

Mark 15:1-21

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and go me to the Gospel according to Mark. We are ready for Mark chapter 15.! We see the miraculous deeds done of Christ very quickly and we move forward and we see him as he is.

He is not only the Son of God, he is the Son of Man. He is God in the flesh. Mark's intended audience was a Gentile audience which was used to seeing things affected by the Greco-Roman culture, seeing matters happen and they were concerned about action and concerned about what is being done.

Not necessarily concerned so much about what is being taught but really they wanted to see action much like our day and time now. And the Gospel of Mark appealed to that audience. It gave you Christ on full display in his work and his movements and things were happening quickly.

But when we come to the end of the Gospel of Mark, while Mark does not give us every detail, we have to reconcile it with the other Gospel accounts.

It is telling how much Mark slows down and walks us through not only the Passion Week but the events leading up to the crucifixion.

[1 : 38] Once we get to the crucifixion and the death and burial of Christ, it is again a very rapid movement. And the highlight of Mark's Gospel is to show that this one who has done such grand deeds, such mighty works and has validated not only his deity but his humanity and has lived among us, has come to suffer and die in our place.

And we're at that portion now where Christ has been carried away. He's stood trial already before the religious leaders. He will stand trial again here in the very opening verse of the 15th chapter. He will be taught and brought before, carried and brought before Pontius Pilate. We know that when he leaves there, he will go before Herod for he is of Herod's jurisdiction. He will return back to Pilate.

Mark does not give us all of those accounts. But we see in all of this that this Savior, this wonder-working individual who has done such mighty deeds, has the burden and the guilt of our sin laid upon his shoulders.

And he will bear it to the cross of Calvary. And he will die in our place. And we stand amazed at not all that he has done, not the miraculous deeds which are recorded and accounted of him, but in this great miraculous work of bearing our sin, carrying our burden, taking upon his shoulders our shame.

[3 : 05] And he does it though he is innocent, though he has no guilt, nor shame, nor vile found within him. So if you have your text, and if you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and read the Word of God found in the Gospel of Mark in the 15th chapter, and we'll start in verse 1.

Early in the morning, the chief priests and the elders and scribes and the whole council immediately held a consultation. And binding Jesus, they led him away and delivered him to Pilate.

Pilate questioned him, Are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, It is as you say. The chief priests began to accuse him harshly. Then Pilate questioned him again, saying, Do you not answer?

See how many charges they bring against you? But Jesus made no further answer. So Pilate was amazed. Now at the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner whom they requested.

The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been his custom to do for them.

[4 : 18] Pilate answered them, saying, Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? For he was aware that the chief priests had handed him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead.

Answering again, Pilate said to them, Then what shall I do with him whom you call the king of the Jews? They shouted back, Crucify him. But Pilate said to them, Why?

What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, Crucify him. Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them. And after having Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers took him away into the place that is the praetorium. And they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed him in purple. And after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to acclaim him, Hell, king of the Jews. They kept beating his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling and bowing before him. And after they had mocked him, they took the purple robe off him and put his own garments on him.

[5 : 27] And they led him out to crucify him. They pressed into service a passerby coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. And we thank you for your word. As we have come to the portion of your word which is before us, we pray that you give us clear hearts and clear minds. Lord, help us to see it as it is, the living word of God. Lord Jesus, help us to see you bearing the weight and shame of our guilt.

And Lord, may it speak to us. May it penetrate the very depth of our being. May every distraction and every hindrance be removed from this place so that you, O Lord, would speak to your people. May you have your way. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Here is we come to the portion in which the burden of humanity is laid upon the shoulders of the Savior.

[6 : 36] The guilt which he will bear to the cross. It is our sin, not our sins, which Christ carries. For he is not carrying the bad things we have done.

For each and every one of us have done a multitude of bad things. Even after coming to Christ, we find ourselves stumbling. And we find ourselves doing that which we ought not do.

We surely commit sins. We are not sinless. We are not perfect. It is found in the word of God that he who says he has no sin is a liar. And it is not that Christ has come to take all of our sins, our actions, away from us.

But rather, he bore our sin nature. The very thing that we are to the core of our being. The thing which makes us do the sins that we are so guilty of doing.

And he came that he may bear the nature of our sin and carry it to the cross and pay the price of redemption. So that the heart of stone may be removed and the heart of flesh be inserted.

