

The Rejected King

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 23. Luke 23. If you are new or visiting, welcome. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here.

And I welcome you. And if there's an opportunity for us to connect, I would love that opportunity.

This morning, as Dave has indicated, we're in the Passion Week.

And to begin, I think it's fair to say that the world knows a lot about us, whether you like it or not.

I don't know about you, but I don't know how you manage the tremendous amount of exposure we have to the world. And the world has to us through social media.

If you ever notice, whether it's Instagram or X, formerly known as Twitter or Facebook, they always seem to have the right posts for us, right? The things that garner our interest.

[1 : 06] And what's interesting is that when we look, we always see certain subjects that are interesting to us. There are essentially five types of subjects that usually always follow me on social media, and I follow them.

One, I think it would be as no surprise, would be theology, right? There's always different theological discussions kind of covering. Number two would be politics. I'm always interested in politics, what's going on.

The third one is baseball, of course. I always want to know what's going on in the world of baseball. And of course, I have 100 opinions about what goes on in the world of baseball. The fourth one you may or may not know is dogs.

I love dogs. There's always a wonderful story about somebody rescuing a dog, and it was trapped, and it never left this person's leash in the backyard.

And they go in, and they rescue the dog, and the next thing you know, it's running free in the mountains of Colorado, like every dog should be doing, right? There's always these nice, warm-your-heart stories. But there's a fifth subject that shows up, and those are human interest stories that tend, like how they built the pyramids or some of those kind of things, great architectural things that man has done.

[2 : 25] But within those, they show these personal stories of people who've overcome great and challenging hardships. And, you know, they start off with how rough it was, and then they've been able to overcome.

And some of them are so powerful, you want to send a quick message to say,atta boy,atta girl, well done, right? But then, there's some of these stories which are absolutely heartbreaking.

Are any of you ever familiar with the Innocence Project at all? All right. There's actually a Netflix documentary about the Innocence Project, and there's actually an arm of them in Canada, and once a while I get an email or a text about them.

But it's a story of wrongly convicted men and women who have been wrongly found guilty in the courts of the land. And it just goes through how these people pursue justice for them.

And the stories, although rewarding at the end when they're free, you do read these stories where some people spent more than half their life incarcerated.

[3 : 41] They've lost their families. They've lost years upon years, if not decades, of their lives. And it's gruesome.

You know, wrong DNA testing, false witnesses' statements. One of the things that always seems to show up in the stories is that led the police down the line to accuse this person is, they just looked like an untrustworthy guy.

Or they just had this suspicious look to them. And it's landed some people to be wrongly convicted, as I said, in jail.

And what happens is when we read these stories, there is something in us that cries out, that's not right. That's not justice. How in the world can we make up for that mistake?

Often they give them millions of dollars. But how can you quantify years of not being with your wife or your husband or your kids over these stories?

[4 : 58] The fact of the matter is, as we go into this Passion Week, what happened with Jesus Christ is far worse than anything that ever happened to man. In fact, the trial of Jesus Christ was the worst, most deliberate act of injustice in human history.

It was rigged from the start. It was rigged by the religious leaders, the ones who were meant to uphold righteousness and justice for the people of faith and the faith community.

The Roman governor at that time caved under the pressure of the mob. The crowd screamed like and became a mob.

And the sinless Son of God was condemned. And ultimately in our place. Here's the thing.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ or this trial that we're going to look at this morning, I want you to understand that it was not an accident. It wasn't the result of complete chaos.

[6 : 18] It was actually the result of a choice. The fact of the matter is, Pilate chose to surrender truth to keep his job.

And we're going to cover that. The people chose a murderer named Barabbas over their own Messiah. And if you were here with us last week, the crowd shouted with glee and joy that their king had entered through the gates of Jerusalem.

And we're going to see that the king of glory chose to remain silent so that you and I could be free.

This morning, we're not here to remember a story. But I want you to envision with me that we are now in a courtroom. And do not ever confuse the Gospels as some story of what happened.

It's actually a drama. There is a drama. There's a series of events that are going on that fills this story that is supposed to engage our emotions, our thoughts of righteousness, and our thoughts of justice.

[7 : 50] And my hope at the end is that you will be able to answer this question. What will you do with Jesus? What will you do with Jesus?

