

# Suffered Under Pontius Pilate

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Mark chapter 15. I'm going to begin reading in verse 1. This is the Word of God.

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and the whole council.

And they bound Jesus and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked Him, Are you the king of the Jews?

And He answered Him, You have said so. And the chief priests accused Him of many things. And Pilate asked Him, Have you no answer to make?

[ 1 : 0 5 ]     See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the feast, He used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man named Barabbas.

And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And He answered them, saying, Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?

For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

And Pilate again said to them, Then what shall I do with the man you call the king of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him!

[ 2 : 1 2 ]     And Pilate said to them, Why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, Crucify Him! So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas.

And having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. May God bless the hearing and the preaching of His Word.

Near the end of his firsthand account of the brutality of the Auschwitz concentration camp, an Italian Jew named Primo Levi says, The horror of what happened to Him there has not ceased to visit me.

One of the ways he goes on to describe that the horror continues to visit Him is through a nightmare that continues recurring many years later.

He describes the nightmares often come when he's sitting at the table with family, or with friends, or enjoying the beautiful green countryside. But then he begins to feel a deep anguish and a sense that he's in danger.

[ 3 : 2 8 ]     Then he says, and I quote, Everything collapses and falls apart around me. The scenery, the walls, the people, while the anguish becomes more intense and more precise.

Everything around me is turned to chaos. I am alone. Alone. Describing this nightmare. He says, And now I know what this nightmare means.

And I have always known what it means. I am in the concentration camp once more. And nothing is true outside of there.

All the rest was a dream. My family, my home, nature, nature, in bloom. That dream of peace is over, he says.

And in this nightmare, a well-known voice resounds. A single word. The dawn command at Auschwitz. Feared and expected, get up.

[ 4 : 35 ]     Get up. The prison guard cast a long shadow. The sound of his voice and the fear of what might happen when he gets up and stands up still haunts Mr. Levy many, many years later.

This morning, in our passage, the sun is rising on that first Good Friday. Jesus is no longer a free man.

He's a bound man. Pushed around by thugs. Whether or not our Lord found any sleep the night before, we don't know. But what we do know is that he is now living the nightmare.

He's been delivered over to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, the whole Sanhedrin. The night before was spent in the darkness of an unjust trial before the religious leaders filled with accusations and false testimonies that didn't even agree.

In the end, they condemned him to death for claiming to be God. Some began to spit on him. They covered his face and began to strike him, lending unjust blow after unjust blow upon the back of his head.

[ 5 : 48 ]     But now it's morning. And the religious leaders must do what they plan to do. This day will be an utter nightmare for Jesus. But as we'll see throughout this passage, the deep mystery and Jesus's nightmare for us.

This day is not just about the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders doing what they have planned to do. This day is about Jesus finishing off what God the Father has planned for guilty, hell-deserving sinners like you and me.

In a word, where we're going is watching fear and wonder. The true king is condemned in the place of hell-deserving sinners. Watching fear and wonder, the true king is condemned in the place of hell-deserving sinners.

We're going to break this text out just kind of scene by scene. The first is the trial before Pilate. The trial before Pilate. The opening verses of our passage focus on the trial before Pilate.

The scene shifts from the courtyard where Peter had denied the Lord. If you remember from Taylor's excellent message last week, Peter denied the Lord three times. It shifts back to where the religious leaders are gathered.

[ 7 : 03 ]     They condemned him to death the night before, but now they must meet to decide how they will bring about his death. And so that's what's going on. And if you look with me in verse 1, it says, As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and the whole council.

And so after, if you remember weeks and weeks ago, almost a year ago, after Jesus healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath, the religious leaders immediately held council with the Herodians on how to destroy him.

Well, here we find the same word. And so after years of conspiring, they hold a final consultation one last time to finalize, finalize the details of how to kill Jesus Christ.

They will deliver him to Pilate. That's their plan. They plan to deliver him to Pilate because they do not have authority in Jerusalem to execute capital punishment.

