

Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Mark 15:6-15 | The Irony of Jesus Barabbas**  
November 28, 2021

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 15:6-15
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

Last Sunday, we learned about a crucial Biblical figure.

We were introduced to a man who is so vital <sup>to the church</sup> that he was written into the Christian creeds of Christendom.

His name is forever next to God and the Virgin Mary in the Apostles Creed.

Who are we talking about? Pontius Pilate.

We also took a shallow dive into Pilate's life.

We saw what kind of leader he was—brazen, arrogant, and violent.

One of Pilate's biggest problems is that he despised the Jews.

And that was no secret.

Ultimately it led to his downfall.

And we wrapped up last Sunday by discussing how this arrogant and violent Roman pagan man was amazed by Jesus.

Why was this brutal politician amazed with Jesus?

Because as the governor over Palestine, he had sentenced lots of people to die, but no one ever responded to the sentence of crucifixion like Jesus as of Nazareth.

Ultimately, Jesus wasn't threatened by Pilate.

Jesus didn't act like His life was in Pilate's hands, because ultimately it wasn't.

Jesus, as the Son of God, was in the Father's hands.

Jesus knew that Pilate was a secondary cause to the plan of salvation.

God the Father was the primary cause.

Jesus knew that nothing would prevent Him from dying on a wooden Roman cross at 3pm on that Passover Day.

Jesus knew that to finish His mission and to save our souls—the cross was the cost.

### **KEYPOINT:**

*Jesus was not acting like He was getting ready to die—because He wasn't!*

Please don't misunderstand; Jesus did die!

But, Jesus didn't stay dead.

Jesus has the audacity to walk out of His grave just like He said He would.

God is a promise maker and a promise keeper.

Ultimately, Jesus had nothing to fear, because He knew that the physical pain and the emotional suffering being separated from The Father was temporary.

Dear friends, do you know that your pain in this life is temporary as well?

Do you know God's promises in Scripture?

Reading and praying these promises over your life are reminders of what is to come.

It's easy for us to forget that, isn't it?

The gift of salvation is so simple to understand that sometimes we forget that there is an end in sight to this life on earth.

Dear friends, let me remind you...this life is as bad as it gets—if you're a child of God.

And for ~~most~~ of us, this life is much better than we deserve.

If you're struggling believing that this morning—please let me give you some encouragement.

Jesus promised us this:

**John 14:1**—“Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

**John 14:2**—In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

**John 14:3**—If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.

Jesus is talking about the rapture.

Jesus is our groom. We, as His Church, are His bride.

And someday, very soon, Jesus is going to make good on that promise.



to spare them from His wrath on sin

Just as God gave Noah the boat, God gave us the rapture.

Dear friends, the home that you live in today is not your home—it's more like an extended stay hotel room.

So please don't get too comfortable in it...because you will soon be changing zip codes.

So all that to say this...

Jesus did not behave like a person whose life was in Pilate's hands— because it wasn't.

In other words, Jesus didn't fear death.

We, too, have no reason to fear.

God is our Heavenly Father, not our judge.

Our sin has been judged on the cross. Amen!

The cross is empty, and so is the grave, my dear friends.

Make no doubt about it, Jesus is sitting next to The Father, reigning and ruling the cosmos with his feet propped up.

## INTRODUCTION:

We left our story from last Sunday when Pilate found out that Jesus is a Galilean.

Even though Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Jesus' home base for ministry was in Galilee.

So Pilate sends Jesus to King Herod because Galilee is Herod's jurisdiction.

Herod also finds Jesus innocent and sends Him back to Pilate.

Now Pilate has an even bigger problem on his hands.

The Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) is working themselves into a frenzy because the politicians are taking too long.

They are turning into an angry mob demanding that Pilate judge and condemn Jesus of Nazareth to death via crucifixion.

At this point, Pilate would like to call out his troops and kill everyone to get this day over with, but he knows he can't do that.

From a political perspective, Pilate's been formally warned by Rome about his administrative style.

The Emperor warned Pilate of all the heavy-handedness and all the violence without just cause.

Needless to say, another uprising from the Jews would not look good on Pilate's record.

Then all of a sudden, Pilate had an idea that would get him out of this mess.

What was the idea?

Today we meet another new character—and if you thought Pilate was shady...well, you're in for a real treat today!

Because we're going to meet a man named Barabbas.

Who is this man? And why do you care?

Let's find out!

