

He Answered Nothing

Mark 15:1-5

17 January 2021, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Today we will continue our sermon series in the Gospel of Mark.

- We will look at the first five verses of Mark 15 where Mark tells us about Jesus' trial before Pilate, the Roman governor (or prefect) of Judea.
 - Pilate was appointed by the Roman emperor to keep law and order, and he was in Jerusalem during the feast of the Passover to keep watch on this mass gathering of the sometimes volatile Jews who had been forced into subjection by Rome.
 - As the governor of Judea, those charged with capital offenses were brought before him and he had the sole authority both to examine and pronounce the verdict.
 - Whatever punishment was determined was to be carried out immediately.
- All four gospels give us their account of Jesus' examination by Pilate, but interestingly, Mark, who usually likes to supply many details, has the briefest account of any of the gospels about this trial before Pilate.
 - Matthew tells about the dream that Pilate's wife had that caused her to warn her husband not to condemn Jesus, and he tells of Pilate's washing his hands in an effort to transfer the blame to the Jews who delivered Jesus to him.
 - Luke adds how Pilate sent Jesus to be tried by Herod Antipas (he and Pilate were both at Jerusalem during the feast), and how Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.
 - And John includes the theological discussion that took place between Jesus and Pilate about the nature of Jesus' kingdom and about truth.
- It is thought that Mark is devoid of details in his account because, as we have noted all along, Mark wrote through Peter's eyes—and Peter was not present for the interrogation of Jesus by Pilate.
 - We have often been thankful for the details that are in Mark, and we should be thankful for them.
 - But neither should we suppose that we are deprived of something we need in this section to make the record complete.
 - God the Holy Spirit directed what is included in each gospel, and He has given us just what we need to know.
- All along the way in our study of Mark, I have sought to bring out whatever is emphasised in Mark rather than those things that might be emphasised in one of the other of the three gospels.
 - As a church, we have been through John and Matthew, and when we looked at them, I tried to emphasise what was emphasised in them...
 - Not that I pretend to know nothing of the other gospels than the one I am preaching from... the information contained in the others provides valuable background information—information that is without error—which sheds additional light on the gospel we are studying.

- But all the while, our goal in studying Mark is to emphasise what Mark emphasises, and what stands out in Mark about this trial before Pilate is the way Jesus does not seek to defend Himself!
 - This is seen in the other gospels, but it is emphasised in Mark.
 - So that is what I will emphasise in preaching from our text today.
 - Listen now as I read this text to you. Mark 15:1-5.
 - This is the holy Word of God, infallible and without error, and also, containing exactly what the Lord wants us to have in Mark.

Mark 15:1-5: Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led *Him* away, and delivered *Him* to Pilate. 2 Then Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered and said to him, “*It is as you say.*”

3 And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. 4 Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” 5 But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

May the Lord add His blessing to His holy Word as we now consider what He has given us here for our learning and edification, for our faith and our walk as His people.

I. See how Jesus is brought before Pilate and accused of being the King of the Jews by the Sanhedrin.

- A. Let's be sure to keep the players straight here.
 1. There are two courts—a church court and an imperial civil court.
 - a. The church court is the Sanhedrin.
 - It was made up of seventy men including the chief priests and some other priests, the elders, who were laymen, and the scribes, who were teachers and experts in God's law.
 - The Jews had sessions made up of priests, elders, and scribes in the synagogues, and these would sometimes meet with other elders from the synagogues in their city, and sometimes send delegates to even broader assemblies, but the highest court was this great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.
 - b. The civil court is the one appointed by the Roman Emperor.
 - In better days, the Jews had had their own civil rulers under their kings, but now that Rome was occupying their land, they had been brought under the dominion of Caesar.
 - They bitterly resented this and tried to resist as much as they dared, but for the most part, they had to put up with their overlords.
 - The emperor had appointed Pontius Pilate to be the governor of Judea, where Jerusalem was, and he had to deal with the Jews who were sometimes hard to manage.
 2. Of the two courts, it was not the Roman court, but the Sanhedrin (the church court) that had been offended with Jesus.

