

## The Innocent King Condemned (Isaiah 53:3-7, 12 and Mark 15:1-20)

22-Mar-2026

### **Isaiah 53:3-7,12**

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

### **Mark 15:1-20**

#### **Jesus Before Pilate**

**15** Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

<sup>2</sup> “Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

<sup>3</sup> The chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup> So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

<sup>5</sup> But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

<sup>6</sup> Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. <sup>8</sup> The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

<sup>9</sup> “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, <sup>10</sup> knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

<sup>12</sup> “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

<sup>13</sup> “Crucify him!” they shouted.

<sup>14</sup> “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

<sup>15</sup> Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

### **The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

<sup>16</sup> The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup> They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup> And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” <sup>19</sup> Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to

him. <sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Mark 15** starting at verse 1.

Let me pray first...

### Context

Before we begin – let’s be clear – even though it’s Palm Sunday - we are not talking about Palm Sunday in the Sermon today – we covered that in Mark chapter 11.

So - let’s get the context before we look at today’s chapter – 15.

### **[Slide-Context]**

Last week we said - after Jesus’ arrest, He was brought before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) and faced **an unjust religious trial**.

The trial was deeply flawed:

- False witnesses were brought forward
- Their testimonies didn’t agree
- There was no consistent charge

It resembled what we might call a “**kangaroo court**” — a trial with a predetermined outcome. The Jewish leaders have already made up their mind

they need to get rid of Jesus once and for all – because He is threatening their popularity and status.

Finally, in the trial – last week – we saw the high priest asked Jesus - the key question:

***“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (14:61)***

Jesus answered in **14:62**

***“I AM”*** – which is God’s Name in the Old Testament.

And then He referred to the Book of Daniel - Daniel 7:13–14, saying:

***“You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”***

Both these replies are a clear claim by Jesus of His divine authority and identity. The Jewish Council condemned Jesus for blasphemy — because He was claiming to be equal with God – and blasphemy carries the death penalty!

Ironically, Jesus is telling the truth, yet they judge Him to be guilty.

But the Jewish Council has a problem - under Roman rule, the Jewish leaders do not have the authority to carry out the death penalty.

This week in chapter 15 – their strategy is - they plan to hand Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor.

But they know that accusing Jesus of blasphemy won’t matter to the Romans. The Romans have plenty of gods already, so this kind of religious charge is unlikely to worry them.

So the Jewish leaders have to reframe the charge against Jesus: And so they use – Jesus’ claim that He is a **King** – this is more likely to trouble the Romans – because it makes Jesus sound like He is a political threat to Roman authority – a threat to King Herod – the Roman puppet king of Judea – and also a threat to the Roman Emperor’s authority.

Which brings us to our passage this morning – Mark 15:1-20

### [Slide-Headings]

We have 3 headings

**The Silent King (15:1–5)**

**The Substitute King (15:6–15)**

**The Mocked King (15:16–20)**

### The Silent King (15:1–5)

1<sup>st</sup> then – Jesus - **The Silent King** – vv1-5

### [Slide-The Silent King]

We pick up the story in v1 – the religious leaders and Jewish Council (the Sanhedrin) hand Jesus over to the Roman Governor of Judea – Pontius Pilate (23-46AD). They do this very early in the morning because legal trials in the Roman Empire were customarily held shortly after sunrise!

The first question Pontius Pilate asks – v2 – “*Are you the King of the Jews?*”

Pilate’s basically asking Jesus:

- Are you a political king?
- Are you a rival to the Emperor Caesar?

- Are you potential rebel leader?

Jesus' reply "**You have said so**" is the ONLY TIME He speaks in this passage – and His reply is very clever!

It's a way of saying to Pilate:

"Those are your words" OR

"You are the one who is saying this" OR

"This is your conclusion"

It subtly puts Pilate on trial, not just Jesus.

It's almost like saying: "You are the one who has said I am a king. What will you do with that?"

Jesus' reply is a **qualified "Yes"** - Jesus means:

- Yes - He is a Spiritual King
- Yes - He is God's Messiah
- Yes - He is the King of God's Kingdom

Then we see the chief priests accuse Jesus of many things – V3.

But vv4-5 – Jesus remains silent.

Why?

Jesus knows the trial is unjust.

He willingly submits to the Father's plan to go to the Cross to die for the sin of the world.

He is not going to say anything to escape the Cross.

And also His silence **fulfills a prophecy** from our OT reading from Isaiah 53:7:

*He was oppressed and afflicted yet He did not open His mouth.*

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth!*

In fact it's impossible to read our OT reading from Isaiah 53 without seeing how it is **a picture of Jesus' suffering and rejection!**

V4 is very interesting in the original Greek - where Pilate says "***Aren't you going to answer***". It literally means "**you do not answer nothing**". In English this is a **double negative** – which really means "you do answer", but in Greek a **double negative doesn't cancel itself out, it emphasizes or intensifies the negative** – so it would literally be "***Are you not answering anything at all?***" or "***have you no reply whatsoever***". The point that the Greek is trying to make is **there is NO WAY Jesus is going to answer the questions from the chief priests!**

### [Slide-Application]

#### Application

What can we learn from Jesus – the **Silent King** here?