[7 : 36] So that we could become a new person, a new man or a new woman, a new individual. That we may be born again. That the nature of our humanity may be changed. Not that we will not fail nor falter.

But that doing so would contradict who we are by nature rather than agreeing with who we are. And we would find this uncomfortable thing of conviction. Because now the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Because Christ has borne our sin nature. And this burden is laid upon him. And in the midst of this burden, we are struck by the humility of the king.

We notice, and we've said it before over and over again. That Christ has given this hour to humanity to do as they wish. In the garden, he had declared that this hour and the power of darkness was theirs.

That they may do as they desired. That if he had not permitted them to do so, no one could have ever carried him captive. He was not taken captive. He surrendered himself.

[8 : 38] And here in the text before us, we notice that very early the next morning, they gathered together. And I just look at the happenings of what they did to Jesus. How they bound him.

And they led him. And they delivered him. And they handed him over. All of these actions seem to imply that they are having rule and dominion over the one before them.

But really they are an emphasis of the humility of the king. The reality that he who holds the world in the palm of his hands. He who sustains it all and upholds it all.

And as the book of Job says, that if God was to call his spirit back to himself, all men would cease. And if Jesus is Emmanuel, that is God with us, and he indeed is.

Then all Christ would have ever had to do was to call the spirit back to himself. And all that were leading him and handing him over and delivering him up would have ceased to be. But yet in his humility, he allows these things and he permits these things to happen.

[9 : 37] It is found in the book of Isaiah in the 53rd chapter and the 7th verse. That he was beaten and he was bruised and all these things. Yet he did not answer like a lamb being led away to slaughter.

He was silent before his killers. Never a word was uttered. The humility of the king. No self-validation.

No answering of the multitude of charges brought before him. We were struck by this last week when we looked at it. The only things that Christ answers are the declarations of the truth.

As Brother Ivan shared with you, the need of the world today is not opinions, but truth. And when Pilate says, are you the king of the Jews? He says, you have said it.

When all of the charges and the accusations and the revilings were brought by the religious leaders, Christ said nothing for that was their opinion. He would indeed answer the truth and truthfully answer it so.

[10 : 38] But as far as it pertained to the opinions and the assumptions of man, he was silent.

Why? Because of the humility of the king. The fact that he enables man to carry him about as they wish and to hand him over as they desire to do.

We are struck that the burden laid upon him is a result of the humility which he displays. He permits it. And I know that I keep saying the same thing as we have looked at this ever since the beginning of the garden.

We have been saying this same refrain. And you say, Pastor, you keep telling us because I do not want you to lose sight of the reality that these things didn't happen to Christ. That Christ permitted these things to himself.

It was his choosing. It was definitely within his power to stop it at any moment. But in his humility, he enabled it. He permitted it.

And he even went along with it. No one leads him where he does not want to go. He tells Peter.

When he reconciles Peter, he restores him back to the group of the apostles.

[11 : 47] The three times, if you understand it, remember when you read the end of the Gospel of John. And he tells Peter, he says, Peter, there will come a day where men will lead you where you do not want to go. And he is talking about Peter's impending death.

That there would be a day that Peter would be led away to death in a place that he did not want to go. But that he too would die a martyr's death for the faith. And in that statement, he says, Peter, you have in the past went wherever you wanted to go.

But there will be a day where men will lead you where you do not want to go. The same cannot be said about our Savior. No one led him where he did not want to go. For this is the intended purpose of his coming.

In his humility, he wanted to go to the cross. And that's astounding, isn't it? Who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

It tells us in the book of Hebrews. Notice the resounding humility of this one who holds the world and upholds all beings within it.

[12 : 47] It's enabling those to bind him, lead him, and deliver him. These that will declare that he is guilty.

They will mock him. They will ridicule him. They will beat him. But none of that takes place apart from his humility. What a king. One that would bear our shames and bear our burdens.

And in the midst of this, there are mankind, various groupings of mankind around him. And we see the vulnerability that is on display by these men and these women.

There are different groups. And each one of them have their weaknesses exposed in the presence of Christ. The first group that we are introduced to are the religious leaders and the scribes and the whole council of the Sanhedrin.

Those religious elites, we are told, that are gathered early in the morning. They had met the night before, some of them. And they meet as a full body the next morning. And they make the judgment that he indeed is guilty deserving of death.