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Mark 15:6-15 CSB**

**Mark 15:1**—As soon as it was morning, having held a meeting with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin, the chief priests tied Jesus up, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

**Mark 15:2**—So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so."

**Mark 15:3**— And the chief priests accused him of many things.

**Mark 15:4**— Pilate questioned him again, "Aren't you going to answer? Look how many things they are accusing you of!"

**Mark 15:5**— But Jesus still did not answer, and so Pilate was amazed.

**Mark 15:6**— At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested.

**Mark 15:7**— There was one named Barabbas, who was in prison with rebels who had committed murder during the rebellion.

**Mark 15:8**— The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them as was his custom.

**Mark 15:9**— Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release the king of the Jews for you?"



**Mark 15:10**— For he knew it was because of envy that the chief priests had handed him over.

**Mark 15:11**— But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead.

**Mark 15:12**— Pilate asked them again, "Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews?"

**Mark 15:13**— Again they shouted, "Crucify him!"

**Mark 15:14**— Pilate said to them, "Why? What has he done wrong?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"

**Mark 15:15**— Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

**PRAY:**

*I pursue the way of your commands, for you broaden my understanding.*  
(Psalm 119:32)

**EXEGESIS:**

**Mark 15:6**— *At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested.*

So as we know from last week, the Sanhedrin is in an uproar at this moment.

They are dead set (literally) on murdering Jesus.

Pilate is in a political position that he would not rather be in.

Even though Pilate hates the Jews and—and even though he knows that Jesus is innocent of these bogus charges—

He is trying to maintain some sort of justice at this moment.

Certainly, more justice than the Jews had provided for Jesus.

And yet, at the same time, Pilate [being the politician he is] is also concerned about his own career.

He knows the danger in provoking and offending the Jewish leaders.

We learned last week about Pilate's management style.

~~He was very heavy-handed with the Jews.~~

Pilate's default mode is violence.

So in the back of Pilate's mind is the fact that he did not need another incident with the Jews.

The Jews reminded him of his record.

**John 19:12**— ...the Jews shouted, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!"

The Jews continue to run over whoever gets in their way in their mission of killing God.

So just when Pilate thinks he has run out of options—DING!



**Mark 15:7**— There was one named Barabbas, who was in prison with rebels who had committed murder during the rebellion.

Now there is some grim irony starting in verse seven.

The name “Barabbas” means “son of the father,”

Bar—“son of”

Abba—“father”

If that’s not weird enough...Matthew’s Gospel—specifically in the NIV translation tells us that Barabbas’ is this man last name.

His first name is...Jesus. (Matthew 27:15 NIV)

*BARABBAS "GOD SAVES BY AN EARTHLY FATHER" CHRIST "GOD SAVES BY HIS ANointed"*

Stay with me...the drama continues to unfold.

Jesus Barabbas is actually guilty of the crime of which Jesus the Christ is accused.

You’ve got one Jesus guilty of leading a real revolt, and the other Jesus accused of causing a fake revolt.

We don’t know what rebellion Barabbas was a part of.

What we do know is that there were minor revolts constantly happening during Roman Rule.

Regardless, Barabbas and his buddies got caught.

This man was a thief and murderer (Lk 23:19)—most likely a zealot.

So Barabbas and his buddies have been found guilty and are waiting to be executed.

Rome was generally pretty quick to punish any threat against Rome. them,

So this rebellion that Barabbas led probably happened fairly recently.

It was front-page news at that time.

**Mark 15:8**— *The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them as was his custom.*

crowd - chief priests, leaders: people celebrating Passover (Lk 23: 13)

There was a custom at Passover that would give amnesty to a prisoner of the people's choice.

This tradition is unknown outside the Gospels in Scripture.

It was, however, a Roman tradition.

Pilate has an idea.

He has in his custody a famous criminal named Barabbas.

So Pilate's idea is this—

He would give the crowd a choice of who they want to grant amnesty to.

Pilate, of course, is thinking that they would grant amnesty to this Jesus the Christ—who in his opinion is harmless.

Jesus is not a thief nor a murderer—like Barabbas.

It's a no-brainer.

Who would you want back on your streets?

A man who heals physically and spiritually or a man who plunders and destroys?

**Mark 15:9**— Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release the king of the Jews for you?"

Verse nine, unfortunately, shows the immaturity of Pilate.

By calling Jesus "The King of the Jews," Pilate intentionally irritates the religious leaders.

*IT'S NEVER WISE TO POKE AN ANGRY BEAR IN THE EYE W/ A STICK.*

~~This is the kind of thing that we learned about last Sunday from Pilate.~~

Even though Pilate is being immature and snarky, it is clear that he wants to release Jesus instead of Barabbas.

*—but he just can't help himself to get a dig in*

To Pilate, the charge that Jesus was the King of the Jews—is absolutely absurd.