Because in this trial, you're not just reading it, you're a spectator. I'm going to show that you are actually in the story.

That this story is about you as much as the first century Jews that were there on that day when Jesus was declared guilty and offered up to be the sacrifice for us.

So this morning, I want to look at four separate scenes of the most unjust trial in the history of man.

And before I go any further, I want to pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, I pray that at the end of this story, as much as it will move us and it will engage our emotions, that we, in the end, would be moved to do something with you, to understand you, to understand your mission.

I pray that it has the intended consequences that Luke first wrote about it. He wrote this gospel to this man named Theophilus so that he might believe in the risen Christ.

[9 : 28] Father, I pray for the same here. I pray for clarity of words and clarity of understanding of our hearts and our minds as we look at this story. Father, we ask these things in your name.

Amen. I want to start with the accusation that is made against accusation. First point is, the king stands accused.

Now, I need to set the scene for you. It is early Friday morning. The city of Jerusalem is still sleeping, unaware that the greatest injustice in history is unfolding in the secret corners of their city. The fact is, Jesus did not endure one trial. He endured two trials on this day. Let's begin in verse 66.

It says, When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes, and they led them away to their council.

[10 : 31] This group of people is known as the Sanhedrin. They are the religious elite. They are the ones that look over the religious affairs of the city. These are the people, the men, that are supposed to uphold justice, and they are the ones that are to guard the truth.

Yet, when they performed their cross-examination in court of Jesus, when they judged them, they actually violate every rule of their own legal system.

One of them, which they were not supposed to have a trial at night. They did. They're not supposed to have any capital verdicts, death verdicts, during the feast holidays.

They did. And they were also supposed to find witnesses to incriminate Jesus Christ, which they could not find. They broke the rules, and they did not care.

Because they went into this trial not seeking truth, but seeking blood. They asked Jesus, point blank, are you the Christ?

[11:46] Jesus responds with authority, if I tell you, you will not believe. But from now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

what Jesus claims here is that he's actually pulling language from the prophet Daniel. Daniel 17 to 13, which is a key prophetic text about the Messiah's exaltation.

Let me read it for you. It should be behind me here. It says, And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom.

They're asking the question, are you the Messiah? And Jesus is saying, I'm not just the Messiah. I'm the exalted one. I'm going to sit at the right hand of power.

I will reign. I will have dominion. I will have power. And I am the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. On that day, on that Friday, that was all they needed.

[13:02] They heard what he said. He claimed to be the Messiah, and now they want him dead. But here's the thing.

They're under Roman law, not Jewish law. They can declare Jesus a blasphemer all they want, which under a Jewish law means death, but they don't control the land.

They don't have the authority to carry out the death sentence that they want Jesus to have. So for that, they need to co-opt Rome.

Let's look at Luke 23, 1 in your text, please. It says, Then the whole company of them, that is the Sanhedrin, the religious rulers, those who had tried him earlier that morning, and brought Jesus before Pilate, and they began to accuse him, saying, Now what I want you to notice is in verse 2, is they're not going to accuse him of being a blasphemer because the fact of the matter is Rome couldn't care less.

So they need to make up some other claim that is going to gather the attention of the Roman rulers. So they need to accuse him of an offense that breaks Roman law, not Jewish law, and therefore get a death sentence.

[14:31] Verse 2, they said, We found this man misleading our nation, forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar.

Okay, that's ratcheting it up a bit. And saying that he himself is Christ a king.

So we have the misleading, the nation forbidding to pay taxes, and the claim to be Christ a king.

Now that last claim, Pilate is forced to pay attention to.

It's Passover. It is the highlight of the Jewish holiday. Jerusalem is overflowing with Jews from all over the land.

It's massive. And in fact, Passover, if you remember, is a remembrance of God rescuing his people from under a foreign power's rule.

[15:34] It is known through history that Rome would increase its troop presence in Jerusalem during this holiday.

Rome is nervous. The whisper of revolt could ignite a rebellion. And to know that Pilate has actually one goal.

His whole role as governor is to keep the flow of gold from the trade routes that went through Israel to keep on going to Rome.

If Rome continues to get the gold to Rome or Pilate, he's safe. And there's nothing better than stopping the flow of trade than a good old rebellion.

