



Christ Reformed Community Church

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“What Shall I Do with the Man?” Mark 15:1–15

Mark chapter 15. We want to begin at least looking this morning at this account you’re familiar with. It’s the account of Jesus before Pilate, His trial before Pilate, in verses 1 through 15. The title of the message: “What Shall I Do with the Man?” And I want you to stand to your feet in honor of the reading of God’s Word, picking up in verse 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. And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Thus ends the reading of God’s authoritative Word. Please be seated, and let’s ask the Lord’s help this morning.

Our Father, we come to Your sacred text for this day, solemnly being reminded of our Lord’s trial before Pilate, and we thank You, dear God, that Jesus is not on trial today. He’s on His throne. We are forever grateful for His lordship over our lives, His lordship over this universe, and so as we study this passage, may we keep that in mind. May our focus be on our ascended Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for His glory and our good. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

That question that Pilate asks, if you look at it with me again there in verse 12, “*Then what shall I do with the man?*” “*What shall I do with the man*” the “*King of the Jews?*” That was a question that faced Pilate, in light of the pressure of the crowd to release an insurrectionist, Barabbas, in the

place of Jesus. That was the question that faced Pilate who had to him handed over Jesus by the religious leaders. The religious leaders had already decided what they wanted done with the man. They wanted him executed. They wanted him crucified according to Roman custom. We read here that Pilate, with all of his power, with all of his prestige failed to fully embrace who Jesus was, even though it's clear he repeatedly says he recognized the innocence of Jesus. He recognized that Jesus spoke as someone from another world, as we go and read John's account alongside of this. He understood there was something about Jesus he couldn't put his finger on, but he came short of embracing the man, the King of the Jews.

Who was Pilate anyway? Well, you need to understand a little bit about Pilate. He was a governor of the province of Judea. Within Judea was located the capital city of Jerusalem, the capital city for Israel. He was the fifth governor of Judea, a consummate politician, making decisions based on convenience and good standing with the people, but really lacking the traditional Roman virtues of honor and integrity. He was a man who didn't live for other people. He was a man who did not live for principle. In fact, he used others to advance his political career. It was customary for the Roman empire to appoint governors over the lands that they conquered, and so his position as governor, Pontius Pilate's position as governor over Judea, was really sort of a lower position. It wasn't an envied position by any stretch of the imagination, and as a matter of fact, most people believe that it was Pilate's marriage to Claudia Procula, who was the granddaughter of the emperor Augustus, a Roman princess, that actually got him the position. He was an incompetent man, and history is not kind to him for good reason. First of all, we read from two men that were evil in and of themselves, Herold Agrippa I and the Roman emperor Caligula, they see him as merciless. That's how they describe him. The Hebrew historians Philo and Josephus describe Pilate as cruel and stubborn. The rest of history describes him as woefully incompetent.

He had four simple jobs as the governor of Judea. One was to command the Roman army that was there at the Fortress of Antonia. The second was to collect taxes. The third was to oversee legal affairs as a sort of justice of the peace to uphold the justice of Rome. And the fourth was his most important responsibility in his job description, and that was to maintain peaceful relations between the Jews and the Roman empire. That last task he was woefully incompetent at. He hated the Jews, and was drunk with what little power he could get. At one point, he stole funds from the treasury in the temple to build a twenty-three-mile aqueduct. That angered the Jews who protested, and then he disguised soldiers as citizens, sent them among the protestors, and beat them with swords and clubs. On one occasion, he stubbornly endorsed his army to march into Jerusalem with flags and banners bearing the image of Caesar, offending the Jews who viewed that as idolatry, and so they went all the way to Caesarea where he actually lived, Pilate actually lived, and protested for five days. And finally, Pilate said, "All right. We'll talk about this. Let's meet in the amphitheater," and when the people got into the amphitheater, he surrounded them and threatened them that he would kill them if they did not desist and stop protesting. Finally, after all of that, he placed gold shields with an image of Tiberius, the current emperor, in the home of Herod, the palace of Herod, which was located in Jerusalem. And this so infuriated the Jews that they sent a Jewish delegation to Rome to the Caesar himself to complain that this was offensive.

