

I. Introduction

A. Culture of threat

1. We live in a culture of constant threat (social media, community app).
2. We tend to live from a perspective of fighting or running from those threats (political, social, economic, moral, health, information, etc).

B. Reframe: The Gospel is the most threatening thing to western culture, and it will cost me severely if I'm going to be true to the Gospel of Jesus.

1. The good news about what's wrong with us - offensive, unacceptable, and oppressive.
2. Jesus' call to and definition of discipleship

\*If you are not threatened by Jesus and the Gospel, then you probably aren't actually taking Him seriously. (If we believe in Hell, then why do we spend 90% or more of our time with Christians? Do we really think merely legislating morality will draw all people to Jesus?)

\*In Mark 15, there is a shift in how Jesus is addressed, and it is critical to our life as disciples.

II. King of the Jews

A. The problem of Jesus (v 1)

1. All the groups around Jesus were threatened by His Kingdom message and ministry.
  - a. Pharisees: "If we can get people to behave, we could bring in the kingdom of God." The Kingdom would show up when enough people obeyed the Law, which is why they turned 10 into 613. Jesus said that the Kingdom was already here.
  - b. Sadducees: Far more secular. They ran the Temple, the establishment. Pharisees taught in the synagogues in the villages, but the Sadducees were at headquarters. Cut a deal with Rome and got to keep their positions and systems as long as Rome was happy. Jesus announces a new Kingdom, riding in on a donkey with Messianic tones, threatening the fragile peace with Rome.
  - c. Rome: Different from the others because Rome was about its own kingdom, not the Kingdom of God. Any other kingdom was unacceptable.

\*The Pharisees were about morality producing righteousness, the Sadducees were about holding on to the system that made them great, and Rome was about not being told by anyone else what to do.

2. Whether they realized it or not, all these groups wanted Jesus gone because the Kingdom of God He represented threatened to change everything.

B. The Roman trial (vs 2-15)

1. The big shift in Mark: from Christ to King
  - a. A King is a threat to anyone who has or wants authority or autonomy, while a Savior is only relevant to those who see themselves in need (poor in spirit).
  - b. Makes narrative sense, Christ as King is a much bigger issue for Rome than Christ as Messiah
  - c. But, for Mark, the Kingship of Jesus becomes the focal theme for the rest of the Gospel. Six times in our passage today (v2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32)

\*These inappropriate charges and mocking of Jesus' title, on the surface, seem to reveal his defeat. Yet, Jesus does enter into His true Kingship, paradoxically, enthroned on a cross. If there's a joke here, it's on them.

2. The conversation

- a. Pilate's suspicion of the priests
- b. Had Jesus claimed innocence, He likely would have swayed Pilate.

\*But Jesus chooses not to take the opportunity to influence to His advantage. Instead He chose self-denial and taking up His cross.

\*Jesus, it seems, has already said all that needs to be said (something for us to think about - to consider less words and only use the important ones. Does everyone who "follows" me need to know what I think?)

3. The concession

- a. Barabbas the freedom fighter vs Jesus the pacifist
- b. Barabbas would have been known in Jerusalem as a patriot

4. The crucifixion

- a. Not a Jewish method, but acceptable because it gets rid of Jesus
- b. Question: What does human nature do when faced with a king? Crucify.

C. The sentence carried out (vs 16-32)

1. The true mission of Jesus - King, replacer of the Temple, and Savior.
2. Simon taking up cross, not necessarily a literal becoming Jesus' disciple (although we know later he did become a follower), but a striking illustration of the costly identification with the suffering Messiah which Jesus earlier predicted and called for.

III. Crucify or submit?

A. Kings and kingdoms

1. Jesus disarmed, made spectacles of, and triumphed over the spiritual powers at the cross. (Col 2:15)
2. Humanity has new life, a life never subject to eternal separation and death through Jesus at the cross.

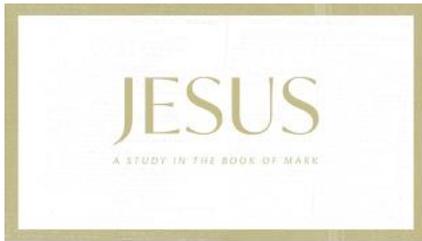
\*Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but ...

B. The question: With so much church-saturation, Bible-reading, resources, and prayer, how do we constantly fail to live in victory over sin and lack the love and joy of the Lord?

1. John Piper was asked once what causes him to question the veracity of Scripture. He responded with something like, "It's that the Bible constantly talks about the transformative work of the Spirit and yet when I look around at the church or even my own life, I don't see that kind of radical transformation that empowers us to obey."
2. Andrew Murray, "One of the most important answers to this (question), undoubtedly, is that we do not know what it is to die to ourselves and to the world."

