

Mark 15:1-15

“What Should I Do With Jesus?”

What a blessing the gospel of Mark has been thus far. I have no doubt it will continue to be as we come to these final couple of chapters that deal with both the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. Ch 15 brings us to the breaking of the day and places us literally with in hours of the cross. The issue at hand, the war that has raged over this night and throughout these morning hours has at its heart the reality of sin. Sin is trying to destroy Christ and Christ is here to do something about sin. Specifically He's here to pay its penalty; He's dying for your sin and for mine. Of the many paradoxes found in the Christian faith the cross is no doubt one of them. On the one hand it's the greatest tragedy which has ever occurred yet on the other hand it's the most glorious victory that heaven and earth has ever witnessed or been the recipient of... *Because of that* we really shouldn't look upon this Ch with a sense of sympathy and/or a feeling of defeat for the suffering Servant of God. (Though those feelings are only natural to us as we think through what He endured for us). It seems to me that we should tread reverently through these scenes with a heart that wells up to God in praise and thanksgiving for providing (as the author of Heb puts it) “so great a salvation.” (Heb 2:3) What God wants from us is not our overwhelmed emotions or feelings but rather our *faith*. Jesus didn't go through all of this so that you would *feel for Him*, but rather so that you might put your *faith* in Him. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever would *believe* in Him would never perish but have everlasting life; it's not about feeling a certain way toward Him (emotionally) but placing your trust, your faith in Him *personally*.

Before we jump with both feet into Ch 15 I want to go back just a bit so that we might think through the painstaking position of Peter's predicament. You recall that as vehement as Peter had been that he would *never deny* the Lord he was all the more vehement when the pressure was on that he never *knew* the Lord. He had denied and disowned Him 3x's even swearing and condemning himself to hell if he *ever knew* Him. His faith was being threshed and thrashed as Satan was sifting him like wheat; he was being broken down and reduced to nothing.

Jesus was completely alone being brutally beaten and bloodied, His friends had forsaken Him, Peter was denying that he ever even knew Him and we read in Vs 72 of Mark Ch 14 that straightaway after Peter had begun to curse and to swear that he never knew Him that the rooster crowed for the 2nd time and the words of Christ came rushing into his mind, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me 3 times.” And when he thought about it, he wept. He had failed the Lord just as Jesus said he would. Evidently they were leading Jesus out at that same moment because Luke's gospel tells us that as soon as that rooster crowed the 2nd time that Jesus turned and looked at Peter, their eyes locked and Peter lost it.

Peter probably thought that all hope was lost for him at this point because he'd denied the Lord. Not in a casual way, but in an adamant “May I go to hell if I ever knew Him” kind of way. and This is what I want to focus on here for a few minutes because it serves to emphasize just how far reaching the restoring love of Christ can be. You cannot sin so atrociously, so horribly but that Jesus can't forgive you. I've met people over the years perhaps you have to that really

believe that they've blown it too bad, that there's no hope left for them anymore, there's no way that God can forgive them, not after what they've done, not after the things they've been a part of. Listen the bible is clear that where sin abounds, grace abounds still more.

We find that after the resurrection Jesus not only reunited with His disciples like He said He would specifically, but He also pursued Peter personally. We'll find in Ch 16 that early in the morning when the ladies went to anoint His body with spices and they encountered the angel that that angel said to them, "Go and tell His disciples-*and Peter*- that He's going before you to Galilee and He'll see you there as He said. The point being that not only was He sending a message to His disciples generally, but He was wanting Peter to know personally that He was looking forward to seeing Him. 1st Corinthians records for us that Jesus actually met with Peter privately before He appeared to all the disciples publicly. Paul said, *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve."* 1 Cor 15:3-5

Jesus pursued Peter, what they spoke about and how Jesus loved on Him and extended forgiveness to Him we don't know, but I have no doubt it was a powerful extension of love under which Peter crumbled before the Lord. Remember the parable that Jesus taught? He said, *"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."* Matt 18:12-14 The love of God reaches out and it restores. We find in John's gospel that even as Peter had denied the Lord 3x's publicly even so Jesus restored him giving him the opportunity to confess his love for Him 3x's publicly.