- a. We saw in chapter 14 how it was the Sanhedrin who initiated His arrest in the middle of the night,
 - how they came after Him as if He were a violent offender and how they took him to the palace of the high priest and sought to find something to charge Him with that would be worthy of death.
 - We saw how happy they were when the high priest asked Him if He was the Christ and He declared that He was and that they would see Him coming in the clouds—with divine glory—to judge them.
 - They immediately agreed that for saying this, He was guilty of blasphemy.
 - They never examined Him to see if His claim was true.
 - They never looked at the evidence of His miracles and His behaviour and the prophecies that He had fulfilled.
 - They simply declared that He was worthy of death for claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed, who would come in the clouds.

➤ But there was a hitch...

- b. They were technically not allowed to execute anyone, and this is where the Roman tribunal presided over by Pilate came into play.
 - The Sanhedrin had to take Jesus to Pilate and present charges against Him that Pilate would recognise as worthy of capital punishment.
 - Blasphemy would not be regarded as such, but claiming to be a king could be regarded as treason against Caesar.
 - Actually, the Sanhedrin probably recognised that it was helpful to have the Romans do the execution for several reasons.
 - First, because they were afraid that Jesus' followers might start a riot if they executed Jesus, but if Rome was doing the execution, Rome would use her forces to stop them.
 - Secondly, if the Romans executed Jesus, it would likely discourage His disciples from trying to continue the movement that He had begun.
 - And third, they hated Jesus, and execution by crucifixion would be the most degrading and torturous death that could be employed.

B. Mark shows us how eager the Sanhedrin were to bring charges against Jesus to Pilate.

1. In verse 1, Mark tells us how the whole Sanhedrin came together at daybreak to do this. They rounded up the whole Sanhedrin.
 - Mark says (15:1), “**Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.**”
 - a. Many of them had been up all night examining Him and had, as I already reminded you, found blasphemy in Him for saying that He was the Messiah.
 - But to make the trial official, they had to wait until morning to pass their verdict before the Sanhedrin—sentences for capital crimes must be passed in the day.

- They were so eager that they were ready to go at dawn.
 - Their proceedings probably took no more than fifteen minutes.
 - They drew forth his confession before the whole court and pronounced Him to be guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.
 - In Luke, we are given a lot more detail about this meeting where the official verdict was given.
 - b. Then, without delay, they take Jesus, bound, through the streets of Jerusalem to Pilate with plans to charge Jesus for claiming to be their king (instead of Caesar).
 - It was customary for a Roman governor like Pilate to do his official business such as holding court in the morning, starting at the break of day, and then to spend the afternoon in leisure activity.
 - It must have made him smirk to see this eager procession of Jews with no love for Caesar coming with their prisoner, all worked up about Him threatening the seat of the emperor!
 - c. Indeed, the irony cannot be missed.
 - The Sanhedrin would have welcomed a Messiah that would come and overthrow the rule of the Romans.
 - One of the main objections they had to Jesus was the fact that He seemed to be more interested in preaching repentance and reconciliation to them than He was about liberating them from Rome.
 - Yet, the irony is that here they are accusing Jesus of doing the very thing they were offended with Him for refusing to do.
2. This is a very wretched matter.
- a. Here is the holy undefiled Son of God, already weary from a sleepless night, bearing the bruises and the spittle from their mocking of Him.
 - And now they are dragging Him bound through the streets of the holy city of Jerusalem to be tried before a pagan Roman governor.
 - Such indignity for Him who is the Lord of glory! Yet, He bears it without compliant.
 - b. Do we not see a dreadful specimen of the depravity of man here?
 - This is how the church—her highest court—treated the Son of God, their own Messiah.
 - Only He is fit to be our Saviour. No one else is worthy.

TRANS> Our Saviour is in this wretched condition, but now

II. Let us admire the way our Saviour does not defend Himself.

- A. First we see how He freely confesses before Pilate that He is indeed the King of the Jews.
1. In Mark's abbreviated account, he tells us of how Pilate asks Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"
- The *you* is emphatic. Jesus hardly looks the part:

- Are you the King of the Jews? You???
 - It is actually in the form of a statement... *You are the King of the Jews?*
 - Though Mark does not actually say it, it is evident that this was the accusation that the Sanhedrin made against Jesus to Pilate.
 - It was, as already noted, suggestive of treason—a charge that Pilate must take seriously lest the Jews report him to Caesar.
2. Jesus' confession is simple—to Pilate's "You are the King of the Jews," Jesus simply replies, "You have said."
- a. "You have said" is the literal translation, but it is idiom that meant "It is as you say."
 - That's the reason that many translations add words to make it more clear that it was an affirmation.
 - But it is also a qualified affirmation—something like, "I am the king of the Jews, but not in the way you think of it."
 - The language is suggestive of this, but we can be certain of this interpretation when we look at the gospel of John.
 - John gives us a fuller account of this part of Jesus' conversation with Pilate in John 18:33-37. He says: John 18:33-37: **Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"**³⁴ Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."³⁷ Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
 - Jesus was not setting up a kingdom that would use carnal weapons, but a kingdom that would subdue by the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.
 - He would gather subjects who wish to be reconciled to God by Him as their Saviour, not subjects who are brought in under the point of a sword and forced to submit against their will.
 - Jesus came to reconcile sinners to God.
 - b. He has no hesitation about claiming that He is the King of the Jews even though this was the charge that would bring on His crucifixion.
 - Even though Rome and the Sanhedrin both consider it a crime worthy of death for Him to claim to be the King of the Jews,
 - He is the King of the Jews.
- But notice further...

B. Jesus does not defend Himself.

1. His silence before His accusers is emphasised by Mark.
 - a. We are told twice that Jesus answered nothing.
 - In verse 3, it says: "**And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing.**"
 - And in verse 5, it begins: "**But Jesus still answered nothing.**"
 - The accusations were aimed at bringing about a verdict that He deserved to die—but He does not say a word to defend Himself.
 - b. Pilate confronts Him about His silence in verse 4.
 - It says: **Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!"**
 - Pilate does not believe Jesus has done anything that is deserving of death, but by keeping silent before His accusers, Jesus is leaving Pilate with no alternative but to pronounce Him guilty.
 - It doesn't make sense to Pilate for Jesus to refrain from defending Himself. He's a bit exasperated with Him.
 - c. We are told at the end of verse 5 that Pilate marvelled at Him for keeping silent.
 - This is a word of admiration that was used by those who witnessed Jesus' miracles.
 - Pilate has never seen a man who appears to be innocent refrain from defending himself when threatened with the cruellest of all deaths.
 - Does He not know that Pilate has the authority to let Him go?
 - What's wrong with Him!
2. The remarkable truth is that Jesus does not defend Himself because He has no defense.
 - a. He is standing before Pilate as the anointed King of Israel, and as such He is indeed worthy of death by the cross.
 - As the anointed King of His people, He has taken responsibility for all their sins. All of their iniquity is laid on Him.
 - He is as guilty as anyone could ever be.
 - He is guilty of all of their idolatry, all of their pride, all of their adultery, all of their stealing and covetousness, all of their trust in other gods, all of their Sabbath breaking, all of their lies and hypocrisy. He is guilty of their disobedience of those in authority over them, of their worship of other gods, and of their complacency toward God. He is guilty of every deception, every murder, every act of oppression and outburst of anger.
 - As Israel's anointed King, He is implicated with all of their sins.
 - b. He makes no defense because He has no defense.
 - There is no excuse for any of His people's conduct.

- There is no justification for it.
- There is no merit that can be claimed by a single one of them to ameliorate their guilt.
- They are worthy of the pains of hell, and that means that He is worthy of the pains of hell as their representative.
 - He has nothing to say because there is nothing to say.
 - He is taking the blame for all of their sin and defilement.

III. There is so much for us to learn from this.

- A. First of all, learn from Jesus' silence how Jesus deals with our sin.
1. He does not deal with it by making excuses for us the way mothers do for their children. 'He didn't mean it'—'He has a good heart.'
 - 'His father was abusive to him.'
 - 'He was treated unfairly in school.'
 - Excuses do nothing to justify us. They rather dishonour God.
 2. Jesus' goal is not to minimise our sin, but rather to fully bear our sin.
 - He wants to glorify the Father by showing how wrong it is for anyone to sin against Him, even in the smallest matter or under the worst circumstances.
 - He wants us to learn what we don't know—how worthy the Father is of our service and obedience.
 - The cross of Jesus shows us how honourable the Father is because on it justice for our sins fell upon the Son of God.
 - He does not come to the Father to persuade Him to not punish us because what we did was not that bad, but He comes in silence to take all the heat that our sin calls for.
- B. Secondly, see that there is absolutely no way of forgiveness but by the blood of Jesus.
1. If Jesus does not intercede for us by trying to convince the Father that what we have done is not that bad, we must not do that!
 2. If we want to honour God, instead of telling Him how good we have been overall or of all the reasons that we have sinned,
 - we must tell Him that we are worthy of hell and ask Him to have mercy on us through Jesus alone.
 3. We err when we try to mix in our excuses and our "it's not that bad" arguments with the cleansing blood of Jesus!
 - You don't need anything but His blood to secure your forgiveness.
 - Why in heaven's name do you think He came and died on the cross if you are able to talk and reason your way out of your guilt?
 - The Bible tells you to trust Jesus for your forgiveness, not your excuses and justifications of your behaviour.
- C. Thirdly, take some time to marvel at Jesus' silence the way Pilate did.
1. Just think of how different He was from Adam.