[13 : 51] But they cannot bring that condemnation in their own power. For they are limited by Roman rule. So they must bring him to Pilate. They wouldn't even enter into the presence of Pilate.

For they knew that it would make them unclean.

And they would not be able to rejoice and to celebrate the Passover meal. We gather that from the other gospel accounts. So they would bring him as far as the door and hand him over to Pilate. Because they wanted to maintain their own purity, their own holiness.

They wanted to be able to ensure that they could have the Passover of the Jews. Make sure you call it what it is. Because in the Old Testament, it's the Passover of the Lord. And it was a reminder of all that the Lord had done for them.

And all that the Lord had delivered them through. And it was the blood that was important. In the New Testament, it's the Passover of the Jews. Because it's a reminder of who they are. Friend, if you want a reminder of who you are, just look in the mirror and understand what's going on in your own heart.

We do not need to have celebrations and festivals that remind us of who we are. But rather, we need to have one that reminds us of who he is in light of who we are. So be careful of the adjective you put in the place to describe the event that you are hosting.

[14:56] I know that was a lot of words just to say, tread carefully. When it becomes about you, then we tread on dangerous grounds. But yet, they wanted to have this celebration. So they would not even enter into the court of Pilate.

For they would be unclean. And we see their vulnerability here. For why? What do we see? Pilate says they handed him over for jealousy.

They were jealous of him. These religious elite. These who had it all figured out. These who were going through the right motion. These whose job it was to study the word were jealous of Christ. For he had a following they could not command. He had people that were drawn and attracted to him that they had no appeal to. He could touch areas that they never could. He could exercise and demonstrate his power in ways that they never had the opportunity to do.

I would dare say that one of the grandest dangers among so-called believers today is the fact of jealousy. They want to be on the podium, not he.

[16:04] And it is the vulnerability of wanting recognition and power. And here among the religious elite, we see the jealousy that drove them. But then we meet Pilate here.

Pilate is the one who has the power, so to say. He has the ability, we know from the other text, that Jesus says that you would have no power given to you unless it had been given by my Father. But by the world's measures, Pilate has the authority to either condemn or to free Christ.

And we read in the text that he who rules over the crowds was so moved by the crowds. Right? Notice his weakness. Wishing to please the crowd.

He handed him over to be scurrs and to be crucified. Oh, how vulnerable man is. Don't blame Pilate for this because this same vulnerability exists in each and every one of us.

How often we do something to please the crowd before us. To make sure that everyone is happy. To maintain the peace, so to say. To ensure that the water is not disrupted.

[17:10] And that everyone is okay. I have a confession to make to you. By nature, I am a people pleaser. That is, I like for people to like me. I like for people to really get along with me.

It's just my personality. And it is a continuous battle that I have when I stand up and preach the word. And I ask the Lord, Lord, help me to preach with authoritative power from heaven.

Not with the power of pleasing the multitude of people before me. May I not be driven by the appeal of the crowd. But may I be driven by the reasoning of the one.

The one who will hold me accountable. Because the vulnerability of man is that often we say, I want to appease the crowd. It is better to blend in and get along than to disrupt the multitude.

Correct? It is better to blend in. And we see the vulnerability. Notice how quickly your power can be handed over. Pilate, the authoritative one, hands his power over only because he wants to please the crowd.

[18:12] How often do we lose testimony and witness and even authoritative kingdom power? Simply because we don't want to disrupt the peace. And we want to make sure the crowd is pleased with us.

While we're talking about it, why don't we look at the crowd? Look at the vulnerability of the crowd. Here is the multitude of people that just six days prior to this had said, Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The people would declare his praises so much so that the religious elite said, Tell him to be quiet. The people would cast the palm leaves down and to cast their own garments down. And they're really crying out the praises.

How so soon can they yell, crucify him, crucify him? Well, it tells us in our text, But the priest had persuaded them.

You know the vulnerability of the crowd? Is the crowd is easily persuaded by whoever is before them. You know this, right? Don't always follow the crowd because the crowd is easily persuaded. [19 : 15] But too often we find ourselves in the crowd. And we focus on what the crowd is doing. And we focus on what's happening. And we focus on all these matters. And we try to adjust to the crowd.

But the crowd is not a good measurement of truth. I read conflicting polls and data even this own week. It is amazing how easily they can conflict.