- **1<sup>st</sup> - We don't have to defend ourselves all the time.** Our instinct might be to defend ourselves; correct every misunderstanding; win every argument; make sure people think well of us. But Jesus shows, not every accusation needs an answer. Sometimes, the most Christ-like response is a quiet trust

in God rather than a loud defence. We can leave our reputation in God's hands!

- **2<sup>nd</sup> - Silence can be an act of trusting God!** When we are treated unfairly, as Jesus was, we often demand immediate justice. Jesus shows us that sometimes faith means waiting for God's justice, not demanding it now! As Romans 12:19 says "***Do not take revenge...leave room for God's wrath***"
- **3<sup>rd</sup> - Part of us following Jesus includes us suffering unjustly sometimes!** Following Jesus means walking the same road He walked!
- **4<sup>th</sup> - Jesus' silence is the reason we are forgiven!** If Jesus had defended Himself; proven the charges were false; argued His case and refused to go to the Cross. Then He would not have died for our sins to be forgiven – and we would still be in our sins – still separated from God – and have no salvation – no forgiveness - and no eternal life. Thank you Jesus for being the **Silent King!**

2<sup>nd</sup> point – Jesus – **the Substitute King** – that's vv6-15

### The Substitute King (15:6–15)

#### **[Slide-Substitute King]**

Under Roman rule and during the festival of **Passover** – there was a custom – v6 – to release a prisoner whom the people requested!

**Passover** was a huge Jewish National Religious festival – remembering how God helped the Jews escape slavery in Egypt (about 1400BC) – God used 10 plagues to cripple the Egyptians and to persuade Pharaoh of Egypt to let the Jews leave

Egypt. The 10<sup>th</sup> plague was the death of the firstborn – God told the Jews if they smeared the blood of a lamb over their doorframes and doorposts the angel of death would **pass over** their homes and their first-born child would not die! The **Passover** festival was celebrated each year – and still is today - to remind the Jews of God's saving grace in Egypt.

In Jesus' time - this festival brought great national pride and this could potentially lead to riots against Roman rule/occupation – so by releasing a prisoner that the people chose – this would help Pilate to keep peace; avoid riots and it was also a gesture of goodwill to the people!

At this point - v7 – we are introduced to **Barabbas** – who is in prison and he is part of the insurrectionists (who were rebels against Roman rule) and he is also a murderer.

V8 – the crowd are keen for Pilate to fulfil this custom to release a prisoner as he did each year

V9 - Pilate asks if they want him to release Jesus – the King of Jews. He hoped that the people might release Jesus – because v10 – He knows the chief priests have only brought Jesus to him out of envy and self-interest – and also because - v14 – Pilate knows Jesus has committed no crime!

But Pilate's hopes are shattered – v11 – because the chief priests have stirred up the crowd to ask Pilate to release **Barabbas** instead!

So Pilate is then left with the dilemma of what to do with Jesus.

The people are very insistent – v13 and v14 – they want **Jesus crucified!**

With the release of Barabbas and Jesus condemned to be crucified – we have  
**one of the greatest ironies – and greatest substitutions – of ALL TIME!**

**[Slide-Barabbas/Jesus]**

**[An interesting thing about Barabbas in Matthew's Gospel – Barabbas is called Jesus Barabbas – so Pilate asks do you want me to release Jesus Barabbas or Jesus the Messiah?]**

Comparing Barabbas and Jesus...

**Barabbas**

His name means “son of the father”

He is guilty but goes free

He is a violent murderer but freed

The false rebel is chosen

**Jesus**

He is the true Son of the Father

He is innocent but is condemned

The Prince of Peace but executed

The true Son is rejected

**[Slide-Application]**

Application

This substitution is actually a picture of the Gospel – the Good News!

Just like Jesus is a **substitute** for the guilty Barabbas

Jesus is **OUR substitute!**

**WE** are Barabbas!

We're might not be a murderer or be rebelling against our political leaders – but we are rebels against God – we are sinners – and we deserve punishment for our sins. But Jesus our Saviour takes our place – He takes our punishment – and He takes our sins away!

He is our **Substitute King!** Thank you Jesus!

And what about **Pontius Pilate**?

Surely we are not like Pilate, are we?

Sadly we can be like Pilate and make our own “**Barrabas choices**” ...