They don't have authority to carry that out. And they're also still worried about the crowds. You've heard a lot about this. There could be as many as 1 million to 2.5 million Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover.

[ 8 : 20 ] And so the religious leaders are preoccupied with the crowd. And they hand him over to Pilate to avoid arousing the crowd. And with kind of a overly dramatic details, Mark tells us in verse 1, they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

And so Jesus is now in the hands of Pilate. He's already been delivered over to Gentiles. Next, Mark moves immediately to the scene, to the trial. Now, that's what we see in verse 2.

Now, Pilate is a Roman governor over Judea. You've probably heard about him. The region surrounding Jerusalem, Pilate's home was north off the coast of Caesarea. But he took up residence in Jerusalem because of how turbulent it was around the Passover.

Because of how many people came in and because of the riots and different things like that, that would often break out when there's so many religious fanatics in town.

And so it seems that now Jesus is at Pilate's headquarters inside his house being questioned by Jesus. Look, I mean being questioned by Pilate.

[ 9 : 32 ] Look in verse 2. He says, Are you the king of the Jews? Evidently, when the religious leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate, they tell Pilate that his crime is he claims to be king.

In fact, Luke tells us more specifically, they began to accuse him, say, We found this man misleading our nation, forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, which is exactly against what Jesus did, and saying that he himself is the Christ, a king.

Now, if you remember the night before, they condemned Jesus for claiming to be God. They condemned him for the sin of blasphemy. But they know that Pilate does not care about blasphemy.

That's an intramural, insider, baseball type claim. He doesn't care about blasphemy, but he does care if someone claims to be king. So they shrewdly established this as the crime of Jesus Christ.

And if it's true that Jesus claims to be king, it's treason. And it must be dealt with. So, Jesus is asked by Pilate, are you the king of the Jews?

[ 10 : 46 ] And he just says, you have said so. Now, this is one of those perplexing statements. I don't know what to make of this statement. What does it mean? I mean, it seems so empty, so incomplete.

Not the bold Jesus we're so often used for. What's more, the apostle Paul says that Jesus made the good confession before Pilate.

So, I mean, how is this the good confession? Well, Pilate's question is very similar to the question they asked Jesus the night before. It's a statement with a question implied.

Really, he's asking, you are the king of the Jews? Question mark. Maybe you have friends that write that in an email. You are coming over for dinner tonight? Question mark. Or something like that. He's really saying, you are the king of the Jews, aren't you?

Jesus says, you say so. Now, we're beginning to see the brilliance of Jesus' answer. It's not exactly yes, but it's also not exactly no.

[ 11 : 48 ] No, Jesus is the true Messiah and the only king from God. But if he answers directly, yes, I am the king of the Jews, then Pilate would have grounds to execute him on the spot. If he answers, no, I'm not the king of the Jews, he'll be, he's a liar.

So, Jesus doesn't disagree with the statement Pilate makes. So, he agrees with it. And he pushes the decision for what to do about it back into Pilate's hands.

Very brilliant. Immediately, the chief priests kind of gather in and assert themselves. They begin to accuse him. Look at verse 3. They said, the chief priests accused him of many things.

Perhaps they're afraid. They've seen Jesus talk his way out of many different trouble, or much different trouble. They thought he might talk his way out, manipulate his way out, and get off again. So, they accuse him of many different things, but he remains silent.

Accusation after accusation, and Jesus stands there silent. So much so that Pilate asks him again, have you no answer to me? See how many charges they bring against you. Verse 5, but Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

[ 13 : 07 ] That's striking. Pilate's amazed, not at what Jesus says, but what he doesn't say. And then the trial concludes. That's all we know about the trial, according to Mark's gospel.

But, we must pause here for a moment. But, why is Jesus so silent? We know it's not because it's wrong, or it would be wrong of him to defend himself.