But if Jesus was the kind of king they wanted, he was ready to let them have Him—and to get this thing over with.

Why is Pilate being snarky?

**Mark 15:10**— For he knew it was because of envy that the chief priests had handed him over.

Even though Pilate is immature and violent—that doesn't mean he's dumb.

Pilate recognizes that behind all this chaos is the religious leader's envy.

Why were they envious?

Because Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, challenged their authority, and threatened their religion.



Jesus performed miracles and forgave sin. They couldn't even think of doing that!

It's right here in our narrative that Matthew's Gospel tells us about an unplanned interruption.

**Matthew 27:19**— *While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him."*

So this interruption is a bit awkward.

Have you ever been in a crucial meeting—like a super important life-changing meeting—and your phone rings, and it's your spouse?

This is pretty much what happened to Pilate.

Instead of a phone call, he gets a note from his wife.

So he stops the meeting right in the middle of this madness.

Many people believe that this dream was from God. *Himself*

Let me ask you this: *Why would God the Father cause a dream to prevent Jesus from accomplishing His mission?*

If Pilate listens to his wife, Jesus is not lifted up, He doesn't die on a tree and is not cursed like OT Scripture says.

*Jesus*  
He Himself prophesied death by crucifixion.

So if Jesus is not crucified—that would make him a liar and false prophet.

No dear friends, this dream was not from God.

It was either a dream based on her own fear of the situation or demonically inspired.

Yes, she knew who Jesus was. Everybody did.

She knew about Jesus coming into Jerusalem days before and the crowds worshipping Him as Hosanna.

She knew that the Pilate sent out 600 soldiers to arrest Jesus the night before. So it's possible that her dream was fear-induced.

She wanted to protect her husband—she wasn't trying to save Jesus from anything.

Secondly, it's also a very good possibility that her dream was demonically induced.

Satan, does not want Jesus to die on this Passover via crucifixion. He wants Jesus to die any other way.

Please remember that Satan is the <sup>world's best</sup> great deceiver.

And At Any other time.

And to be a great deceiver, you must also be the world's best theologian.

So it's during this break in the action where we see the Sanhedrin really go to work...

**Mark 15:11**— But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead.

We said earlier, that Pilate is not dumb.

The religious leaders are not dumb either.

They see what Pilate is doing with Barabbas, and they won't back down.

They work the crowd into a frenzy. Full blown

Why do you think it was easy for the religious leaders to convince the crowd to vote for Barabbas and not Jesus?

Remember, Barabbas is front-page news.

He possibly, was trying to free Israel from Roman rule.

It was easy for the crowd to vote for Barabbas, because Barabbas is a man of action—Jesus is not.

Barabbas was probably a political activist—Jesus was a political pacifist.

In the crowd's twisted thinking—Barabbas is a national patriot.

It's Jesus Barabbas who is the true Israelite.

Which meant that he seemed like Robin Hood.

Barabbas may have been somewhat of a hero to many in Israel.

His zeal and leadership appealed to the crowd.

the christ  
Jesus, however, had disappointed them with His inaction on political issues.

Barabbas seems more like a Messiah than Jesus. The Christ.

The people chose lawlessness instead of righteousness, violence instead of love, ~~war~~ instead of peace.

They think good is evil and evil is good. (That's a sermon for a different day)

Yes, indeed, at this moment, Barabbas seems much more logical to be Israel's Messiah.



No true Messiah would endure all this abuse and humiliation like Jesus is at this moment.

At the end of the day, Israel did not want the true Son of the Heavenly Father.

*They didn't want Jesus the Anointed one.*

They wanted a different Jesus.

They wanted a son of an earthly father.

They wanted a son of Adam.

As Christ told the Pharisees in Matthew 23:15, they want a son of hell. *-WOW.*

They chose a Jesus that they could live with.

They chose a Jesus that they could understand.

They chose a Jesus who would not make them feel guilty about their sin.

They chose a Jesus who did not tell them to repent because the Kingdom of God is near.

Ultimately, they chose the Jesus of this world.

A Jesus who looks and acts and talks just like us.

*And they chose Jesus Barabbas because they were disappointed w/ Jesus the Christ.*

Pause...

When was the last time you were disappointed with God?

How long have you been praying and waiting — waiting and praying.

You just knew that God would show up in a certain way to solve your problem...and He didn't.

And if that's not painful enough... He continues to not show up on your timeframe, and in the ways, you thought He would.

~~And because you have all this time on your hands...~~ you start to think your situation through logically.

Instead of reading God's Word, you choose to read man's opinion—A NY Times best seller, no doubt.