So, by the time that Jesus stands before Pilate, he is skating on thin ice with the Caesar himself. One little slipup could cause the removal of his position in office. But when you look at Pilate's life, Pilate's demise was really the result of what we could describe as an ambitious, reckless, self-

seeking politician. By the way, he was eventually removed. He sent cavalry to attack and kill an angry mob who at the direction of a false teacher had charged up Mount Gerizim—that was the worship side of the Samaritans—because they claimed that Moses had left some sacred vessels there. He was so infuriated by that, his cavalry stampeded them and beat them and pierced them with swords. And when the Samaritans complained to Rome, he was eventually removed from office. And on his way to Rome to answer those charges, Tiberius Caesar died, so that by the time he reached Rome, legend tells us, because we aren’t one hundred percent certain, that he was forced to commit suicide, sort of like a defeated and depressed Nazi officer during World War II.

His life was sick and sad, but he really had no personal axe to grind with Jesus. In fact, he repeatedly states over and over and over and over again in this passage that Jesus was innocent, that Jesus wasn’t guilty—or at least he implies that. But he had to be sentenced by Pilate to die to fulfill Scripture, John 15:25: *“But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’”* There was no legitimate charge, but according to the sovereignty of God, Jesus Christ must be crucified; and therefore, He must be sentenced by someone who represented Rome and represented crucifixion, and that was Pilate. Peter later said, *“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”* And *“God raised him up.”* Pilate was guilty. Pilate was responsible. He was a lawless man, not someone that truly upheld the law of God. But in the final analysis, it was God’s sovereignty that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. The sacred record is clear about that. Again, Peter says, *“For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”* Peter recognized this was predestined for Jesus.

And so, Jesus’ sentencing by Pilate to be crucified is crucial for the gospel itself. I hope you understand that. Peter again says in Acts 3, *“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he [has] thus fulfilled.”* This was the plan of God from before the foundation of the world. It’s important to keep that in mind when you speak about the suffering and the sorrow and the pain and the injustice of Christ. The Father of heaven and earth was behind all of this. This goes back to Isaiah, right? It was the will of the Father. It pleased Him to crush His Son. This wasn’t an accident. This was planned. This was predestined. This was predetermined, and it was so for the good of your salvation.

That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That is the gospel. So, ultimately as we speak about Pilate, our focus must be on our Lord in this passage, and when we focus on our Lord in verses 1 through 15, we discover not only Jesus’ innocence from breaking any law of God, breaking any Roman law, but we also see the very glory of the gospel itself when we focus on Christ. By focusing on Him, there are three aspects of the glory of the gospel that we see. First of all, we see what we might call His sanctification, His sanctification. That word shouldn’t trouble you or trip you up. It simply means to be set apart, to

be consecrated. In Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer, He prayed, *“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake,”* Jesus says, *“I consecrate myself. I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”* Jesus sanctified Himself. Jesus set Himself apart from sin. Jesus was free from sin, and yet, in spite of the fact that He was wholly sanctified, the religious leaders recognized that and knew that. Look at verse 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.”* They held a consultation. Why were they doing this? Well, because they violated Jewish law earlier, we can say that night, but really earlier that morning, back in chapter 14 and verse 53: *“And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards.”* Verse 55:

Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy.

He claims to be the Messiah. And verse 65 says: *“And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the guards received him with [many] blows.”* That whole trial before Caiaphas, the high priest, was a trial to manipulate charges. This was the council’s attempt to find a legitimate charge against Jesus, the holy, innocent Son of God, and they found none. That trial ended about 3:00 a.m., and it was about 5:00 a.m. that, as verse 1 says, they had *“a consultation...the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.”* So, from the hours of 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. on Friday morning of the day He was crucified, Jesus was imprisoned and as verse 1 indicates, *“the chief priests,”* they were the ringleaders, had a *“consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.”* So, this is the religious delegation, the religious tribunal, the Sanhedrin holding a consultation. Now, why would they have to have a consultation? Because they knew they had violated Jewish law. You’re not supposed to have a trial at night. They had done that. Not only that, but they had come up with trumped up charged, false charges of blasphemy. Jesus wasn’t guilty of that. They could find nothing else to accuse Him of, so they just came up with that. And so now to sort of cover their tracks, daybreak has come, daylight has come, 5:00 a.m.