The Apostle Paul spends four plus chapters in the Acts, and most of 2 Corinthians, defending himself. So, why didn't Jesus just defend himself? Why didn't Jesus seize this opportunity with the Roman governor to tell him clearly the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Well, Jesus is submitting completely to the plan of God for sinners. Strikingly, in Mark's gospel, from the Garden of Gethsemane to the agonizing cry of Golgotha, Jesus basically says nothing.

Nearly 24 hours. Jesus doesn't confront Pilate or rebuke the religious leaders. Jesus doesn't curse the ones who mock him, spit on him, or strike him.

[ 14 : 37 ] Jesus doesn't condemn the gathering crowd. He never once explodes in anger. There's no sign of irritation in Jesus Christ. But, anger is not just hot like an iron.

As we know, anger is cold as ice. But, Jesus shows no signs of coolness either. He shows no signs of withdrawal, or checking out, or looking away, or growing cold.

There's no single indication of, I will get you back, or I will repay you. In fact, one of his final prayers, expressing why this silence is, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

So, why is Jesus so silent? To show the complete forgiveness he's securing for sinners. Taylor quoted last week, Isaiah 53.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb is led to slaughter, and like a sheep for its shears are silent, so he opened not his mouth. The idea is, he's silent now to secure our complete forgiveness through his sacrifice on the cross.

[ 15 : 46 ] The idea is, if he explodes in anger now at the religious leaders, or Pilate, or anybody else gathered, wouldn't he be saying that there's forgiveness for everyone else except that?

But Jesus remains utterly silent to all the religious leaders, to Pilate, to the crowd, to the jeering crowd while he's on the cross, to the thieves that are on either side of him.

He remains completely silent so that he can say that complete forgiveness is offered to anyone and to everyone. I just finished reading The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom.

If you've not read this book, you've just got to do it. Amazing story about a Christian family in Holland and their work to hide Jews.

And then her experience of labor camps and then a concentration camp in Germany.

[ 16 : 50 ] And after she got out of hiding, she began to tell her story all throughout the world of what she encountered there.

And she tells a story about going back to Munich, back to Germany, to speak about the horrors of the concentration camp. She says, It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former SS man, who had stood guard in the shower room door in the processing center.

He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time, since she was under their watch. Their cruel treatment.

And suddenly it was all there, the room full of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, her sister Betsy's pained face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing.

How grateful I am for your message, Corrie, to think that, as you say, he washed my sins away. His hand thrust out to shake mine.

[ 18 : 01 ] But I, who had preached so often to the people the need to forgive, kept my hand by my side. I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand.

I could not. I felt nothing. Not even the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again, I breathed the silent prayer, Jesus, I cannot forgive him.

Give me your forgiveness. As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened from my shoulder along my arm and through my hand, a current seemed to pass from me to him while in my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so, she says, I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on his.

It's not on our forgiveness that the world's healing hinges, but on his. Jesus remains silent to show that he's dying to offer complete forgiveness to all, even SS officers.

[ 19 : 08 ] So, many may accuse you. Many may charge you. Many may condemn you. Many may laugh at you, say, what have you done?

Look at the mess you have made. Many may throw their hands up and say, there's no hope for you, but Jesus will remain silent in that moment.

Even more, as we'll see, Jesus will open up his arms to welcome you. Dane Ortlund helpfully says, the posture most natural to Jesus is not a pointed finger, but an open arm, but open arms.

Second point, the condemnation of Jesus. The condemnation of Jesus. The scene shifts from where the crowd, from where this private chamber where Jesus was examined by Pilate, shifts to where a crowd has gathered.

We think right outside Pilate's residence or where he was staying when he was in Jerusalem. And we look down, and Mark describes the scene. At the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.

[ 20 : 16 ] And among the rebels in prison, there was a man named Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. So apparently, in conjunction with Jesus being examined, there's this crowd gathering to ask for this clemency, this once-a-year thing where Pilate releases someone of their crime.

And so, Pilate seems ready to grant their request, and he responds to them, do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? He perceived that the religious leaders delivered him up out of envy because they were intimidated by him.

So he says, do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? But they say, no. Look in verse 11.