One is telling us that there are more and more people in America that are leaving the churches, never affiliating with the churches, that people are driving past our churches and have no desire for anything in our churches.

Another one said that there are more people being drawn to the churches and more Bibles purchased than any other time in recent history. Now that's just telling me what the crowd is doing. And I think, just to be honest with you, both of those are right. Because the crowd is finical, right? It kind of goes back and forth. Sometimes they want a Bible. Sometimes they want to go here. Sometimes they want to go there.

[20 : 11] Sometimes they'll do this. And they are ever persuaded by the loudest voice among them. This is why we have to be careful of basing our faith and doctrine upon the crowd.

Now surely when I read the Word of God and I study the Word of God, I will always check myself. Now if I come to a conclusion from a text, and I read the text and I say, Well, I believe this is what it says.

If I go and I cannot find anybody in church history that has ever agreed with me, then more than likely I'm wrong. More than likely my interpretation of the text is inaccurate.

Because I would dare say that with all of the faithful men and women of God over the years, surely I would not be the first one to come to the truth of that passage. But then there are also times where I come to a conclusion of a text, and I say, I believe that's what it says.

And I check myself, and I balance myself out, and I look at resources, and there are people speaking in agreement. But maybe there's even a larger segment that says, I think that's wrong. Now I am faced with the dilemma.

[21 : 13] Do I follow the crowd and appeal to their understanding of the text, or do I seek to know the Lord and find the truth of the text? Because the crowd is easily persuaded. Friend, notice the vulnerability of man.

Oh, how vulnerable we are. May the Lord God deliver us from this vulnerability. That too often we are tossed to and fro, as James would say, like the waves of the sea, not knowing where we stand, even in light of his humility.

But there's one other group here. It's that strong group, the ones who know where they stand, and they are going to stay that way ever. Notice the mockery of the strong.

In our text, it's the Roman cohort. The Roman soldiers known for their strength and their valor, known for their authoritative presence, the ultimate fighting machine, the Roman cohorts.

Pilate has him scourged, which is not a light matter. Too often we read that in a light fashion. It is to be beaten beyond recognition, for his face was marred, and he was unrecognizable.

[22 : 28] There's no mercy in Roman beatings. In Jewish beatings, there were 39 stripes, and they were limited to that, for a man might die on the 40th. No such limitations placed upon the Roman scourgings.

We've all heard how it would take place, and the torture that would take hold of our Savior, and the cohort that gathers around him, and places the purple robe upon him, and the crown of thorns upon his head, and they bow before him, and they mock him, for in this world's appearance, strength means to have empowerment, or ability to overpower another.

But I would dare say that on that scene, the strongest one there is the suffering Savior. It's not those who are lording over him, and pressing him down, and mocking him, and making fun of him, and ridiculing him, and spitting upon him.

Rather, strength is the one who is enduring that for you and I. But the mockery of the strong, over and over again in this world, those who think they're strong by this world's standards, either academically, or physically, scientifically, however it may be, that they tend to mock such things as the humility of Christ.

Be careful of the mockery of the strong, for strength is not always that which is physical proudness. Sometimes strength is the ability to endure that which no one else could.

[23 : 53] We see this mockery going on here. But before we close our text, look at the text in all of its imagery. Look at the beauty that is woven through this passage before us.

There are things that are clearly displayed to us, and there are some that are kind of subtly given. We cannot fail to notice the fact that there is a guilty man, Barabbas, who is guilty of murder and insurrection, one who is offensive, or ought to be offensive to the crowd, one who has done things deserving of death, and yet the guilty man goes free.

Christ takes his place. We know that that's the ultimate goal of salvation, right? That the guilty may go free, and that another would take his place. There is nothing in Roman history that tells us this was the tradition.

Biblical text tells us it is. By the way, I would trust the scripture over the history books any day. No offense to the history teachers, and I love history, and I read it as much as anyone else, but I'll stand by the word of God.

And yet we know that here the guilty man goes free, the one whose guilt was put upon public display, the one who had done such horrendous deeds to be deserving of death, and yet he goes scot-free for Christ takes his place.

[25 : 14] And then we notice when the Roman cohort is around him, the curse put upon the earth because of the sin of man.

Do you remember that in Genesis 3? That when man sinned, it said, and the earth will bear what? The thorns of the ground. Those of us that garden have been cursing that curse since the day it came upon the earth.