They’re going to go to Pilate, but before they do that, they’re going to have this sort of makeshift trial, a consultation. Literally in the Greek verse 1 reads, *“come to a resolution, come to an official charge,”* that they can then go to Pilate and say, *“He’s violated our law. He’s violated the law of the land in some way.”* But they needed to come up with a better charge against Jesus. They had to involve themselves in careful political maneuvering. That was necessary in order to ensure Jesus’ execution. In other words, they had to convince the Romans that Jesus was a threat. They

were shrewd enough to know, the council was, that committing blasphemy according to Jewish law meant nothing to the Romans. They were pagan to the core. They could care less about some charge of blasphemy. That was a waste of their judicial time. And so, they had to have this consultation to say, “Oh, yeah, we met during the day,” and also to determine, “Okay, we determined we want him to die. We’ve determined He has committed blasphemy, but how can we look at Roman law now and take Him to Pilate and convince Pilate that He’s broken a law that makes Jesus look like He’s a threat to the Roman state?” Undoubtedly, the scribes—they’re listed there in verse 1, part of the Sanhedrin—they were key to the case that would be made to Pilate when He was actually delivered over as the end of verse 1 says. The scribes, by the way, all referred to in Scripture as lawyers, they were experts in Mosaic law. Mosaic law was viewed by the people to be the final authority of God to govern Jewish life. These scribes were trained from a very early age. The best way I can say it is to possess a certain competency in making decisions on questions of religious legislation and penal justice. That’s why they were called lawyers. And you might not know this, but there was a sort of mystical aura that hovered over the scribes because it was taught that there existed among the scribes and among their tradition, secrets of interpretation, forbidden degrees of knowledge, that they and they only possessed.

And so, the council under the leadership of the chief priests who ran the temple, wanted to use the master techniques and knowledge within the scribal tradition to come up with a good case, or we could say a bad case in this sense, against Jesus to give to Pilate. I mean they had to work hard earlier that morning to come up with some charge that said He broke Jewish law. They couldn’t find any, so they said, “Well, He claims to be the Christ, so we’ll just say He’s committed blasphemy because we don’t believe He’s the Christ.” But now, they’ve got to look at Roman law. Now they’ve got to determine how could we make Jesus look bad before Rome? How can we make a charge palatable to Pilate who represents Rome, to have Pilate view Jesus as a King who is in rival to Caesar and is threatening the Roman state? Such explains exactly what they did. Just peek ahead to verse 2. Pilate asked Him, first question, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” We’ll look at that more closely in a minute, but that question, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” tells us that the case they brought to Pilate when they bound Jesus and delivered Him over to Pilate was the fact that He was making himself out to be a political insurrectionist, a political activist that wanted to go to war with Rome and rule on Caesar’s throne itself. So, they took this charge of Jesus being the King of the Jews, the Christ, and they said, “Well, really, He says He’s going to be the King of Rome,” and they brought that before Pilate. That’s why he asks Jesus, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*”

Now, we need to look at a closer analysis of what this charge actually was. Turn with me to Luke chapter 23. In Luke’s account, Luke gives it to us in verses 1 and 2: “*Then the whole company of them arose and brought him [that is Jesus] before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying*”—here are the charges. Number one: “*We found this man misleading our nation.*” Number two: “*And forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar.*” Number three: “*And saying that he himself is Christ, a king.*” Those were the three charges: first one, misleading the nation. That is to say, He’s a political revolutionist. He’s a political activist. He’s misleading the nation of Israel to raise up zealots to overthrow Rome, which was the exact opposite of what Jesus taught. That night when Peter lopped off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus said, “*Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.*” That very night Jesus had made it clear that He wasn’t interested in setting up an earthly kingdom that overtook Rome in the first

century. But the second charge was—notice Luke 23:2—*“Forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar.”* Oh, so now they’re saying that Jesus said it’s wrong to pay taxes. Don’t pay taxes to Rome, Israel, because God owns you. But what did Jesus say? *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* Jesus was clear. There’s the sphere of Caesar. *“Give to him taxes, fine, but there’s Caesar who is under the authority of God, and all things belong to God. So, as you pay your taxes to Caesar, you’re paying them to God because God placed Caesar there.”* He encouraged people to pay their taxes. And then that third charge: *“saying that he himself,”* Luke 23:2, *“is Christ,”* but notice this, *“a king.”* Some sort of king. Jesus on one occasion—you remember this in John chapter 6—resisted a forceful crowning of Himself as King. He had to flee and escape the crowds because they tried to forcefully make Him a king and Jesus ran away, which clearly means the third charge Jesus also wasn’t guilty of.