The chief priest stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. So Pilate seems surprised that they don't want him to release Jesus. I mean, the idea is, the takeaway from the trials is Jesus seems to be a good enough man, and an innocent man, and so why not release him?

So he asked him again, then what shall I do with the man you call the king of the Jews? Putting it back into their court, and they cried out, crucify him.

[ 21 : 38 ] Then Pilate asked them a third time. In verse 14, Pilate said to them, why? What evil has he done? Pilate said to them, they shouted out, all the more, crucify him.

So wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate releases Barabbas, and delivers Jesus over to be crucified. So he condemns him to death.

Now there's, just wonder, what do you make of this? The first is not surprising with Mark. This scene includes a number of ironies.

The religious leaders who are so afraid of the crowd that will be incited by Jesus against them are the very ones who incite the crowd against Jesus.

Pilate begins by curiously seeking freedom for Jesus, but ends by seeking freedom for himself, wishing to satisfy the crowd, lest he be in hot water with them and have a political issue on his hand.

[ 22 : 46 ] Then the crowd chooses Barabbas, someone who takes away the life of others, and condemn Jesus who gives away his life for others. So just very interesting scene here, but it also includes several warnings.

The condemnation of Jesus Christ includes several warnings for us. You don't have to reject Jesus like Peter to reject him. Sometimes we straddle the fence in regards to Jesus like Pilate.

Now, Pilate, don't be confused. I mean, Pilate is not a good guy. He doesn't have a soft heart towards Jesus. This is all political maneuvering. You could say some things about Washington, but I'm going to avoid that, but Pilate's convinced that Jesus is innocent, but he's afraid to say it.

He doesn't want to condemn him because he believes he's innocent, but he also doesn't want to free him because the chief priests and the scribes and the elders believe he's guilty. And so Pilate is in quite a quandary, and so he chooses to remain neutral.

He chooses to straddle the fence. He chooses to not say one way or the other. And we often do the same thing with Jesus Christ.

[ 24 : 09 ] At times, we're never quite all in with Jesus. We give him some of our time, some of our commitment, some of our money, some of our obedience, but we never quite give him everything.

Far too often, our relationship with Jesus is marked more by convenience than it is by conviction. we follow him when it benefits us. We do what he says when it's easy.

We obey him when it looks good before others. After all, we live in a time when convenience has shaped nearly every aspect of family life. Custom-made burgers or everything else, Walmart pickup, handheld devices that can access anything.

It's no surprise that the things of God will be shaped more by convenience than by conviction. but discipline, generosity, kindness, sacrifice, and commitment are rarely, if ever, convenient.

What we desperately need is not more convenience but more conviction and courage. And when we, here's the idea, when we straddle the fence like Pilate, we make our choice.

[ 25 : 21 ] And the choice says condemn Jesus Christ. We're neither hot or cold. Jesus says, Revelation 3 spews us out of his mouth. Other times, we may try to get rid of Jesus like the religious leaders.

None of us would be so bold to say, we're going to take him out or something like that. Religious leaders are proud of their priests, their prayers, their sacrifice, their front row seats in the synagogue, their status. But Jesus is not impressed.

He's a threat to them and so they say, I got to get rid of him. We often do the same thing with Jesus Christ. We have plans for our life.

Plans to prosper us and fulfill us. We have an agenda. And when his plans are not our plans, we often become angry and are ready to be done with him.

We try to keep Jesus at a safe, comfortable distance. But sometimes, he steps in and messes things up. The preacher, R.A.

[ 26 : 18 ] Torrey, tells the story of a letter he received just before speaking one night in Australia. He says, Dr. Torrey, I'm in great perplexity.

I've been praying for a long time for something that I am confident is according to God's will, but I do not get it. I've been a member of the church for 30 years and I've tried to be a consistent one all the time.

I've overseen Sunday school for 25 years, an elder in the church for 20 years, and yet God does not answer my question and I cannot understand it.