Your sin, no matter how ugly, how horrible, how staggering and unspeakable it may be is not beyond the reach of God's forgiveness. Maybe you feel sorta like Peter, you've known the Lord but you've denied Him, you've failed Him, you've walked away from Him; you're not beyond the reach of His restoration, perhaps today He's pursuing you. He wants to meet personally with you, and restore you to serving Him publicly once again. How many times we emulate Peter's failure, we deny the Lord and loose opportunities to share Him with others. We talk when we should listen, argue when we should obey, sleep when we should pray, and fight *with* Him when we should simply submit *to* Him. But you need to know that if there's a willingness to repent on our end, there's always a willingness to restore on His end.

Peter wept when he thought about what Jesus had said to him, when the word of God penetrates your heart how do you respond? Do you receive it, or do you harden yourself against it? Judas wept as well, but there was a fundamental difference wasn't there? The bible is clear that there is more than 1 kind of sorrow that can lay hold of us, 1 is a godly sorrow that's not to be regretted, why? Because it brings about repentance, a turning around, turning *from* our sin and turning back *to* Christ. The other sorrow is the sorrow of the world that leads to death. Listen to this, *"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."* 2 Cor 7:10 Judas regretted what he'd done, there's no doubt, yet he never repented, he was swallowed up by worldly sorrow that produced death, he committed suicide. Peter however *repented* over what he'd done, godly sorrow was at work

in Him and because of that the Lord restored Him. *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”* 1 John 3:1

Vs1

This is the 3rd time that Jesus has been given a “hearing” if you want to call it that and He will have 3 more before the morning is through. He’s been before Annas, He’s been before Caiaphas and a # of the Sanhedrin and now He’s before the whole council (Sanhedrin) again at 1st light. Why are they having another so called hearing now?

Because as you recall their night trial was in reality illegal, so now as the morning dawns they meet again to legally ratify the decision they’ve predetermined. Believe me it was merely a technicality at this point, so once they declare Him again worthy of death due to blasphemy they bind Him and lead Him as a sheep to the slaughter, delivering Him to Pilate.

But why the rush, why meet at 1st light and get Him to Pilate so quickly? Well, for 1 thing that’s when Pilate would be available, the procurator (the administrative official, in this case Pontius Pilate) would begin their work at day break and generally their legal affairs would be over by around noon. However that’s probably the last reason they’re rushing through this thing. The fact is that they wanted to gain the verdict before the majority of the city was buzzing and this thing could be over and done with before anyone even knew what was going on. Jesus had celebrity like status among the common people, there were no doubt 10’s of thousands of people (conservatively) who had heard of Him or perhaps seen His miracles or heard Him teaching in the city at that time for Passover. If the people found out this were happening it could cause a riot. They also wanted to get Him to Pilate so that he (in essence) could do their dirty work. It’s true that the Roman’s had exacted rite of capital punishment from the Jews however that didn’t stop them from taking matters into their own hands whenever they felt the matter was relevant. (You can see that in the book of Acts when they all stoned Stephen, with a man by the name of Saul of Tarsus, later to be called Paul the apostle holding everyone’s coats for them and consenting to his death).

So it doesn’t seem to me that this was a matter of being afraid to execute someone so much as it was a matter of wanting to distance themselves from the decision and maintain some form of integrity or nobility in the eyes of the people; hypocrisy at its finest. It was completely their plan yet they wanted to be free from any direct affiliation with it.

So they bind Him up (you can’t present a man as dangerous and worthy of death if you don’t even see the need to bind him can ya?) and deliver Him to Pilate. Now Pilate was not a nice man, history records him as an anti-Semite who had already had a few different run ins with the Jews that had put him in a bad place before Caesar and one more could cost him his position. So these religious leaders have him in a bad place, (a good place from their perspective). But he saw the Jews as stubborn and obstinate and believe me he had no intentions of doing them any favors.

Vs2

Now as we’ve discovered Mark is an “on the go” gospel, he keeps matters moving, and true to form he gives us a radically condensed version of the hearing before Pilate. As you piece together the accounts from the other gospel records you realize that the Jews came before Pilate and began to accuse Him of all kinds of things. But what we need to notice is that one thing they didn’t accuse Him of before Pilate was what? Blasphemy, the thing that they condemned Him to death for under Jewish law isn’t even brought up in the Roman court. Why? Because

Pilate couldn't care less about what the Jews considered to be blasphemy, there were 100's of "gods" in Rome what's one more, if this guy claims to be a god why does Pilate care? So when they bring Him to Pilate they accuse Him on a political level, they say that He claimed to be a King and that He had forbidden people to pay taxes to Caesar. Now you bring charges like that before Rome and you'll get their attention because there would be only 1 ruler, 1 Emperor or king and that would be Caesar. So at this point they've got Pilate entertaining the fact that Jesus is an insurrectionist guilty of treason. But Pilate is immediately suspicious because why would the Jews (who stood in open hatred of the oppressive boot of Rome) be seeking to turn over one of their own who supposedly stood against Rome? This guy would be a hero to them, not a villain.