So, what we see here in Mark 15:1 with this consultation of passing a resolution by the council, as we see the council was guilty of legal malpractice. Jesus wasn’t guilty of anything, but the very ones claiming to love God’s law, the very ones claiming to love God’s truth lied using legal powers to manipulate a charge on Jesus, painting Jesus out to be a political insurrectionist that was a social threat to Rome. Equivalent to treason, to say you’re a king. You weren’t allowed to do that, and anyone with even amateur Bible knowledge can see the legal malpractice of the council. Jesus wasn’t guilty of breaking any Jewish law. That was clear in His trial before Caiaphas, and Jesus wasn’t guilty of breaking any Roman law. He told the Jews to pay their taxes, He told Peter to put his sword back, and He said that His kingdom was *“not of this world”* later in John chapter 18. Jesus wasn’t guilty of anything. John 6:69, Peter’s great confession, he says, *“And we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the,”* what? *“the Holy One of God.”* *“We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”* Hebrews 4:15, Jesus was tempted *“in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* Second Corinthians 5:21, I read it earlier: *“God made him who knew no sin to be sin our behalf,”* so that we who are sinners, *“might become the righteousness of God.”*

Jesus was obedient in our place, pure, holy, undefiled. No one had a valid charge against Him—no Roman authority, no civil magistrate, no religious leader. Paul says in Romans 5:19: *“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience [that is Christ] the many will be made righteous.”* He was obedient in our place. This is referred to by theologians as the active obedience of Christ. We’re in the section of Mark which highlights the passion of our Lord, the suffering of our Lord, His passive obedience, dying on the cross, but His active obedience is also necessary for our salvation. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:45: *“Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”* The sinlessness of Jesus, His complete innocence is on display throughout this passage to remind us of that glorious doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, to celebrate it, to rejoice in it. As we see the malpractice of the council, it reveals the sanctified status of Jesus. Commenting on the relationship between the first Adam and the second Adam and the need for a second Adam to obey where the first Adam disobeyed, active obedience, Thomas Goodwin, the great Puritan says this, and I quote: *“Paul speaks of them [Adam and Christ] as if there had never been any more men that existed in the world, nor were ever to be for time to come except these two. And why?”* says Goodwin. *“But because these two between them had all the rest of the sons of men hanging on their girdle.”* In other words, *“You’re either of Adam the first man, still in your sin, or you’re of Christ, the second Adam of righteousness. God views you as a sinner, condemned, or He views*

you as sinless and righteous and holy as Jesus was holy. And all the great Puritans, all the great Reformers affirm the active obedience of Christ, the perfection of Christ. That is why when we speak about Jesus’ trial before Pilate, we must affirm there was no guilty violation of any law. Pilate knew that. The religious leaders knew that. They were guilty of legal malpractice, twisting the law. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith says this:

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for those whom the Father has given unto Him.

The beginning part of that is really important: “The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself,” gives us all the blessings of the gospel—all of them. So, we must affirm this active obedience of our Lord, the Holy One of God. He was holy from His very conception. Turn with me over to Luke 1:35: “*And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.’*” Or Hebrews 1:6: “*And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’*” Why? Because He is holy. From His conception, He was holy. Also, from His maturation, from childhood into manhood, Jesus was holy. Luke 2:51–52: “*And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them*” That’s talking about Jesus’ submission to his parents. “*And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*”

In other words, He matured as a man, and He found favor with man, but He also found favor with God. He was wholly sanctified, set apart from sin. The longer He lived, the purer His life looked. From His conception, He was holy. Through the maturation process as the God-man, it was clear He was holy. At the inauguration of His ministry, when He was baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit, what does the Father say? “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” For thirty years the Father had only found pleasure in the Son of God. No sin, completely undefiled, never breaking the law of God, and that’s why when John the Baptist is arguing with Jesus, “I don’t want to baptize you. You need to baptize me.” Jesus says, “Oh no, John. This is to fulfill all righteousness. We must do this. If I’m not baptized by you, I’m being disobedient. I’m not fulfilling all righteousness, and I have to be righteous for My people so that my death for them counts because they are sinful.” He was holy from His conception, holy through the maturation process into manhood and into ministry, the inauguration of Himself into ministry, and even at His crucifixion, His holiness is seen. Psalm 16:10, speaking about the crucifixion, says that God the Father would not abandon His Son to Sheol, or allow His Holy One to see corruption. At the point of His crucifixion, the Father was still pleased with the Son. He never sinned once. Jesus was born under woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the curse of the law.