Can you explain it to me? Reportedly, Mr. Torrey walked into the pulpit, read the letter to everyone and said, the problem is not hard to see. This man thinks that because he's been a consistent member for 30 years, faithful Sunday school teacher for 25 years, and an elder for 20 years, that God is under obligation to answer his prayer.

Sadly, we can get into an exchange with Jesus like this man. Treat Jesus like a slot machine in which we put in our good works and expect to pull the crank and walk away with what we want.

[ 27 : 33 ] When we don't get away, walk away with what we want, we're ready to walk away from Jesus. We're angry. We want to get rid of him. I mean, this is not easy.

These are these most distressing moments. And so we, you know, we want to get rid of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ wants us to follow him. We want him to give us our space. We want him to stop interfering with our lives.

We want him to mind his own business, to which he responds, we are his business. He'll never leave us alone. Soberly, Jesus often disrupts our peace, disturbs our plan, confronts our compromise, exposes our insincerity, until we turn completely to him.

Still other times, we just become one of the crowd that rejects him. We're often impressed by the crowd, but Jesus is not. Now, if you remember, as we've gone through Mark's Gospel, Jesus has had a complicated relationship with the crowd.

The crowd follows him. The crowd listens to him. The crowd claps when he does these signs and wonders, but often Jesus, even though he feeds him at times, Jesus withdraws away from him, tries to get away from these guys, and now we see why.

[ 28 : 46 ] If Pilate rejects Jesus by straddling the fence, the crowds reject him by jumping from side to side, by being for him and against him, like a preschooler bending his Coke can.

She loves me. She loves me not. I mean, it's all circumstantial, and jumping back and forth as the wind blows is where they go, and falling in the crowd is as easy as falling off a log, and so the warning is there.

In the end, Jesus is rejected by Pilate, the religious leaders, and the crowd. They all condemn him. No one cries out, Injustice!

With one voice, they all cry out, Crucify! Crucify! Thirdly, the release of Barabbas. The release of Barabbas.

So the scene concludes with the release of Barabbas. Look in verse 15. Mark tells us they've come to ask for this release of a prisoner.

[ 29 : 51 ] So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Now everything is going according to plan.

Mark 10, 33-34 says, See, we're going up to Jerusalem. This is what Jesus has promised. The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they'll condemn him to death, deliver him over to the Gentiles, and they'll mock him, and spit on him, and flog him, and kill him.

So everything is going according to plan. Jesus has been delivered over to the Gentiles. So first, he's delivered over to the Jews, now he's delivered over to the Gentiles, and now the Gentiles deliver him over to be crucified.

But first, Jesus is scourged. Unlike the movies and popular writings about the crucifixion, the New Testament repeatedly avoids dramatic detail into the physical pain.

The key to Calvary is not in the scars. Nevertheless, Jesus is scourged.

[ 31 : 13 ] Scourging or flogging, another name for it, was a cruel and merciless preparation for the cross. Reportedly, one of the purposes of scourging or flogging was to shorten the length of the crucifixion.

But many prisoners did not survive the scourging. When a prisoner was scourged, the prisoner was stripped of his clothing, tied to a post, and beaten with a leather whip woven with bits of bone and metal.

The cat-of-nine-tails. That's what some refer to it. There's no limit to the number of blows. Unlike the limit of 40 lashes for a Roman citizen, there's no limit to the number of blows for a condemned criminal.

The blows would burst open the flesh on the prisoner's back, often leaving his bones and guts exposed. So the true king, the friend of sinners, is scourged.

Then Jesus is delivered over to be crucified, and Barabbas is released.

[ 32 : 28 ] Now what is this release of a prisoner thing? Well, since at least the 7th century in England, well, obviously it's here too, but governments have often given the king or the president the right of pardon.

Perhaps to correct some obvious injustice or to avoid some unnecessary trouble, the Constitution of the United States gives the president what it used to be called the prerogative of mercy.

I think that's amazing. It gives the president the prerogative of mercy. The first pardon was in the United States within 1794 by George Washington when a number of whiskey distillers were rejecting the tax on whiskey so they just burned down the local tax collector's house.