But upon hearing that Pilate gives Jesus a private interview of sorts. He called Jesus into the Praetorium and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" That's when Jesus said, "You said it." Which is a "Yes" but it's not really direct, Jesus went on to ask Pilate if he were inquiring for himself or if he's speaking on what other's have said (incredible really, that He would have the composure to be reaching out to Pilate like that in that moment). Pilate acted all offended, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and chief priest has handed You over to me, what have You done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were My servants would fight so that I wouldn't be delivered to the Jews, but My kingdom isn't of this world." Pilate said, "Are you a King then?" Jesus said, "You say rightly that I am a King, for this cause I was born and have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." That's when Pilate standing there before Jesus said, "What is truth?" Truth incarnate standing right in front of him, *reaching out* to him and he couldn't see it. He went back out to the Jews and said, "I find no fault in this Man."

They said, "He stirs up the people teaching throughout all Judea beginning in Galilee to this place." When Pilate found out that Jesus was a Galilean he sent Him to Herod who was there in the city as well. That didn't go well either. Herod wanted to see a magic trick, a miracle, he'd heard of Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't even acknowledge him. So they mocked Him, treated Him with contempt and sent Him back to Pilate.

Vs3-5

Pilate *marveled*, the word here speaks of admiration; there was something about Jesus that captivated and intrigued Pilate, He was different. Pilate was sitting upon the judgment seat, Jesus was being accused of crimes punishable by death and yet He stood in regal silence. The accused had a platform to defend themselves, how many people do you think Pilate had heard gravel for their lives as he was preparing to sentence them to death? Yet Jesus wouldn't even utter so much as a single word. That intrigued Pilate, in a way he admired Christ in that. But listen, being *intrigued* with Jesus, even having *admiration for* Jesus is not tantamount to being saved *by* Jesus or even in some way right *with* Jesus.

Again as you piece together the other accounts you find that over and over again Pilate declared that he found no fault in Jesus and that he wanted to release Him. and As Pilate was seeking to dialogue with Jesus he was trying to get some sort of cooperation *from* Him, that Jesus might give him something to help him in his decision making process. But here's what Pilate discovered; when it comes to making a personal decision concerning Christ, who He is, the verdict he would reach, that's something he had to decide on his own, for himself and act accordingly. So to with you and so to with me; Jesus isn't trying to *convince us* of who He is,

we have the record, we can weigh the evidence, but concerning the verdict we reach *of* Him and what we do *with* Him that's a decision that can't be made for you. You've got to stand personally accountable and responsible for that.

Vs6-14

That crowd frenzy and mob mentality is beginning to set in and things are at this point volatile at best. There was a custom that Rome had established whereby at the feast of the Passover in order show good graces toward them Pilate would release 1 prisoner of their choosing, general amnesty would be granted at Passover for 1 person. The Jews knew this and Pilate figured that when placed beside a known murdered that surely Jesus would win the favor of the crowd, he was trying again to somehow set Jesus free.

But in reality it's quite possible that the reason that crowd had gathered was to petition Pilate for Barabbas in the 1st place. Bible teachers such as myself have at times pointed out the fickle nature of a crowd by demonstrating that one week these people were shouting "Hosanna, save now, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" The very next week they were shouting "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and There's an application there that's quite legitimate, people can turn on you, singing your praises one day and calling for your crucifixion the next. That's 1 reason we should seek to be God pleasers and not man pleasers. However it's quite possible that this particular crowd hadn't gathered there because of the arrest of Jesus, they may not even have known much about Jesus but were in reality there to seek the release of Barabbas. Compound that with the fact that they knew Pilate was wanting to release Jesus, their own religious leaders were supporting the release of Barabbas now who are they going to side with? The model of oppression who stands before them (Pilate) or their own leaders who are standing with them? Besides to them Barabbas may've been a sort of a national hero, he'd resisted Rome, lead a rebellion against Rome and evidently even killed a Roman in the process. Isn't it interesting that the religious leaders delivered Jesus to Pilate accusing Him to be a rebel against Rome (for which there was no evidence) but then cried out for the release of a known rebel of Rome who'd revolted against Rome and was a known murderer? Something's not adding up there is it?

