

Mark 15-16

Last Week:

- Jesus is anointed for burial with expensive perfume.
- He holds the last supper.
- Jesus predicts Peter denial
- We see His spiritual battle and victory in the Garden of Gethsemane
- The LORD's arrest and joke of a trial
- Peter's denial of Jesus

¹ Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led *Him* away, and delivered *Him* to Pilate.

The Jewish leaders held an illegal tribunal, but despite their desire to kill Jesus, they did not have the power to sentence Jesus to death – only Rome could do that. We learned last week that even when they made up accusations, they couldn't agree on or defend them. Moreover, their issue was a religious issue, and they knew the Romans would not send a man to death for a religious reason.

Therefore, they had to create a charge that the Romans would buy to get what they wanted – to have Jesus crucified. The best they could hope for is to accuse Him of being an insurrectionist against Rome. I believe, to add credence to this accusation, they, reluctantly, told Pilate, the Roman governor of the region, that He claimed to be their King.

² Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered and said to him, "*It is as* you say."³ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. ⁴ Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!" ⁵ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

So, Jesus is brought to Pilate, and he asks Him point blank if He is the King of the Jews. Jesus confirms this. Apparently, the chief priests are there with Jesus before Pilate, and they're hurling all sorts of false accusations at Him. Jesus - remaining silent – is again fulfilling Isaiah 53:7 by being the silent lamb led to slaughter. Pilate is stunned that Jesus isn't pushing back.

⁶ Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. ⁷ And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. ⁸ Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask *him to do* just as he had always done for them.

At this time of the year – each year, the Romans had a tradition of releasing one prisoner. We learn of a man named Barabbas, and we're told that he had committed murder in a rebellion. Up until I prepared for this teaching, I had always had a simplistic notion that this guy was a bad guy – a murderer – to be juxtaposed against holy and sinless Jesus. Accordingly, I really struggled with the idea that the people who just a few days ago were cheering Jesus' entrance into the city calling Him Hosanna in the Highest would do such a complete about face on the LORD.

However, the Jews hated the Romans and their occupation of their land. Accordingly, there were Jewish zealots who would periodically attempt an insurrection against the Romans. It would appear that Barabbas killed – likely a Roman – during a rebellion. Therefore, it's possible that the people who Pilate is addressing aren't the same people that cheered for Jesus on Palm Sunday. This could have been a different crowd, perhaps orchestrated by the religious leaders, that was really there for their folk hero, Barabbas, who stood up to the cursed Roman oppressors. This is just speculation, but it helps me find some peace over how the crowd is about to act.

⁹ But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. ¹² Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do *with Him* whom you call the King of the Jews?”

The chief priests stoke the crowd to deliver Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Pilate then asks the question that every person needs to answer at some point in their life, “What do you want to do with Jesus?” Jesus is a radical – He’s not some fence-sitting, namby-pamby guy that you can ignore. He demands attention – He demands a decision about what we think of Him. Is He the Son of God, or is he a fake?

C.S. Lewis, in his great book, “Mere Christianity,” broke down the options in how one can respond to as to what do with Jesus. He could only be one of three things:

1. A mad or delusional man claiming to be the Son of God. This is a hard thing to conclude given the mountain of wisdom He provided in His teaching.
2. A cruel and awful man – trying to get people to follow Him no matter what but unable to deliver on His promises. Again, to conclude Jesus was a bad man would fly in the face of all the good, love, mercy, and grace He provided.
3. He is the Son of God. He is who He says He is.

If you think a little more about this question about what to do with Jesus, each person is, in effect, being placed in a position of judge of the LORD. I know that may sound crazy, but in choosing whether or not to believe in Jesus, you are judging His legitimacy as the Son of God and Savior. However, the irony of being in this position of judge, our judgment of Jesus is that it has no bearing on Him. Yet it has everything to do with each of us. In other words, when we judge Jesus, we’re really judging ourselves. Since salvation is only by faith, then to choose to not believe in Jesus is really a self-judgment of your eternal destination. Pretty heavy, huh?

¹³ So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁴ Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁵ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

Another gospel has Pilate’s wife warning him to not crucify Jesus because she had bad dreams that she interpreted being related to the intent to kill Him. I believe Pilate really wanted to release Jesus, but he succumbed to the will of the mob’s escalating cries. He would send Jesus to be scourged and crucified.

This may sound a bit blasphemous, but in my studying the horrors of scourging, I believe it ranks up pretty close to the awfulness of crucifixion. The normal purpose of scourging was to extract information for the purpose of condemning someone to death. A scourge consisted of multiple strips of leather with chards of broken glass and lead attached. The person doing the scourging would swing the scourge across the bare back of the accused. When pulling it off, it would literally shred the accused’s back.