- When we know Jesus is Lord, yet **fail to stand for Him when it costs us something.**
- Or - When we try to follow Jesus, yet **compromise under pressure from others.**
- Or - When we want to do what is right, yet **choose our comfort, our popularity, approval from others, or peace instead of obeying God!**
- Or - When we remain silent about Jesus and God’s truth because we want to avoid conflict or the accusation of being intolerant
- Or when, as **Christians, we are too afraid to speak God’s truth into our society — and so we say nothing while our governments make laws that go against God’s Word** – things like: same sex-marriage; gender identity; abortion; euthanasia and assisted dying; religious freedom; gambling addiction – and so on!
- Or - When we attempt to sit on the fence, but in doing so we **end up denying Jesus.**
- Or - When we recognize the truth, but **delay or dilute our response to it.**
- Or - When we fear rejection or losing friendships or losing family - more than pleasing God!

**All of this amounts to making people BIG and God really small!**

## Bad things happen – when good people do nothing - which is what Pilate did!

And notice the bad thing that happens in v15 – Jesus is **flogged** – some translations say “**scourged**” – which was a dreadful punishment!

**Scourging** involved being "tied to a post and beaten with a leather whip that was interwoven with pieces of bone and metal, which tore through skin and tissue, often exposing bones and intestines. In many cases, the flogging itself was fatal.

All this abuse against our Lord Jesus - who was completely perfect and innocent!

3<sup>rd</sup> point – Jesus – **the Mocked King** – that’s vv16-20

### The Mocked King (15:16–20)

#### [Slide-Mocked King]

In verse 16, Jesus is taken from the public courtyard and Pilate’s judgment seat (the **bema**) into **Pilate’s residence, the Praetorium**, and into the soldiers’ courtyard, where the whole company of Roman soldiers gathered around Him.

Then in verses 17–20:

- They dress Jesus in a **purple robe** — a **colour** worn by **royalty**.
- They place on Him a **crown of thorns**.
- They call out, “**Hail, King of the Jews!**”
- They **strike Him, spit on Him, and kneel before Him in mock worship**.
- Then they **lead Him away to be crucified**.

This is some of the most cruel and diabolical treatment our Lord Jesus endured.

But the great irony is that **everything they did in mockery was actually true**:

## What they did

Put on purple robe to pretend He is a King

Crowned Him with a crown of thorns

They say “Hail, King of the Jews!”

They led Him to be crucified

They perform a mock coronation

## The Irony

Jesus really is the King!

Jesus really is crowned King!

They are speaking the truth!

The Cross is Jesus’ throne!

This is Jesus’ actual coronation!

## [Slide-Application]

### Application

Sadly, Jesus is still **mocked** today!

- People use **Jesus’ name as a swear word** instead of worship.
- People **joke about Jesus and the cross**.
- People say **Jesus was just a good man, not a King**.
- People **celebrate Christmas and Easter but totally exclude Jesus** from their celebrations!
- People **pretend to follow Jesus but do not obey Him**.
- People **bow to money, success, and their self - instead of bowing to Jesus**.
- People say “**I’ll follow Jesus later**”, but then never get around to it!
- Even Christians sometimes **sing to Him on Sunday but ignore Him during the week**.

Sadly, like Jesus - we can also face opposition and ridicule for following Jesus today...

How can we respond to this opposition and ridicule for following Jesus?

1. **Rejoice - and don't be surprised** by opposition...

- Jesus said: *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me”* (Matthew 5:11).
- Opposition is a **sign of our faithfulness to Jesus** and a reminder that we are to keep following Jesus.

2. **Respond with love, not revenge**

- Jesus says *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44).
- **We must pray for those who oppose us**, and meet their ridicule with **grace, patience, and prayer**.

3. **Keep our eyes on God, not people**

- We must live for **God's kingdom and righteousness**, not for human approval (Matthew 5:6–10).
- **We must trust God, walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)**, and remain faithful to His Word and His Son.

4. **Let our character and witness speak** for itself

- Be **salt and light** in the world (Matthew 5:13–16).
- **Stand for truth** – Jesus says *“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me”* (John 18:37)
- Remember that **Jesus suffered and we must carry our cross in some small way**, and continue to **spread the Gospel**.

- Our faithfulness under ridicule and suffering **glorifies God and points others to Jesus** – when they see our faithful witness to Jesus under pressure!

## Conclusion

To finish up then...

Jesus, our **Silent, Substitute, and Mocked King**, suffered in our place without retaliation—so let us follow Him, die to sin, live for righteousness, and trust in God's justice.

Let me finish with these verses from...

**[Slide-1 Peter 2:21-24]**

**1 Peter 2:21–24**

*"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.' When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."*

*Let's pray*

*Heavenly Father, thank you for our Lord Jesus, the innocent King who was mocked and condemned in our place. Forgive us for the times we have followed the crowd or stayed silent when we should stand for Him. Fill us with gratitude for His saving love and give us courage to honour Christ as our true King. In His precious name we pray, Amen.*