cross between two thieves.

Barabbas was the first to experience what we call the “vicarious atonement” of Christ. Literally Jesus died in his place as a substitute.

1 Peter 2:24 **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.**

So far we have seen the Surrendered Savior who obediently and silently went as a lamb to slaughter.

We have witnessed clear evidence that Jesus is Our Substituted Savior, the **one who bore our sins and carried our infirmity**. NOW we begin the painful trek from the Palace, down the Via Delarosa to the hill of Calvary.

- Here we meet The “Scorned Savior.”

Scorned Savior

- As Pilate surrendered to the demands of the mob and delivered Jesus over to be crucified things turned ugly very quickly.
- Jesus was subjected to horrible abuse and mockery while his enemies gloated over him.
- The very one who has been worshipped by the angelic host throughout all of creation now endures the ridicule, the cruel disdain and physical abuse of sinful men.

Mark 15: 16 **And the soldiers led him away inside the palace** (that is, the governor’s headquarters), **and they called together the whole battalion.**

- The other Gospel writers tell us before this time Pilate had Jesus scourged. So when He returns to the Palace he has been severely beaten, bleeding to the point where he is hardly recognizable.
- BUT the Soldiers (battalion 700 men) show him no compassion, adding insult to injury.

17 **And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.** 18 **And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”**

19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

- With some time to kill before they kill the author of time, the soldiers gather together for a period of cruel and sadistic entertainment at Christ's expense.
- Jesus is utterly alone, beaten, humiliated, virtually naked when these soldiers make sport of him, mocking his royal heritage.
- They strip him and decorate him with a mock cape and they proceed to bash a crown of thorns down upon his unrecognizable face. Then they strip him again, beating him in the head with the scepter they fashioned for him.

At this point Jesus can hardly carry himself let alone the cross that was laid across the open wounds on his back.

- All of this mistreatment and verbal abuse serves to identify Jesus as the Suffering Servant, the Messiah that was foretold by King David more than 1000 years before.

Psalm 22: 6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"

- Mark tells us how this prophecy came to pass.

Mark 15: 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

Over the years I have heard a great number of heart wrenching, emotionally draining sermons delineating and elaborating on the gory details of Christ's physical suffering.

- Some Pastors meticulously described the Roman Scourge and how it literally stripped a man of his flesh exposing his bones and bowels. How many of the criminals never made it to the cross because they died from the flogging.
- I attempted to watch Mel; Gibson's portrayal of the scourging of the Lord Jesus in the Passion of the Christ. But I must admit, I have never successfully kept my eyes open throughout the entire scene.
- I have been moved to tears even weeping at the incredible anguish that Jesus suffered at the hands of sinful men.

BUT I have come to understand that the physical suffering that Jesus endured on his last day fades in comparison to the suffering that could not be seen with the human eye.

All of the pain, all of the blood, the emotional badgering and physical abuse was nothing compared to the full weight of God's holy wrath that was poured out on the Lord Jesus in the hours of darkness as he hung on the cross.

He faced the outer-darkness of divine abandonment that is horribly described as continual weeping, everlasting torment and gnashing of teeth in the place where the flame is never quenched and the devouring worm does not die.

- God the Son emptied the cup of God's wrath by drinking it himself for every one of God's chosen people.

Many of us have heard the gruesome stories of soldiers who have suffered cruel affliction, inhumane torture and emotional torment in the horrors of WAR

BUT ONLY Jesus bore the fury of the eternal wrath of Almighty God that rightfully should have been measured out upon you and me.

As we saw with Barabbas Jesus Christ is the spotless Lamb of God who sets the prisoner free by taking upon himself the guilt and the punishment of his sin.

- When I think of Barabbas I picture his chains dropping to the ground AND I see the chains of sin and death dropping from MY own hands and feet.

I hear the Words of my blessed Savior saying: John 8:36 **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

THIS is the Good News that God has called us to believe, this is the Gospel that God has called us to proclaim.

- This is the foundation of our faith.
- This is the reason why we gather together for worship.
- This is the essence of the JOY and blessed HOPE that floods our soul.

- This is what draws us to the table to break the bread and drink the cup.

He calls us to REMEMBER Him.... HOW could we ever forget!!!