So, Calvin says, “We obtain through Christ’s grace what God promised in the law for our works, for if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when by taking that burden upon himself reconciled us to God as if we had kept the law ourselves.” In fact, Reformed theology and Scripture teaches us that the law itself binds us both to the punishment of the law or the curse of the law as well as to the obedience of the law or the blessing of the law, to punishment because the law places a curse on anyone who does not perform all the words written in the law of God. That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 5, “*You [therefore]*

must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” And the law binds us to itself through obedience because the law promises life to those who keep it perfectly, which no one is able to do but one; that is, Christ. Deuteronomy 6:25: *“And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.”* I read that earlier, Deuteronomy 6:25. Who did that for you? Christ did that for you. Christ was obedient for you. What sin have you not confessed in your life? What sort of hidden sin do you have today? What sort of thing causes you anxiety because you know you are unholy, you’re defiled in mind and heart, you are depraved, you say the wrong thing, you hurt the wrong people. What is your hope? It’s not your obedience; it’s Christ’s obedience. And this morning, you are being reminded by the Word of God that as Jesus stood before Pilate, nobody could bring any charge against Him that was legitimate. He is brought out to be the Holy One of God. Everyone there knew it. And the gospel writers bring that out to give us comfort in the gospel, comfort in Christ, that this malpractice of the council having all their consultations and meetings and experts looking into this thing, reveals the innocence of Jesus. Even the experts couldn’t nail Him on any sin.

So, if you’re in Christ this morning, all of your sins have been nailed to the cross, past, present and future. You are able to worship God this morning with a free heart, a liberating heart because Christ didn’t merely die for you; Christ obeyed for you, and that is what your eternal security depends upon. So, we see that in the malpractice of the council. It reveals the sanctification of our Lord, the holiness of our Lord. But go back with me to Mark chapter 15 because there’s a second aspect of the gospel that we’re reminded of, not only the sanctification of our Lord, His consecration, His perfection—that’s revealed by the malpractice of the council—but secondly, His submission is highlighted; namely, His submission to the Father to do whatever it would take to secure salvation. Pilate at this point brings Jesus inside the praetorium to question Him. Verse 2: *“And Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ And he answered him, ‘You have said so.’ And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, ‘Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.’ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.”*

Now, John in his account, John 18—we’re going to look at it in a minute—tells us that the Sanhedrin brought Jesus beaten and bound to Pilate. Pilate had a second residence in Jerusalem, and Pilate was there in order to maintain peace and order because he was concerned that there could be some sort of revolution or a protest by the Jews. And so, he stayed in the Fortress of Antonia, which was located on the northwest corner of the temple complex, next to the garrison where the soldiers were posted who went to the garden to arrest Jesus. The temple police also went to find these Romans. That’s where Pilate is. His main residence was in Caesarea, as I mentioned earlier. But the religious leaders bring Jesus to Pilate because they basically want him to rubberstamp their desire for Him to be executed, and so they bring up this charge that He claims to be a King. He claims to be someone who’s a political threat. He has a large following. He’s going to overthrow society. It’s going to be chaotic. And so sarcastically, in verse 2, Pilate looks at Jesus and says, *“Are you the King of the Jews?”* I mean, in other words, Jesus is standing before him bloody and dirty and bruised from the beating, and Pilate says, *“Are you the King of the Jews?”* And Mark tells us, *“And he answered him, ‘You have said so. You have said so.’”* Sort of a quick answer, but in 1 Timothy 6:13, Paul speaks about the fact that Jesus made a *“good confession”* before Pilate. So, Jesus said more than just this.

Turn with me to John chapter 18. Mark is briefer than the other gospel writers, but John gives us a little more of a context and there was a little bit more—not much more—but a little bit more of a dialog. We know from Isaiah 53:7: “[Jesus] was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” That’s speaking about a submission to the Father, being willing to be delivered up to the Romans and punished for something He did not do. So, He didn’t even open His mouth. That means He refused to answer any of the charges. But here in John chapter 18, He is relatively silent. In fact, keep your finger there in John chapter 18, and just turn over with me to Matthew 27. It’s good to see all of the accounts. This is Jesus before Pilate. Matthew 27:12 says, “But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders,” Matthew says, “he gave no answer.” But then Matthew clarifies what he means by the fact that Jesus gave no answer because “Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?’” And Jesus wasn’t completely silent. He said in verse 14: “But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.”