That's one way to do April 15. Just burn it down. Well, they weren't the only ones who didn't like the taxes in his cabinet. Alexander Hamilton did not like this tax, did not like where it was going.

Remember, we are the ones that started with the tea party, and so President Washington was faced with a dilemma. He sent in a militia he rode in. He led a militia into Pennsylvania to stop the rebellion.

[ 33 : 46 ] Twenty men were arrested. Two were convicted of treason, sentenced to death by hanging. But less than a year later, Washington chose to pardon them both to avoid more trouble.

So it seems that Pilate retains a similar pardon power and has used it over the years to keep the Jewish people happy with him.

So there's a turbulent, necessary relationship between the Jews and the Romans. And so Pilate's just maintaining this relationship. He's given them some autonomy, given them the privilege to do the different things they want to do for their religion, but he's maintained this hard political relationship.



So it seemed he curries their favor by pardoning someone every year. And so today, he pardons Barabbas. The only reason we know his name, though, is because Mark brings us into this scene to make very clear that this is no pardon.

This is an exchange. So yes, Pilate has pardon power, and year after year, he's been using his pardon power, but this morning, this pardon is an exchange.

[ 35 : 04 ] Look, three times Pilate offers to release Jesus. Three times the crowd refuses. Look again in verse 11. But the chief priest stirred up the crowd to have them release for them Barabbas instead.

Barabbas instead. And so Mark has set this scene up to help us understand something about the work of Jesus Christ. Now look in verse 15, coupling them right next to each other.

Pilate released for them Barabbas, and having scourged, Jesus delivered him over to be crucified. Do you see what Mark is trying to show us?

Jesus is innocent and being delivered up in exchange for the guilty man Barabbas. Jesus is innocent, delivered up in exchange for the guilty man Barabbas.

Barabbas is being released instead of Jesus Christ. Now we've seen the idea of substitution throughout the Bible and also in Mark's Gospel. If you remember Jesus' statement, the most important statement in the Gospel of Mark, for even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[ 36 : 10 ] We saw it in the Passover when he said, this is my body and this is my blood. But now, we have the idea of substitution that's been building up to this moment, but now we have the exchange. Jesus has said, I will give my life as a ransom for many.

Jesus said, I'll give my life in exchange for your life. Jesus said, I'll give my life in the place of their lives. Jesus said, I will substitute myself in the place of them and pay their ransom with my blood.

And now, we're seeing the exchange. The king is delivered over for the rebel. The master for the prisoner. The giver of life is being delivered over for the murderer.

The innocent is being delivered up for the guilty. The righteous is being exchanged for the unrighteous. Do you see it's beginning? That's what's going on. This exchange is beginning to happen.

Jesus Christ is being delivered up in the place of guilty sinners. But there's a deeper mystery here for us. Jesus is not just stepping into the place of Barabbas.

[ 37 : 14 ] Jesus is stepping into the place of all who are far off. Jesus is not just being delivered up to secure the offer of forgiveness for Barabbas. Jesus is being delivered up to secure the offer of forgiveness for all who are far off.

For all who have strayed like sheep. For all who have lost their way. Do you see? Jesus is not just being delivered up for Barabbas. Jesus is being delivered up for you and me.

It's precisely here that you must see your face in the crowd. Because if Jesus is being delivered up to secure your ransom, he's being delivered up to stand in your place to receive the full punishment for your sin and to secure your complete forgiveness.

It is not just the sin of Barabbas that required him to be exchanged on this day. It's not just a pardon. It's an exchange for your sin and my sin.

John Stott helps us. He says, we ourselves are guilty. If we were in their place, we would have done what they did. Indeed, we have done it.

[ 38 : 21 ] Were you there when they crucified? My Lord, the old Negro spiritual ask, and we must answer, yes, we were there.

Not as spectators only, but as participants, guilty participants, plotting, scheming, betraying, bargaining, and handing him over to be crucified.