- When Adam was guilty, he blamed Eve. He tried to make excuses for his sinful conduct.
 - You know how hard it is to admit your guilt—to really face it fully.
 - You want to weasel out of it—you are driven to do so.
 - But Jesus was accused of the sin of others—
 - He was thought to be personally guilty when He bore our sins.
 - Yet, He did not blame those who were truly the guilty ones.
 - He bore our sins in silence.
2. You are more like Adam, aren't you?
- What if you are falsely accused? You are furious!
 - If you were angry and hateful to your sister seven times and did not get punished for it and then one day you actually were not being angry and hateful toward her and you got falsely accused—
 - you might carry the bitterness of that false accusation with you for weeks or even years!
3. It is amazing to see Jesus, bearing the sins of His people without a word to defend Himself before His accusers.
- Let us admire Him! Let us worship Him! There is no one like Him.
- D. And I say, let us all learn from His example.
1. Stop defending yourself when you are guilty.
 - Just stop. You dishonour God and you make a mockery of your Saviour's cross.
 - Instead of making excuses for your sins, just confess them without all the qualifications.
 - And when there is some punishment, just accept it with grace. Lamentations 3:39 asks a good question: **Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?**
 2. And not only that, but learn to bear your afflictions with patience, even when there is no particular wrong that you know of that you have done.
 - a. God appoints suffering for us in this world because we need it.
 - We really do. He uses it to humble us and teach us that we are not worthy of the least of His mercies.
- 1) This very week, I had some irritating problems with computer software and with a phone that I was trying to activate.
- I felt so wronged by this.
 - What a petty little wretch I was.
 - Self pity is such an odious thing for a Christian!
 - I came with my whiny heart to study for this sermon, and what did I read but this from J. C. Ryle:
 - “Let us learn not to complain and murmur, no matter what the Lord may lay upon us. Beware of giving way to irritation and ill-

temper. Nothing in the Christian character glorifies God so much as patient suffering.

- “**1 Peter 2:20-21: For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.** ²¹ **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”**

2) Many of you have had much worse things than computer troubles.

- But let me tell you—no matter what it is that you may have suffered in the past or that you may be suffering now...
- Just remember that you deserve to go to hell forever—the place that it is better to avoid even if it means you have to pluck out your eye or cut off your arm.
- If Jesus could bear our sins patiently, shouldn't we be able to bear anything that we who are sinners are given to bear in this life?

b. Learn also bear blame for others.

- If your spouse neglects to do something that the two of you promised to do, you don't have to tell anyone that it was your spouse's fault.
- Jesus was willing to bear your blame. Why can't you just ask the person for forgiveness without having to point out whose fault it was.

c. And learn to bear reproach for the name of Christ.

- When you are persecuted, it is not the time to tell your persecutors how bad they are for persecuting you and of how they have violated your rights.
- It is time to bear it silently—to give glory to your Saviour who was treated as a wrongdoer because His light exposed the sin of others.
- When you have Him as your Saviour, there will be times when you suffer because you are shining as a light in a dark world.
 - To extinguish the light by defending yourself.
- The martyrs in the early church were so often like Jesus when they were brought to the place of execution that their persecutors made it a point to give them three chances to defend themselves.
- They had no defense. They were following Jesus and He had no defense when He bore their sins. They were willing to suffer shame with Him.
- Their enemies knew that they were in the wrong. Let others think what they will. They will not defend themselves—they will only testify that they belong to their Saviour.

Conclusion

O my brothers and sisters,

- What a wonderful Saviour we have!

- He took the heat of hell for us without a word when we were the ones that were guilty.
 - Now we are set free to serve Him forever.
 - Do so with joy and thanksgiving.