Thorns instead of vegetation. And the thorns, the crown of thorns, placed upon the brow of our Savior. The curse of the ground that we brought upon it, placed upon the head of the Savior, and beaten into his brow.

That's our curse, not his. Used as an instrument of torture. That which was to be hard for us is torturous to him. But the greatest picture that we see in this text is that of Simon of Cyrene.

I love the fact that Mark, by the way, gives us this little insertion that Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus. I'll give you a little side note here. And the reason I love that is because Mark was a traveling companion of an individual named Paul.

[26 : 28] Now, surely Paul and Mark, better known as John Mark, didn't get off on the best of startings, for John Mark went home. He got scared. And Paul said on his second journey, I'm not taking him with me.

If he wouldn't go with me the first time, I don't want him to go with me the second time. And I can resonate with that with Paul. But I can also resonate with a little bit of Paul's humility at the end where he said that John Mark was beneficial for the gospel.

And there seems to be some reconciliation that happens near the end of their life. And now it is Paul alone who mentions a man named Rufus in the church of Rome.

And he acknowledges him. And this is why if we ever wonder, why does Paul always, Paul likes dropping names, right? Paul would tell you the ones he's handed over to Satan. He doesn't say, I've given some people.

He tells you exactly who they are. He even tells you what they do. Alexander the coppersmith. You know, he's done me a lot of great harm. He tells you, don't even go to the coppersmith shop. And he'll tell you the people's name. But he also tells you those that have done good.

[27 : 26] He tells you those that serve in the church and those that are faithful saints. Rufus was one of those. And I do not think it's coincidental that Mark, in writing his, to the Gentile believers scattered out the Roman Empire who would have been aware of the ministry of Rufus, tells us how Rufus came to faith.

Because there was a day where his dad was coming out of the fields. And by the way, Simon of Serene is northern Africa, so he's out of northern Africa, but he happens to be in the fields around Jerusalem.

And he's coming out of the fields. And as he's coming out of the fields, there's a moment where the Roman soldiers grab him and they compel him to bear the cross, more than likely the cross beam of our Savior.

Now you and I know that the reason he had to bear the cross is because of the suffering of Jesus up to that moment. He was so physically weakened by the scourging which he had just endured. The pain that had been inflicted upon him. But there's another reason why Jesus didn't bear that cross. One did I think that we overlook time after time.

[28 : 37] Because in Roman culture, and in Roman legal standing, the guilty individual would bear the cross as a demonstration of public shame and an acknowledgement of guilt deserving of death.

I'll say that again. The reason you carried your cross is so that you would declare to all watching, I did something deserving of death, and I am guilty.

I have been found guilty in the court of law. And now my sentence is that I am deserving of death. And it was a testimony to everyone you walked by.

It was a testimony to all that you strolled by that that individual had done something so offensive, he's deserving of death. Friend, listen to me. Jesus had no guilt.

Jesus had no sin. Jesus was deserving of no death. The man carrying the cross had all the guilt, all the sin, and all the deservings of death.

[29 : 44] And that man was Simon. You say, why are you picking on Simon, pastor? Because Simon is a man just like us. And there is none righteous, no, not one.

The guilty man was indeed carrying the cross that day. But he wasn't the one nailed to it when they got to the hill of Calvary. Don't miss that. That's our cross.

We're the guilty people. We're the ones who bear, need to bear it upon our shoulders and to walk among the public saying that I have done something deserving of death, but the wonder of it all, when I get to the place of execution, I will lay it down and another will take my place.

He will lay himself upon my cross. It is my shame, my guilt, my sin, but it will be his suffering and his death for my redemption.

The guilty man did indeed carry the cross, but the perfect Savior died upon it to redeem him, and it made a lasting impact. Just go ask Rufus, who's serving at the church in Rome, when Paul writes the letter to them.

[30 : 56] It is not his guilt. It's not his shame. It's indeed Simon's, and it's yours, and it's mine, for we are deserving of the death he's about to die. The burden is on our shoulders, but yet he takes it, and he bears it before the Father in our place.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day, and we thank you for your word. We pray that the truth of it would resonate within our hearts.

Lord, that we would be moved by it, to be drawn closer and closer to you. Lord, we cannot fathom love like that, that while we are yet sinners, you die for us.

May we never get over it. We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.