\*Self-denial and taking up our cross are things we do not know how to or do not want to do in order to become disciples on Jesus' terms.

C. Steve Trevino



## MARK 15:1-32

### KING OF THE JEWS

MARCH 28, 2021 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



**\* If you have not done so yet, take the time to watch the movie, "Sheep Among Wolves" on YouTube before you meet with your home group. You can find it by searching for Sheep Among Wolves volume 2 (watch the video that says "official feature film")**

#### GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

**1** Think about stories you have recently heard in the news, or things that have happened in your own life. What is one story that has seemed unfair to you, and why?

**2** What things do we base our understanding of fairness on? Why is fairness something we value?

Sometimes we look at the suffering in the world around us and wonder where the justice is. From a very early age, we learn that life is not fair. However, we also believe in a God of justice, so we want Him to deal with the unjust circumstances we see around us. Today we are going to look at a man who encountered Jesus in the hour of his own execution as he received the justice society said he deserved for his crimes. Even in that moment, this criminal understood something no one else did—Jesus had done nothing wrong but was paying the penalty for man's sin (including the criminal) before God by dying on the cross. This story contradicts our human understanding of fairness and reminds us that Jesus has joined us in our condemnation in order to offer us salvation, something none of us deserve.

#### QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

#### DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

**1** Someone read **Mark 15:1-15** in their Bible.

**What are some of the ways Pilate's questioning of Jesus was different than the earlier questioning?**

**Does the crowd's reaction surprise you? Why or why not?**

**Do you resonate more with the story of Peter or Barabbas? Why?**

*A man was clearly and rightfully condemned. Another innocent man took his place while he went free. The story of Barabbas is more than just another tragic detail in the story of Jesus' crucifixion; it's our story. Jesus courageously stood in our place, and because He was punished, we get to live lives of freedom.*

**2** Someone read **Mark 15:16-20** in their Bible.

**Why is it tempting to pass judgment on the crowd? What should be our reaction when we read these verses?**

*The crowd evidently knew the rumor circulating about Jesus - that He was the long awaited King, the Messiah, come to save His people. But they, along with those even closest to Jesus, misunderstood the nature of His kingship and kingdom. They mockingly dressed and hailed Him as King; ironically, Jesus was the true King, not just of Israel but of the universe.*

**What are some ways we might, with our actions, mock the kingship of Jesus?**

**3** Someone read **Mark 15:21-32** in their Bible.

Take a look at Psalm 69:21; Psalm 22:18; and Isaiah 53:12. Where do you see these prophecies being fulfilled in Mark's account of the crucifixion?

Why is it important that Mark included these details? What does doing so affirm about the identity of Jesus? What does it teach us about the nature of Scripture?

What was Jesus really talking about when He claimed to be able to destroy the temple and raise it again in three days? How does this fact point to the centrality of Jesus in all things?

*These verses are full of Old Testament prophecies that remind us that the crucifixion of Jesus didn't take either Him or the Father by surprise; it was planned long ago. What seemed like a situation that escalated to being out of control was really the centerpiece of God's design.*

#### LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1 How does this text bring clarity when you think both about the identity of Jesus and who we are without Him?

2 Matt has stated a number of times that to be Jesus' disciple means dying to ourselves and taking up our cross daily. How has viewing the film, *Sheep Among Wolves*, and hearing from Steve Trevino on Sunday shifted your thinking on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

3 Matt closed out the message by asking this question: If what we talked about on Sunday is true, what do you need to bury that is keeping you from Jesus being King in your life? Take some time to go around the group and share what individuals need to bury.

- Plan on coming back next week to your group and sharing if you took that step and what it is that you buried.

Also be ready to share what you need from this group to help you keep it buried in order to walk in closer obedience to Jesus as your King.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

#### NEXT WEEK: EASTER SUNDAY!

Read **MARK 16:1-8** before Sunday and your next home group gathering. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

#### PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

#### TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

**PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME:** Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

**PRAY MORE THAN ONCE:** If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

**KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE:** Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

### ***How to Use this Discussion Guide***

*This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.*

*With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!*

**Visit [cpmodesto.org/groupleaders](http://cpmodesto.org/groupleaders) to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit [cpmodesto.org/homegroups](http://cpmodesto.org/homegroups) and use the Home Group Finder!**

## **COMMENTARY**

### **MARK 15:1-32**

**15:1.** This verse is often seen as a third Jewish trial in which the whole Sanhedrin legalized their verdict in the morning (cp. Lk 22:66-71). Decisions reached at night were not binding. Being handed... over (Gk paradidomi) is repeatedly emphasized in this chapter (vv. 1,10,15) and throughout Mark. Pilate was a Roman official among the Jews from a.d. 26-36.