In other words, Matthew is saying that Jesus’ silence can be explained by the fact that He refused to answer the charges, other than affirming that He was the King of the Jews. But He wasn’t going to get into the details of answering every little charge. His silence wasn’t complete, but His words were few, relatively speaking. Think about it. Any other person that would have been brought before Pilate, the judge of Judea, who was innocent would have begged and shown any evidence he had, “I’m not guilty of this charge or this charge or this charge or this charge.” People were absolutely terrified of Rome. Jesus was quiet compared to all those people because Jesus was submitting to His Father, and His words reveal an armistice. An armistice is a temporary suspension of hostilities. Notice with me in John 18:33: “So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him,” so now here is the larger context, “‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’” He knows it was said to Pilate about Him. Pilate answered, “‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’”

This is a declaration of an armistice, a temporary suspension of hostilities. Jesus says, “You don’t understand.” “My kingdom is not of this world.” “If it were of this world, back in the garden, I would have called on legions of angels to kill your army. If my kingdom were of this world, I wouldn’t have told Peter to put a sword back in its place. I would have told the other ten disciples who were there to take their swords out and begin swinging them.” This is not saying that Christians have no voice in the political realm. This is not saying that there are no implications for politics in society with respect to the kingdom of Jesus; that Jesus is, He’s the King of our sweet little hearts, and He’s the King of us when we come to worship Him on Sunday; but outside of that, the authority and the power and majesty of Christ is not there, and if the state tells you to do something, you better do it. That’s not what Jesus means. Revelation 1:5 says He’s “the ruler of kings.” Revelation 19 makes it clear: He is the “King of Kings.” Ephesians 1, Ephesians 2 says that all things have been placed “under his feet,” but that would not happen, listen, unless He allowed the Roman authorities and the Roman state to kill Him. And so, we read in 1 John 3:8, “The reason the Son of God appeared,” and the word *appeared* is *phaneroō*, “to make visible, to make manifest.” “The reason the Son of God *phaneroō*,” was manifest, “was to destroy the works

of the devil.” That’s all Jesus is saying here. *“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”* “I am not from this world. My kingdom doesn’t come from this world, and ultimately the reason the Father sent Me was to establish a heavenly kingdom.” Notice in verse 37: *“Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’”* So, Jesus is maintaining the fact He was sent into the world to bear witness about the truth. He is *“the way, the truth, and the life.”* He came to preach repentance, *“for the kingdom of God is at hand.”* Jesus is telling Pilate, “I come from another world. I’m not going to resist the Roman authorities. I’m going to submit to my Father and be delivered up to them because I came to deliver sinners from their sin. I came to establish ultimately a heavenly kingdom that’s glorious and triumphant and transcendent. John 10:10, right? *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* Mark 10:45: *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*

So, the relative silence of Jesus was a silence not where He didn’t open His mouth at all. He had to clarify some things about His identity as the Son of God coming from another world, establishing a different type of kingdom. He had to defend Himself against false notions of who He was, but He would not defend Himself against any false charge. He was who He was. He was the King of the Jews. He was the Messiah. And He needed to be considered guilty by the Roman state in order to be crucified so that He could die for your sins. That’s the point to see. So, He was relatively speaking, silent. As Isaiah 53:7 says, *“He opened not his mouth.”* He didn’t answer a single charge, but He did give a little theology lesson to Pilate. He wanted Pilate to know “I’m from another world. My kingdom is bigger than your kingdom, and you’re going to see some day.” That was His point.

Well, that sort of silence amazed, it absolutely amazed Pilate. Turn back with me to Mark chapter 15. We’re still there. Verse 3 says: *“And the chief priests accused him of many things.”* So, they’re frustrated that Jesus won’t answer these charges, so they just keep piling up ridiculous charges. *“And Pilate again asked him, ‘Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.’”* Verse 5: *“But Jesus made no further answer.”* So, once He said what He said to Pilate, He said nothing else. He didn’t open His mouth, and the end of verse 5 says, *“So that Pilate was amazed.”* Why was he amazed? Well, because the bold, brazen, rash political activist that they made Him out to be He clearly wasn’t. He was amazed because he knew Jesus was from another world. He was amazed because he saw the purity and innocence of Jesus. He saw that His kingdom was transcendent from another world, and how many criminals did Pilate see who panicked before him, begging for forgiveness, begging to release the charges? No one was like this. The calm, dignified demeanor of Christ made Pilate amazed. Pilate didn’t see any guilt in Jesus. Jesus made the council look guilty while Jesus appeared truly as He was—innocent and undefiled. By the way, on four separate occasions, Jesus held His tongue. Before Caiaphas He did it, before Pilate the first time, before Herod, and then before Pilate a second time. And in spite of Pilate’s pagan heart and little theology that Jesus gave, he was amazed that a man so clearly innocent who refused to defend Himself, so willing to be delivered up. As John MacArthur says and I quote: “The official findings of the Roman magistrate exonerated Christ of any guilt, and he [that is Pilate] repeatedly said that he found no fault in Him.” That is clear from the passage. So, having heard that Jesus was from

Galilee, Pilate doesn't know what to do. He can't find a legitimate charge, so he sends Jesus back to Herod.