The people fighting against Rome. So the fact that this is no small thing. Luke's account of this interaction with Pilate is actually pretty short.

[16:38] I want to read you the interaction from the Gospel of John that reveals there's more to this conversation. It said, so Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, are you king of the Jews?

Jesus answered, do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me? Pilate answered, am I a Jew?

Your own nation and your 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 this

world.

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. Now what Pilate knows, there is not one simple accusation ever made against Jesus and his followers.

[17 : 54] There has never been any violence. So in this moment Pilate understands that Jesus is not a revolutionary. Pilate's response, I find no guilt in this man.

I want you to understand how powerful that statement is. That statement is the official ruling of the Roman governor.

There is no guilt in this man. Jesus is innocent. But as we know the drama is just beginning.

The religious leaders are not backing down. Luke 23 5 says they were urgent saying he he stirs up the people teaching throughout all Judea from Galilee even to this place.

In this moment Pilate hears the word Galilee. Whoa. That's not my jurisdiction. I don't have to make the call.

[19 : 12] In fact Pilate is given his way out. So he sends Jesus to Herod Antipas who happens to be in town and who's in charge of Galilee and Herod as we all know from what Dave read Herod wants to see a miracle from Jesus but all he gets is silence.

Jesus says nothing. So Herod mocks him dresses him in royal robes and sends him back. Now Pilate has even more reason to release him.

Luke 23 15 tells us that he says I find no guilt in this man neither did Herod. So now we have two official statements from the governing ruling authorities stating clearly that Jesus is not guilty.

But this is where political pressure crushes moral clarity. The crowd is stirred up. The religious leaders have riled them into a frenzy.

Pilate as we know offers a compromise. He'll release one prisoner for the Passover feast. And with that we go to the next scene. I read this quote that I want to share with you which encapsulates this beginning accusation.

[20 : 40] Simply says the king is accused, the judge is confused, the mob is amused, and the guilty are excused.

All so that grace could be loosed for us. So we move from the court scene of accusation to where Jesus is now before the court of public opinion where Jesus is rejected by the crowd.

The verdict has been declared. Verses 13, Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people and said to them, you brought me this man as one who has been misleading the people and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him.

In fact, neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.

I will therefore punish and release him. The text reveals to us four times that Pilate says, I find no fault in this man.

[21 : 56] He's passed Jesus to Herod and back and yet here is Jesus standing next to him before the crowd.

He is bloody. He is beaten. He is bruised. Let's be clear.

This is not about guilt anymore. It's about pressure. It's about politics. It's about a crowd that has turned rabid.

Pilate is desperate. He does not want to see rebellion. He knows Jesus is innocent. The gospel of Matthew tells us, states that Pilate knew it was because of envy that they ruled against him.

But he also knows there is this great storm that he faced. If the crowd riots and word gets back to Rome, Pilate could lose more than his post.

[23 : 04] He could lose his life. So he tries for the loophole. Hey, you have a custom that I should release one man at Passover.

Whom should I release? Jesus or Barabbas? We know what the crowd chose on that dark day.

Barabbas, the real rebel, a murderer, a man who was an actual threat to Rome.

This is the man who the crowd chose. In Barabbas, they chose rebellion over righteousness. In Barabbas, they chose violence over virtue.

In Barabbas, they chose a killer over the king of life. But here's the thing, and we may not always see this at first, my friends, but right then we get to see the gospel on full display.

[24 : 12] The guilty go free and the innocent is condemned. And Jesus is accused not because he is guilty, but because we are guilty.

The king of glory stands silent while liars scream. Jesus is slandered, Jesus is mocked, Jesus is whipped, and he's sentenced.

And it's not because Rome found fault, but because heaven found grace. And here's the thing that we need to understand and comprehend about this day.

This was the plan all along. Isaiah 53 7. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

Several hundred years ago, Isaiah the prophet wrote this. Let the weight of this event hit you. Jesus was not a victim here.

[25 : 38] Jesus was the substitute. Barabbas, a known insurrectionist, a rebel, and a murderer. He's everything they accused Jesus of being, but actually is.

The contrast could not be made more clear for us. You see, this is where the mask comes off. The religious leaders incite the crowd.