Instead of seeking the Lord's face through prayer—it's much easier to seek man's opinion.

You start to change your thoughts and your plans.

You start to take things into your own hands.

And before you know it, you're asking for Jesus Barabbas to make things happen, because Jesus the Christ is taking too long.

All that to say...Pilate was speechless by the crowd's response in asking for Barabbas.

His plan misfires, and now the crowd begins to rage against Pilate.

Pilate can't believe the anger and the bitter hostility of the crowd.

**+** *Mark 15:12*— Pilate asked them again, "Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews?"

Verse 12 is one of the most important questions you too will answer.

Will you believe that Jesus is the Christ?

Or will you:

- Mock Him like the Sanhedrin.
- Laugh at Him like the Roman soldiers.
- Believe and then later betray him like Judas. *because you're not getting your way.*
- Ignore Him like King Herod
- Judge Him like Pontius Pilate.

Your answer—the world's answer—is very interesting, because in God's providence, it's not Jesus who on trial—

It's all of us. *We're the ones on trial - that's what this life is for. We have to decide what we're going to do w/ Jesus the Christ.*  
~~Again— Pilate is still trying to bring some sort of justice to this crazed mob in front of him.~~

**Mark 15:13**— Again they shouted, "Crucify him!"

Not only do they choose Jesus Barabbas over Jesus the Christ.

Now they choose crucifixion ~~for Jesus.~~

The irony continues—none of this makes any sense.

Jesus the Christ, [who had no interest in causing riots or social rebellions] will be crucified between two rebels.

Jesus Barabbas, [on the other hand], who is guilty of murder, will go free because Jesus the Christ has literally taken his place on the cross.

Wow, Doesn't this sound familiar?



**KEYPOINT 1:**

*What Jesus The Christ did for Jesus Barabbas physically— is the same thing he did for us spiritually.*

When we talk about Christ being the substitute—substitutionary atonement—this is a visible picture of what has taken place.

Jesus physically took Barabbas' place on the cross.

In other words, Barabbas represents <sup>every child of God who calls on the name of Jesus.</sup> all of us.

**Mark 15:14**— *Pilate said to them, "Why? What has he done wrong?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"*

When Pilate asks, "Why?" The Jews only shout louder.

<sup>Pilate</sup> He was shouted down.

The only answer Pilate was going to hear from the crowd was a louder demand for the crucifixion of Jesus The Christ.

At this point, the crowd had reached a stage where they were beyond reason.

No death for <sup>Christ</sup> Jesus but crucifixion would satisfy them.

The change of attitude in the Jewish people in just a few days is so tragic.

Five days prior, On Sunday, the crowds are shouting, "Hosanna!" and placing palm branches in Jesus's path (11:8–10), and on Friday, they are shouting, "Crucify him!" (15:12–14).

**Mark 15:15**— *Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.*

We're learning how Pilate satisfied the crowd by saving his own skin—he gave them exactly what they wanted.

~~I can't help but think that we've all done the same thing as the Church today.~~

~~I pray that changes for many of us this week.~~

Pilate realizes that he has a full-blown riot on his hands if he doesn't.

And he is going to avoid a riot at all costs.

*In other words,*

Pilate wants to satisfy the crowd at the cost of justice.

Interestingly, this event occurred over 2,000 years ago, yet a mob's mentality hasn't changed.

Crowds are fickle, aren't they?

The mob mindset will change at a moment's notice.

We've all seen the riots over the past year.

Crowds don't make any sense in their decision-making because they don't have any sense.

**Mark 15:15**— ~~Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them;~~ and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Let me stop and pause here for a second.

This is a personal aside from me—disclaimer as we move forward.

We now move into the part of the narrative where Jesus is flogged/scourged and crucified.

I love teaching you about Jesus.

But I don't like teaching this part of the Gospel.

Because I can't stand the thought of watching what happens to Jesus happen.

Imagine what you would do if someone were to lay a hand on your spouse or your child or on someone you love the most in this world.

How much more for Jesus, your Savior?

I'm going to teach the text—the rest of Chapter 15 as I usually do.

But in doing so, I pray that this part of the narrative—especially, is not simply an exercise in head knowledge.

I pray that this teaching reaches our hearts and leads us to repentance.

*That we will stop doing what we've always done - hate sin - love righteousness*

So Pilate had Jesus flogged or scourged.

**Flogging/Scourging**—Punishment by repeated lashes or blows of a whip or rod.

The OT recognized flogging as a form of punishment (Deut. 25:1–3).

In the Jewish version of flogging, there was a set limit on the number of times you could beat someone.