We may try to wash our hands of responsibility like Pilate, but our attempt will be futile. See, before we can begin to see the cross has done something for us, leading us to faith and worship, we have to see it as something done by us, leading us to repentance.

Indeed, only the man who is prepared to own his share in the guilt of the cross, wrote Canon Peter Green, may claim his share in its grace.

Beloved, what this is saying is that I'm the guilty man. I'm the unrighteous man.

[ 39 : 28 ] I'm the prisoner. I'm the rebel. The truth is, as my friend Tony Carter has taught me to say, I am Barabbas.

I am the murder. I'm the angry man who strikes down people with his tongue. I'm the arrogant man who demands his own way. I'm the one who loves comfort and convenience more than obedience.

I am the covener, the one who's ungrateful with what he does have and complains about what he doesn't have. I'm the disrespectful son who dishonors his parents and disregards their counsel.

I am Barabbas. I am the one who deserves the punishment. I'm the one who deserves the nails and the spitting and the mocking. I'm the one who deserves the wrath of God, yet he came to stand in my place that I might go free.

I am Barabbas. I'm the one who's walking away from this gross scene, and there's no room in the cross unless you're prepared to say, I am Barabbas too.

[ 40 : 32 ] Are you prepared to say it? Is your worst problem your spouse, your sister, your teacher, your boss, or is your worst problem your sins against God?

Because until you're ready to say, my sins against God are deserving of the same punishment that Jesus endures on the cross, you're not ready to be saved.

Regardless of how many times you've asked Jesus into your heart, you become a Christian by looking into this mystery that God made him who knew no sin to be sin for you so that in him you might become the righteousness of God.

So watch in fear and wonder the true king is condemned in the place of hell-deserving sinners. So what do we do? Just two things.

First is we rejoice in our true freedom. I recently listened to the book Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. Listen to a couple interviews with him.

[ 41 : 48 ] Mr. Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative and works to free people from wrongful convictions. He tells the story of visiting an inmate on death row for the first time.

He'd never been there. You know, he's just right out of law school, really green. He was a law student. He was sent there to tell the inmate that he would not be executed any time this year. The inmate entered the room first time ever on death row, first time ever in the presence of a death row inmate.

And Mr. Stevenson said he fumbled out the words, I am a law student and I don't know much yet and I can't help you. What an opening line, right? But then he continued, I was sent here to tell you you're not at risk of execution any time in the next year.

The man said, what? Say it again. He said, I was sent here to tell you you're not at risk of execution any time this year.

He said, sir, just say it again. He said, I'm sent here to tell you that you're not at risk of execution any time in the next year. He said, the man just said, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[ 43 : 02 ] I've been wanting to see my wife and kids. I've been waiting. I didn't want to bring them here if I was going to die. soon. I've been sent to tell you you're not at risk of execution ever again.

That's what it means. Either you're going to bear this weight or God's appointed suffering servant is going to bear it on your behalf.

There's nothing left for you to pay ever again. Because double jeopardy tried for the same time twice never happens in God's courtroom.

So we rejoice and we run to the Father. Now interestingly, this man's name is Barabbas. If you remember when we studied Bartimaeus, Bartimaeus is not really a name.

it's a title. It's a combo. It just means son, Bar, son of Timaeus. So son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus.

[ 44 : 13 ] So apparently maybe his name was Peter and Mark didn't want to get confused and think about the wrong Peter or something like that. So he just called him Bartimaeus and everybody knew him as Bartimaeus. Everybody knows this guy is Barabbas which is son of the Father.

Son of the Father. Very general, unspecific. Which father?

Perhaps we're meant to see here a whisper of the precious truth. God did not spare his only beloved son so that he might bring many sons. to glory.

So one son was delivered up in exchange for many sons. Galatians 3 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

So watch in fear and wonder the true king is condemned in the place of guilty sinners like you and me. May God help us. Father in heaven, cast our selves onto you.

[ 45 : 24 ] We thank you for the privilege of sitting on and meditating on these things.

God, we pray that you would help us to see more and more of the wonder and the mystery of the cross. praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.