**15:2.** Pilate focused on whether Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews. This is the first use of this title in Mark's Gospel, but Pilate used it several times (vv. 2,9,12,26; cp. v. 32).

**15:3-5.** Pilate's question involves a double negative. It is matched by Mark's double negative that Jesus did not answer anything. Pilate was amazed at Jesus' silence because he could free Him if His answers were satisfactory.

**15:6.** Mark is silent about Pilate's attempt to extricate himself from the situation by sending Jesus to Herod Antipas (cp. Lk 23:5-12), the same Herod as in Mk 6:14-29. Here, in 15:6-15, Pilate tried another maneuver involving a custom to release for the people a prisoner. This custom is not documented outside the NT and was apparently done only at the Passover festival (Jn 18:39).

**15:7.** The rebels who were in prison with Barabbas probably included the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus. Mark gave no other details about the rebellion, which may indicate that his readers were familiar with it and thus did not need him to spell it out.

**15:8-9.** The crowd, coached by Jesus' enemies, asked Pilate to follow his custom of releasing a prisoner. Pilate instinctively offered them the King of the Jews (vv. 2,9,12,26). Thus Pilate unknowingly confessed Jesus' true status.

**15:10.** Pilate recognized that envy was why the chief priests wanted Jesus dead.

**15:11-12.** Again the chief priests (vv. 1,3,10) manipulated the course of events. "Stirred up" suggests they incited the crowd to riot. Ironically, the crowd chose Barabbas ("son of the father") over Jesus, the true Son of the Father.

**15:13.** This is Mark's first reference to crucifixion. None of Jesus' death predictions specifically mentioned crucifixion, though He had hinted at it (8:34).

**15:15.** Willing to gratify the crowd at the cost of justice, Pilate handed Jesus over.

**15:16.** "Company" reflects the Greek equivalent of the Latin "cohort," which totaled 600 soldiers. Mark did not use "company" in its technical sense, but he meant to indicate that a large group of soldiers mocked Jesus.

**15:17.** The soldiers used makeshift substitutes for the robe... crown, and scepter of a king. Purple was a royal color.

**15:18.** "Hail, King of the Jews" was a mocking corruption of the greeting, "Hail, Caesar."

**15:19.** The verbs in this verse are in the imperfect tense, indicating repeated action. They beat the King of the Jews on the head with His own scepter (reed) to indicate, as they believed, the weakness of His reign.

**15:20.** The phrase "led Him out to crucify Him" refers to the centurion and the execution squad, not to the company of soldiers.

**15:21.** Roman soldiers had the right to press citizens of subject nations into compulsory service (Mt 5:41), so they forced Simon to carry Jesus' cross. Simon was a Jewish Cyrenian from the north coast of Africa. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, indicating that readers in Rome probably knew these men (Rm 16:13). Simon apparently became a Christian due to this experience.

**15:22.** "Golgotha" is Aramaic for Skull Place. The traditional site of the crucifixion is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located outside the city walls (Lv 24:14; Num 15:35-36; Heb 13:12).

**15:23.** Wine mixed with myrrh was a primitive narcotic. The offer fulfilled Ps 69:21.

**15:24.** "They crucified Him" is all Mark wrote about the main event of the Gospel. The crucifixion took place on Friday, now known as Good Friday. That the four soldiers of the execution squad divided His clothes and cast lots for them fulfilled Ps 22:18 (cp. Jn 19:23-24).

**15:25.** "Nine in the morning" is literally "the third hour." Jews reckoned time of the daylight from sunrise.

**15:26.** The charge on which a person was condemned was often written on a placard and hung around his neck. In Jesus' case, it was nailed to His cross (Jn 19:19). All four Gospels record the words differently (cp. Mt 27:37; Lk 23:38; Jn 19:19), possibly because the inscription was trilingual (Jn 19:20). THE KING OF THE JEWS ironically proclaimed the truth about Jesus.

**15:27.** "Criminals" is the word used to describe Barabbas in Jn 18:40 (cp. Mk 14:48). Jesus' crucifixion between "criminals" was meant as a parody of His kingship (as if He had attendants on either side) but by God's design the whole event really was His royal enthronement. The phrase one on His right and one on His left recalls the request of James and John (John 10:37,40).

**15:29-30.** "Insults" means "blasphemies." Those who passed by were thus guilty of the very thing for which the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus (14:64). The bystanders' insults and shaking of their heads fulfilled Ps 22:7 and Lam 2:15.

**15:31.** Once again the chief priests led the mockery of Jesus. Their derision along with that of the scribes went to the heart of Jesus' mission: To save others, Jesus refused to save Himself (10:45).

**15:32.** The religious leaders' mockery recalls the second charge Jesus faced before the Sanhedrin (14:61). Mark reported that the two crucified with Jesus also taunted Him. One of them repented (Lk 23:39-43).