They've manipulated this moment and what does Pilate do? Bless his soul, he tries again. Verse 20. Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him.

We read the text and we can hear it. That word in Greek means to impale. It doesn't mean just to simply put him to death. It means to put him to death in one of the most painful means possible. It's to hang on a tree and die in slow suffocating agony. This is no kind crowd.

[26 : 54] And Pilate gives in. He washes his hands, towards water for a coward's conscience, and he sends Jesus to the crowd.

Luke would later write in Acts 3, he says, but you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and you killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead.

To this we are witnesses. Notice the statements. You denied the holy and righteous one.

and you killed the author of life. Could there ever be a worse verdict to be read against mankind?

You see, this is not a simple historic outrage for us to witness. this is our human hearts being exposed.

[28 : 09] The crowd in Jerusalem is the crowd of humanity. They are us, we are them. Every time that you and I choose sin over the Savior, we cry, give us Barabbas.

Every time we cling to control and instead of surrender we shout away with him. And every time we delay obedience, ignore conviction, and silence the Spirit, we whisper, crucify him.

Crucify him. Crucify him. You see, Jesus was rejected not just by the rulers, but by the people.

And that rejection was not passive. It was loud, it was deliberate, and it was final. And here's the most amazing thing in this whole story.

Jesus stood there, silent, willing, sovereign, rejected.

[29 : 28] But get this, he is still the king, and he's still sovereignly ruling. Because this was always the plan, that the innocent one would take the guilty's place, so we who reject him can be eternally accepted.

So we've seen that the king is accused, the king is rejected, and now we look at the third scene. It's the innocent king taking the guilty man's place. My friends, this isn't just the turning point in the story, this is the turning point of history.

Jesus stands silent. Barabbas was in chains, one is guilty, one is spotless, one is stained with rebellion, blood, and murder, the other is the embodiment of righteousness, and the crowd has made their choice.

Luke 23, 18, away with this man, release to us, Barabbas. Can you see it? Barabbas is everything they falsely accused Jesus of being.

He was the true seditionist, a killer, a murderer, a man who has taken life, Jesus who freely gave life.

[30 : 53] Now he's set free while the giver of life is condemned. Pilate folds. He surrenders to the pressure and delivers the unthinkable verdict.

The innocent will die, the guilty will walk. And this is a point I don't want you to miss here, my friends. This isn't injustice.

This is substitution. Isaiah 53, 5, 6, but he was pierced for our transgressions and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Barabbas is the picture of us. Barabbas is the stand-in for all who are guilty and know it. The fact is Barabbas deserved punishment. He had no appeal.

He was headed to the cross and Jesus took his place. You see, this just wasn't Barabbas' freedom being secure. This was our freedom being purchased.

[32 : 04] Lest you misunderstand me here, Jesus didn't die for Barabbas. Jesus died instead of Barabbas.

Let that truth sink in. We are Barabbas. We are the rebels. We are the self-serving.

We are the truth deniers. We are the lawbreakers. We are the arrogant. We are the addicted. We are the guilty. And Jesus? Jesus is the innocent king who took the cross with our name etched in wood.

And as I said last Sunday, Jesus did not stumble into these events. He orchestrated them. This wasn't a random outcome.

This wasn't a judicial mistake. This was the plan of redemption unfolding in real time. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5.21 it says, He, God, made him Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

[33 : 27] That is what David earlier referred to as the great exchange. God gave us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and Jesus took on our unrighteousness.

Think about it for a second. Barabbas woke up that morning expecting death. He was guilty. He knew it. Probably heard the crowd outside. He likely heard his name shouted.

And then the door opens. A Roman guard unlocks his change and says, You're free to go. You're free to go.

History doesn't tell us, but I wondered if he hesitated. If he believed this was a game. Are they toying with me? They want to get my expectations up and then just to put me in again, just to drive home that punishment?

Then he asked the jailer, Why? Why? Why me? Why am I going free? And the jailer simply says, Because Jesus of Nazareth is dying in your place.

[34 : 46] This is the gospel. We are the ones who should have been condemned and yet the bloody Nazarene walked the cross we built.

world. See, this moment isn't about who deserved death. We know that's obvious. But it's about the mercy of a king who willingly stood in our place, rejected by the crowd and yet he still goes.