The limit was 40.

Women were exempt from being flogged or even witnessing a flogging.



Children were not flogged; they were disciplined with rods (Prov. 23:13–14).

Flogging was so grotesque that it even horrified the Emperor Domitian. (Doe-meshin)

Jesus warned His disciples that they would face flogging (Matt. 10:17).

In the book of Acts, the apostles were flogged by the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:40).

Before Paul was converted, he was known as Saul, and he had believers flogged when he was persecuting the church. (Acts 22:19–20).

The Apostle Paul himself, received the “forty lashes minus one” at the hands of the Jews five times (2 Cor. 11:24).

Paul was also beaten with rods three times (11:25).

As you may know, one of the purposes of flogging for a capital punishment case was to shorten the duration of crucifixion.

Many times, the flogging was so brutal that prisoners died before reaching the cross.

So how is it that the apostle Paul was flogged five times and didn't die?

There are two versions—the Jewish and the Roman version.

The Jewish version of the scourge—the actual weapon—was had a wood handle.

It had short leather lashes connected to it.

For the Jews, the only part of the body beaten was the victims' back.

The whipping was excruciating but never deadly—and that's why Paul endured the flogging by the Jews and survived every time. (2 Cor. 11:24).

However, Jesus was flogged by the Romans, not the Jews.

The Romans did not have a limit to the number of blows a person could be struck.

Additionally, the Roman version of the scourge was also different.

It had longer leather lashes that would wrap around the whole body—not just the back.

At the end of each lash was a piece of metal, nail, glass, sharp lamb bone, or even jagged metal balls.

It was called a scorpion.

Needless to say, the Romans were perfecters of pain.

To flog Jesus, the Romans first stripped down him naked.

They then tied his hands above his head to a post or forced him to bend over a low pole.

Usually, two soldiers, one on each side of the victim, did the flogging because of the amount of work and energy it took to carry out this punishment.

It only took a few lashes of the Roman scourge to where the victim's skin has torn away and the muscle was exposed.

All that to say this...  
Jesus' entire body was impacted: the front, back, sides, and face.

Many paintings of Jesus' crucifixion don't reveal the true horror of His flogging.

Often these paintings reveal Jesus' face intact except for the blood on His brow from the crown of thorns.

But that's not accurate—at all.

In reality, His face would have been a bloody pulpy mass.

By the time a Roman flogging was over, even the family members no longer recognized the victim.

Jesus fulfilled prophecy that day with His Roman flogging.

**+** *Isaiah 52:14*—Just as many were appalled at you—  
his appearance was so disfigured  
that he did not look like a man,  
and his form did not resemble a human being—

**+** PREACH

If you've never seen the movie "The Passion of the Christ," it's important that you do watch it in its entirety.

Maybe many of us should probably rewatch every couple of years to give a visual picture of what takes place in our text. *TODAY*.

Here's the reason—because we are so disconnected from the OT sacrificial system.

For many of us, we read through the OT too quickly, especially when it comes to the books of Numbers and Leviticus.

Do those pages still stick together in your Bible?



Why? Because we don't want to read the intricate details of all the different sacrifices.

We don't want to hear about various animals being slaughtered for our sin.

We think it's too barbaric.

We falsely believe that somehow— we today are better than those OT Saints who had to appease the wrath of God in that way.

We miss the point that one of the many reasons God set up the OT sacrificial system was to keep us from sinning.

For us to kill a perfectly good animal doesn't seem right.

One of the many purpose of the sacrificial system was for God to reveal the cost to the perfect animal.

God wanted us to feel the pain of the animal as he suffered for our sin.

God wants us to see the blood as the animal dies.

God wants us to smell the blood and to see how it stains our hands and clothes visibly.

Lastly, God wants us to see— how much our sin cost Him.

God the Father didn't have to send God the Son to save the souls of mankind from hell.

But He did.

And that's why we celebrate this day today as... Good Friday.

Why is it Good?

**John 3:16**— For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

**John 3:17**— For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Dear friends, there are a lot of people who want Jesus Barabbas.

The world is finding out that a worldly savior ultimately doesn't save.

They will only be disappointed in man-made gods time and time again.

And yet, you, dear friend, have the one true Living God with you.

Now go share Jesus The Christ with the Verde Valley—and then watch what He does with your obedience to the truth and to the Great Commission.

### **BENEDICTION**

<sup>24</sup> *“May the Lord bless you and protect you;*

<sup>25</sup> *may the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;*

<sup>26</sup> *may the Lord look with favor on you  
and give you peace.” ’*

(Numbers 6:24)

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