So, turn with me to Luke chapter 23. Pilate sends Jesus back to Herod, and we'll just pick up in verse 6: “*When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, [Pilate] sent him over to Herod.*” In other words, Pilate can't find any guilt. He doesn't want to deal with this. “He belongs to Herod. He's a Galilean. Send him back there.” “*When Herod saw Jesus...*” and by the way, Herod was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover as well. And “*When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.*” I mean, really, there was this sort of superstitious notion that Herod had about Jesus. The Bible tells us in another place that Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead, and he was fearful the ghost of John the Baptist was haunting him. And so, he was fearful. He was also mesmerized by Jesus, and he looked forward to meeting him, and now that day had come, and so he appears before Herod at the behest of Pilate. “*So he questioned him,*” verse 9 says, “*at some length.*” But notice, it says, “*but [Jesus] made no answer.*” Isaiah 53:7, “*He did not open his mouth. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.*” Wow! Apparently when he finally met Him, Herod finally met Jesus, he was wholly unimpressed. “This is who I was worried about? Dirty, bloody, bruised man on criminal charges sent to me by Pilate? What a joke. Oh, you're the King of the Jews. Yeah, put this royal robe on and go parade yourself back to Pilate. I can't find anything guilty, that you violated any law. You're just a joke.” That was the attitude of Herod, and so Jesus is sent back to Pilate. The silence of Jesus.

This declared armistice, this is a temporary ceasing of hostilities so that Jesus could be delivered up and crucified. Now, what happened after His crucifixion? He was raised from the dead, right? Forty days later, He ascended, right? Where did He ascend to? To the right hand of the throne of God. So, in one sense Jesus' kingdom is of this world in the sense that Jesus reigns over this world. When Jesus said in John 18:36, “*My kingdom is not of this world,*” He meant at the time of His crucifixion. But after His crucifixion, after He was raised, after He was ascended, He would be the King of the world, and there's all sorts of implications of what that means for the state, what that means for the Christian and his role in politics, what that means for legislation according to the law of God. God in Christ is King over every king and every ruler and every Caesar, and every president. And so, in that sense, you should have a great interest in the kingdom of God, understanding its implications and how it affects the world that we know. But during Jesus' days on this earth, His kingdom was not of this world. There was an armistice, a ceasing of hostilities, because Jesus came to fight Satan. He came to fight sin for you and for me. And that armistice that He declares, the temporary ceasing of hostilities, reveals His perfect submission to the Father. That's what you need to see. As Calvin says, in a great sermon entitled, “This Man or Barabbas,” on this very passage but from Matthew's account, Calvin says this:

Jesus chose to be condemned. That is why Scripture says that he did not reply to the accusations which were brought against Him. He had ample reason to do so, but His lips remained sealed as it is said by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 53:7. This was [Calvin says], not only to demonstrate His patient endurance, but also that we today might boast that we are righteous and blameless before God.

In other words, Jesus was silent so we can open our mouth and boast who we are in Christ. Calvin says:

However much our conscience accuses us or condemns us, knowing that God has received us in mercy and that all our faults have been removed by the perfection found in Jesus Christ, thus by making no reply and by refusing to demonstrate his innocence, the Son of God won for us the freedom to boast openly that we are God’s children and are counted righteous in His sight.

So, in other words, Calvin is saying Jesus kept His mouth shut so that He would be viewed as guilty so that we could open our mouths and boast about the fact that not only is He righteous and innocent, but so am I, so are you, through faith in Jesus Christ. This is a trial of mockery, isn’t it? It’s a trial of mockery orchestrated to make our Lord look bad, and yet our Lord shines through it—His goodness, His holiness, His perfection, His purity. Jesus’ holiness is revealed when you look at the depravity of the Sanhedrin and their malpractice. When you look at the depravity of Pilate, the purity of Jesus shines through, doesn’t it? Listen, you need His submission to the Father for your salvation to be complete, His perfect submission. You need His perfect sanctification, never violating the law of God. That is necessary for your salvation, and we see that. We see the holiness of Christ. We see the obedience of Christ. We see His submission. We see His sanctification, and it causes us to rejoice because we know how sinful we are, right? We know how depraved we are, even as born-again Christians. It would be a frightening thing for me to get up here this morning if I were able to read your minds and read off all the things that you’re thinking. It would be a frightening thing.