Another interesting point is that "Barabbas" means, "Son of the father." So you have Jesus, "The only begotten Son of the Father" and "Barabbas" who means "son of the father" standing there. The people are making their decision; a murderer, or the Prince of Life, a rebel, or the Prince of peace, one who stole that which wasn't his (a thief) One who came to give freely of all that He had, a prisoner, or One who came to set the captives free, the son of the father, or the only begotten Son of God... The people chose Barabbas, they opted for the polar opposite of Christ, we're faced with the same decision today, we can choose Christ or we can take the polar opposite path it's up to us.

Pilate sought to release Jesus here, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" Because he saw through the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, we read in Vs 10 that he knew they had handed Him over because of *envy*. Beware of the bitter poison of envy... What is envy? It's similar to jealousy isn't it, both of which are sin; but there is a distinction and that is this: *jealousy* desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself, "I want what you have." *Envy* desires to deprive the other person altogether of what they have, "Not only do I want it, but I want to rip it out of your possession altogether so that you no longer have it." Cain

was envious of Abel. Saul was envious of David, he wanted to rip away from him the people's admiration, the platform of respect he'd gained. He didn't just want it for himself he didn't want David to have it period. So he sought to destroy David, envy will move you to destroy another person, watch out, be careful. Search your motives, ask yourself what your motives are in a given situation. If you can't discern it ask the Lord to search you. David said, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."* Ps 139:23-24 The chief priest were stirring the crowd, "We want Barabbas!" The people were there wanting Barabbas, they definitely weren't going to be moved to agree with Pilate. So Pilate asks them in Vs 12, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" "What should I do with Jesus?" Great question isn't it?

The problem lies in this; once again it's a decision that only he can make. When it comes to what you should do with Jesus I can give you my advice. I think you should get on your face, humble yourself, confess your sin and seek His forgiveness. However the decision with what you do is up to you, you can receive Him, or you can reject Him.

They opted to reject Him, they chose a false son of the Father, sort of a prelude to the A.C. having reject the Christ they'll follow after and choose to stand behind the A.C. They cry out, "Crucify Him!" Pilate says, "Why, what evil has He done?" But this crowd is beyond rational, they just cry out all the more, "Crucify Him!" *Psalms 69:4 "Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, Being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it."* Having done nothing wrong He still paid the penalty, having stolen nothing He still had to restore it.

Vs15

Luke tells us that he was still seeking to release Jesus. He said, "No, I will chastise Him, and let Him go." They then began to threaten Pilate saying that since Jesus claimed to be a King if he let Him go he was no friend of Caesars and they'd make sure the word got back to him. So Pilate buckled under the pressure and his sentence was declared...

Roman justice went awry, causing the innocent to die in the place of the guilty, placing Jesus on the cross that had been intended for Barabbas... If there was ever anyone who could say, "Christ died in my place" it was Barabbas. But in reality that's what the gospel is all about isn't it? Everyone of us could stand in the place of Barabbas; guilty as charged. The bible declares that *all have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God, that we all like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The innocent on behalf of the guilty. Jesus died not only in the place of Barabbas that day, but in your place and in mine as well. Pilate sat upon that judgment seat and gave the official declaration, "You shall mount the cross." That's exactly what Jesus did, God treated Jesus like He lived our life, so that He might treat us like we lived His life... The bible puts it like this, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* 2 Cor 5:21 Now what will you do with Jesus?

Prayer Points:

Father may we have a right response to that question. May we respond in reverence, in praise, in worship that Jesus was willing to be made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Stir our hearts, help us to resist the coercion of the crowds or worry about what man may think. But may we concern ourselves with what You think, and wanting to walk with You and be pleasing to You. Jesus we thank You for the overwhelming, far reaching/restoring love that You extend to us, help us to receive that grace gracefully, in humility. May it cause us to grow even closer to You, that You might use us openly for Your glory.

Is Jesus on trial in your life? Are you still trying to figure out who He is and what you're going to do with Him? I would encourage you to think it through carefully, don't be swayed by the coercion of the crowds, worried about what others will think. It's a decision that you have to make with out regard to what others think, what matters is what do you think, who do you say that Jesus is? A harmless religious extremist, a good guy who got the raw end of the stick? Or is He the Christ, the Son of the living God sent to die for the sin of the world, what you believe will determine your eternal destiny. Will you reject Jesus, or will you receive Him? The choice is yours alone...