From the extreme pain, the accused would confess his crime(s) - then the lashes would continue – maybe a little lighter if they were getting the info they wanted. However, Jesus had nothing to confess, so the lashes got stronger. He took the full brunt of the 39 lashes. History tells us the majority of the people who were scourged either died from blood loss or went insane due to the pain.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*,

¹⁸ and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

The Roman soldiers led Jesus away and started mocking Him. As a symbol of Him being royalty – the King of the Jews, they gave him a purple robe to wear. Then they put a crown of thorns on his head. The symbolism here is significant. After Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden, God pronounced a judgment on his sin that included cursing the ground. It will now bring forth thorns and thistles. Here we have Jesus – becoming our sin on the cross, wearing a crown that is symbolic of judgment on sin. When they were done with their mocking and hitting, they led him out to the cross.

²¹ Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. ²² And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.

This man Simon was likely coming to Jerusalem for the Passover. He likely didn’t know who Jesus was, but when the Roman guards tell you to do something, you have to do it. The LORD was no doubt in very bad shape after the scourging, and these crosses were extremely heavy. I’ve heard some Bible commentators suggest that this man would come to believe in Jesus because a “Simeon” is mentioned in Acts, and his son Rufus is noted by Paul in Romans.



Just outside the temple mount, there is a hill that is believed to be Golgotha. It’s likely called the place of the skull because there is rock face that does kind of have the appearance of a skull face – this is the above picture.

²³ Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. ²⁴ And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them *to determine* what every man should take. ²⁵ Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.

The wine mingled with myrrh was an anesthetic that was offered to those being crucified to ease the terrible pain and suffering that comes with crucifixion. Jesus denied it as He needed to feel the totality of what it likes to be tortured and died on our behalf. Their dividing Jesus’ garments and casting lots was a fulfilled prophecy from Psalm 22:18. The third hour was the equivalent of 9:00am.

²⁶ And the inscription of His accusation was written above:
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁷ With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. ²⁸ So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with the transgressors.”

In another gospel, the Jewish leaders protested at the sign placed above Him on the cross – The King of the Jews. It’s easy to understand why they wouldn’t want this as it was a judgment against their evil plan. With Him being placed between two other criminals, another prophecy was fulfilled – this one from Isaiah 53:12.

²⁹ And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! *You* who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself and come down from the cross!” ³¹ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

He saved others, Himself He cannot save. As separate individual statements – one is true, and the other is not true. These people had to admit that Jesus had healed and saved many people – they couldn’t deny it because of so many instances and witnesses. However, Jesus absolutely could have saved Himself. Jesus told Peter in Matthew that He could summon 12 legions of angels to deliver Him, so He absolutely could have saved Himself.

However, combining these two individual statements into one - “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” - is a true statement. For Jesus to save others – to save us, He could not save Himself. The only way for us to be saved – to have hope for forgiveness of sins and be reconciled to God the Father was for His only begotten Son to die on a cross. How can we not endlessly praise God for the depth of His love, mercy, and grace to go to such an extreme to demonstrate His passionate desire to reconcile us? If you’re in a tough time in life and finding it hard to praise the LORD, please remember this truth as one unshakable motivation to praise Him.

³³ Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

The sixth hour was 12:00 – noon, and the whole land goes dark for three hours. Given the Passover is always held at the time of full moon, this darkness could not have been due to an eclipse. The sun has to face the moon with no obstructions for it to be full. What caused this darkness no one really knows. Personally, I can envision the Father putting up His hand and shielding Himself and heaven from what His fallen creation – humanity – was doing to His cherished only Son.

The ninth hour was 3:00pm, and Jesus cries out to the Father asking Him why He has forsaken Him. This is the first verse of Psalm 22. Why has the Father forsaken His Son? Two verses later in this Psalm explains why, “But you are holy.” Being the representation of our sin on the cross, the purity of God’s holiness demanded that He forsake His Son. And He did this all for me and for you.

³⁵ Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” ³⁶ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last. ³⁸ Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

The people thought Jesus was calling out for Elijah who, in the Old Testament, had been caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire. They were hoping that Elijah would come back down in His chariot to rescue Jesus. They were looking for a show. The hope for that show abruptly ended when Jesus cried out

– which we learn what He said from John’s gospel, “It is finished.” What was finished? The task that would bring the propitiation of sins. Propitiation means the appeasement or settling of God’s wrath. Jesus had taken the full punishment.

Notably, sometimes it would take people being crucified as long as 5-6 days to finally die. For the LORD to die only six hours after being crucified was highly unusual. Since He was finished taking the fullness of the Father’s wrath, there was nothing more for Him to do. Jesus said in John 10:18, “No one takes it [my life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”

Throughout every step of Jesus’ three-year ministry, He was in complete control at all times. Even has He surrendered to the authorities and kept quiet through the sham of a trial and Pilate’s questions; He was still in complete control. This control went to the very end as He had the power to dismiss His own spirit. He wouldn’t have done that if He had not finished what the Father asked of Him on our behalf.