There is a story. It’s an old story. Heard it many years ago when I was a kid. True story about an African chief that visited a mission station, and outside of the missionary’s hut, there was hanging from a tree a tiny mirror, and the chief not knowing what the mirror was—he had never seen one or heard of one—began to peer into that mirror and he saw a reflection of himself which was terrifying and even threatening-looking. And as he stared at his reflection, horrified, really utterly grossed out at what he saw, he said to the missionary, “Who is that horrible creature living inside of that tree?” And the missionary said, “Oh, that’s not the tree. The glass is reflecting your face.” And the chief began to ask the missionary if he could buy the mirror. The missionary said, “It’s not for sale. I don’t want to sell it,” but the chief continued to say, “I want to buy the mirror. Give me the mirror.” So, in order to avoid trouble, the missionary agreed on a price. As soon as the African chief got that mirror into his hands, he smashed it to the ground and it broke in several pieces, and he said, “Now, that funny-looking person in the mirror will never make a face at me again.” The ugliness of his outward features he wanted to suppress.

Isn’t that us apart from Christ? “Well, I’m not as bad as you think I am. I’m pretty good. I’m better than the next guy. I’m one step up.” You see, the beauty of this passage is that the religious leaders killing Jesus, they were really dashing the mirror of their souls. They did not like what they saw in Jesus—pure and holy. They didn’t like what He told them about their sin. They did not like what He stood for. They viewed Him as a threat to their power. They viewed Him as a threat to their liberty and to their freedom, and yet, Jesus came to die to give us liberty, right? He came to free us from the condemning nature of the law, but because the religious leaders refused to see the purity of Jesus, they smashed the mirror and they didn’t see the ugliness of their own sin. And dearly beloved, that is all of us apart from seeing the heinousness of our sin, that our sin before a holy God, one sin is deserving of hell, one sin.

But Jesus came, and what have we learned about Jesus this morning? We learned about His sanctification. He was consecrated, pure, holy, undefiled, without blemish, and we’ve learned about His submission. He was willing to look guilty so that we could go free. He was willing to be counted sinful, 2 Corinthians 5:21, so that we could be counted righteous. He was willing to not open His mouth about the fact that He was innocent so we could declare and boast to the world. Not only is He innocent, but we are too, we are righteous in the sight of our Father. So, the whole trial reveals the glory of Christ.

Now, there’s a third point. We’re going to look at it next week, but let me introduce it to you. We’ve talked about His sanctification. We talked about His submission. The third glorious aspect about the gospel is His substitution. What do we read in verses 6 through 15? Well, we read about a real criminal, don’t we? A real criminal named Barabbas who was really guilty, who really committed murder, who was really an insurrectionist. He was everything that they accused Jesus of, except he actually was that. And what did Jesus do? He became the substitute for Barabbas. He became the substitute for all of those God chose before the foundation of the world to be His people. He became exactly what we are—sin. And the Father treated Him exactly as we are in our sin. He crushed Him, killed His Son. It pleased Him to do that because He vindicated Him by raising Him up, crowning him Lord of Lords and King of Kings over all things. And so, as we worship the Lord today, we are reminded of the fact that we need a substitute. We need someone who will submit to the Father. We need someone who is sanctified, pure, and holy. And apart from those things, talking about the death of Christ on the cross means nothing. You have to understand the character of Christ. You have to understand and acknowledge the person of Christ, and also look into the mirror and understand the person of sin that you and I are. We need Christ. We need His mercy. We need Him as our substitute. Next week, we’ll finish out our study of the passage.

Father, thank You for these words written by Mark so many years ago, Mark really using Peter as an eyewitness to these events. We see the calmness of our Lord, the dignity of our Lord before those who falsely accused Him. It’s a reminder to us and an encouragement to us there will be many that falsely accuse us. This was prophesied. They hated Your Son without a cause, and people will hate us without a cause. It could be a brother. It could be a father or a mother. It could be a friend. It could be an enemy in the community. It could be political regimens. We will be falsely accused, and when we are, we aren’t to defend ourselves. We aren’t to open our mouths and declare that we aren’t worthy of persecution because You tell us that we will be persecuted. You tell us that if they hated Your Son, they will hate us. But, Father, we thank You that we have a heavenly kingdom we can look forward to through the gospel, through Christ, a heavenly kingdom that will one day fill this world where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. We thank You for Him. We thank You for His sacrifice, His sanctification, His submission, His substitution—all of it. We glory and we revel in the gospel because the gospel is our only hope. We thank You for it, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.