

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#32: Mark 15:1-32: Crucifixion of Jesus

Intro: "Alexamenos worships his god!"

I. The Cowardice of Pilate (v.1-15)

A. Pilate was the Roman Governor of Judea

- Since Israel was "occupied" by the Romans, there were regional Roman governors
- Israel had no power to put someone to death; the Romans had to do it
- Pilate was known for being cruel, corrupt and vicious

B. Pilate was Most Concerned about His Own Power

- Pilate sees that Jesus is innocent
 - Even though the Jews accuse Jesus, Pilate sees it is out of "envy" (v.10)
 - Pilate asks: "What evil has he [Jesus] done?"
- But rather than upholding justice, Pilate decides to placate the crowds
 - Pilate normally released one prisoner each year at the festival, as a concession to the people
 - He should have released Jesus because he's innocent, but instead released a *guilty* person, Barabbas, to please the crowd and preserve his own power.
- The irony of releasing Barabbas
 - Jesus was accused of insurrection (but wasn't one); Barabbas was an actual insurrectionist! Pilate would rather release an insurrectionist than an innocent man...
 - **This is a picture of Christ's substitutionary work: An innocent man is condemned so a guilty man can go free

**Key Take Aways:

- Preserving power often motivates injustices in our world
- Ever experienced injustice? Jesus experienced the greatest injustice imaginable
- Don't forget: We are Barabbas! We are the guilty ones set free by the work of Jesus

II. The Hard-Heartedness of the Chief Priests and Crowds (v.6-15)

A. Remember all the Reasons the People Had to Favor Jesus

- He had done countless miracles throughout his ministry
- He was known for his acts of kindness and compassion
- He clearly was the Messiah promised by God (born in Bethlehem, of the seed of David)

B. Yet the Chief Priests and the Crowds Wanted Him Dead

- They wanted Jesus dead so much, they effectively stirred up the mob to have him crucified. "They shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!'" (v.14)

- What can explain this level of bloodlust in what are supposed to be God’s chosen people Israel?
 - It shows the propensity of the human heart towards great wickedness
 - It reminds us “Not all Israel is Israel” (many of these people were unconverted)
 - It reveals how humans respond when confronted over their sin and rebellion—rather than repent, we want to kill the person saying these things. We turn the tables and make the problem be about the one confronting the sin than about the sin itself

III. The Suffering of Jesus (v.16-32)

A. The Scourging (v. 15)

- Romans would whip their prisoners severely, with a Roman Flagrum (three leather straps with pieces of bone, metal and stone on the ends)
- Some prisoners would die just from a scourging alone

B. The Mocking and Beating (v.16-20)

- They dressed up Jesus as a “King”: Purple clothes and a crown of thorns
- **Remember that crucifixion was more about humiliation than pain

C. The Crucifixion Itself (v.21-32)

- Jesus is already physically spent and can’t carry his cross, so Simon of Cyrene must do it
- The “place of the skull” would have been just outside the wall of the city so that people passing by could all see it
- Crucifixion ultimately killed a person slowly by a combination of dehydration (which is why they offer Jesus drink), blood loss, and ultimately asphyxiation.

**Key Applications:

- The passage is filled with the theme of Jesus as “King” (v.17-18; 26, 32). They were more correct than they realized. He really was the King of the Jews!
- The depth of Jesus’ suffering reminds us of how serious our sin really is
- The depth of Jesus’s suffering also reminds us of how much he must love us!

Discussion Groups

1. Take a moment to reflect on a time when you feel injustice was done to you. How did it make you feel? How can the injustice of Jesus’s trial help us endure our own injustices in life?
2. What do you learn about your own heart by watching the hard-heartedness of the crowd? What are some ways to keep our hearts soft towards God?
3. What are some of the details of Jesus’s suffering and crucifixion that really stand out to you? Why is it important that we really grapple with the depth of Christ’s suffering?