Not simply to save us, but to swap places with us. So we understand that the king is accused, the king is rejected, the king takes the guilty's place.

And my fourth point is the silent king is still sovereign. The silent king is still sovereign. Let's not mistake Jesus' silence for weakness.

Let's not confuse his stillness for surrender. But make no mistake, Jesus is not being swept away by these events. He is steering them.

[35 : 58] Herod mocked him. Pilate washed his hands of him. The priests shouted, the crowd roared, Barabbas walked and threw it all.

Jesus says, almost nothing. Why? Because this was always the plan. Isaiah told us about this in Isaiah 53, 7.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

See, Jesus wasn't cornered. He was carrying a cross that had been ordained since before time began to carry.

Jesus didn't fight the accusation because he wasn't trying to avoid the sentence. He wasn't dodging Jeff. Jesus was marching straight into it.

[37 : 10] God said, he tells Pilate in John 19, 11, he says, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

love. This is my father's plan. This is my father's plan. Jesus revealed to Pilate, you're not in charge. I am. You see, Jesus is not the victim of Rome. Jesus is not the pawn of the Jews. Jesus is not caught in some web of political compromise.

eyes. Jesus is the sovereign son of God, willingly submitting himself to the father's will so that we could be saved.

As one author says, Jesus didn't die because things got out of control. Jesus died because he was in control. The cross wasn't the tragic end of a failed mission.

[38 : 21] It was the climax of a divine rescue plan. For those of you who have been walking with us through our study in the Old Testament, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

He was the solution to their lives that continued to spiral out of control because they were not able to live in righteousness.

Jesus is the silent king who still rules. Here on that day, he is still fulfilling prophecy.

He's still orchestrating every moment so that every sin of yours and mine could be nailed to that cursed tree. Do you feel the weight of it?

this was purposely done for you. Pilate thought he was passing a sentence. The priests thought they were silencing a threat, but God praised the Lord was saving the world.

[39 : 33] And in the middle of that courtroom where injustice reigned, chaos swelled, grace was moving.

So my original question still stands to you this morning. What do you do with a king like this? you can't ignore him.

You can't play games and negotiate with him. You can't shrug him off and say maybe later.

There's only one response to the true king and it's that you bow. You surrender. You say you took my place.

God is sovereign. The question has never been whether Jesus was sovereign that day. The question that remains is God sovereign in your life today.

[40 : 40] Do you continue to radically try to live your life your way? Do you live in ignorance thinking you're doing it your way? not only is he savior but he is lord.

And as king he demands your surrender. Because the king who stood silent before his accusers now speaks life over those who trust him.

and the offer that he spoke back then still stands. It simply says come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Let's pray. Dear holy heavenly father sometimes we do not understand the magnitude of everything that was transpiring in these narratives.

We could spend months looking at every fulfilled prophecy. Every word that is spoken is not by accident. Every instance written by these gospel writers is just dripping with so much theology and so much power.

[42 : 11] But at the end of the day they give us reason to believe that this king who is declared innocent not guilty four times still did not object when he walked towards his final punishment.

and none of this was by accident. We can sit behind this story and cry out what an injustice how horrible if I was there and I had the power I would work against the crowd I would silence them I would call out the hypocrisy of the leaders but the reality is we don't because when we make our choices to follow self when we follow our own way we simply say give us Barabbas when we choose to sin over the Savior when we try to cling to the control of our let's be honest small life we shout away with him and every time we delay obedience ignore conviction and silence the spirit within us we whisper crucify him crucify him if we read this story and think we're above the crowd we've missed the point of this story the only one who was above the crowd was the perfect king of kings and lord of lords who still rules today as much as he ruled then and for that we give him thanks so as I said if anybody here is burdened and heavy laden

I pray that they would indeed come to you Jesus Christ and cast their burdens on you that they would simply say I want the exchange not only do I want your righteousness Jesus I need your righteousness Jesus I need I need you so if there's anyone here who is being moved by the spirit to understand this story I pray that it begins with I need you Jesus I need you because I realize that I am doomed to death my sin has killed my spirit and only you can give life to my spirit I need you Jesus and all of God's people said amen voy voy!