³⁹ So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!” ⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, ⁴¹ who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

The centurion, who had likely witnessed multiple crucifixions, recognized that Jesus was different. The other gospels have more detail on what Jesus said while on the cross, and the centurion probably heard all of it. I’m guessing though, he never heard of another person dismissing his spirit and dying so quickly. In just spending a few hours with Jesus, this tough soldier realized Jesus was the Son of God.

Some of the unsung heroes of Jesus’ first earthly ministry were the women who served the LORD. They fed Him, cleaned his robes, and probably made repairs to His clothes. With the exception of Jesus’ mother, Mary, who was with Him the whole time, the rest of the women were still watching the events from afar. I’m certain these women will be rewarded for their unheralded service. Please know that God is always aware of your service to Him no matter how insignificant it may appear to be, and I believe He will bless you and reward you for it.

⁴² Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Jesus died at 3:00pm. Given the Sabbath started at 6:00pm, they needed to get Jesus down from the cross and deal with His body as it was a big deal to have a dead body on the cross on the Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathea was believed to be a member of the Sanhedrin, but he was a silent follower of Jesus. He approached the surprised Pilate with the request to take Jesus’ body. Pilate was surprised because as I noted earlier, it is rare for someone who is being crucified to die in just six hours. After having this fact confirmed, he conceded to Joseph taking His body.

⁴⁶ Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

Joseph was a wealthy man, so he did what he could to treat the LORD’s body with honor in the short time He had before it was 6:00pm and the Sabbath began. There is a beautiful garden in Jerusalem quite near Golgotha that contains what is believed to be the tomb that Jesus was buried.



Above is the outside of the tomb – you can see there is a track or channel in front of the opening where the round stone would have been rolled in front of it. The below picture is the inside. Is this the actual place where Jesus was buried? I think it is impossible to know for sure. However, given the proximity to where He was crucified and how it is described in the Bible, it very well could be where Jesus was buried. I have had the great privilege to visit this place, and it is very moving to be standing in the tomb my Lord and Savior was laid to rest because of my sins. The good news....He wouldn't be resting their very long. Now we get into the final chapter of Mark – the best part.



¹ Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?”

It's Sunday morning, and the women who had been following Jesus these last three years wanted to properly anoint His dead body with spices. I think it's funny that they only thought about who is going to move the stone in front of the tomb after they already left. Turns out, as so often what happens when we worry, God already had what they were worried about handled.

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷ But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.” ⁸ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The stone was rolled away, and they go into the tomb and see what I believe is an angel. I'm just speculating here, but I'm thinking this is Gabriel. In the other gospels, He has been given tasks of giving major announcements. There is nothing more major than the news that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Why do you think the stone was rolled away? It wasn't so Jesus could get out. From chapter 20 in John's gospel, we're told the risen Lord suddenly appearing in a room where the doors were shut. The stone was rolled away to let people in and see He wasn't there any longer.

The angel informs the women to go tell His disciples – and Peter – that Jesus is going to Galilee, and they'll see Him there. Why do you think the angel singled out Peter? The legalistic, judgy person would view this as Peter was isolated out because of His denial of the LORD. The merciful and grace-filled respondent would see this is the beginning of Peter's restoration. I believe by singling out Peter, the angel is telling him that Jesus is specifically looking forward to seeing Him again. This would be the case due to the beautiful way Jesus restored Peter by telling Him to feed His lambs – meaning feed the people following Him with God's Word.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is THE central message of our faith. I want to share some verses that speak to the vital importance of believing in the resurrection. Let's start with what life looks like without the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17: “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the Father's stamp of approval on the acceptability of His sacrifice on our behalf. Consequently, the resurrection is the unshakable foundation of truth of being forgiven of every past, present, and future sin for the believer. Without the resurrection, we are not forgiven, we are dead in our sins, and we are not reconciled to God.

Romans 4:25: “who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification.

To deepen the truth of God's forgiveness through the resurrection, we are declared justified. To be justified means to be declared “Not guilty.” As unforgiven sinners, we are guilty before God. We have violated the Law. With God's forgiveness secured through Jesus' sacrifice AND resurrection, we are no longer guilty of breaking the Law. This justification by faith imparts on us Jesus' perfect righteousness that allows us to be reconciled to a righteous God. What does that mean? One more verse...

1 Peter 1:3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

Our faith in the resurrected Jesus – the living Jesus – gives us a living hope. This living hope is found in a new spiritual birth. We're born again through belief. This is what is meant by the word "begotten." We're forgiven. We're declared not guilty. We have a living hope. All of this is because of the belief in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That deserves an Amen!

⁹ Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹ And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

The first evangelist - the first witness to Jesus was a woman. I don't think that truth should be glossed over. At this time in Israel's history, women were, at best, second-class citizens. In my opinion, no other religious system has been more welcoming and acknowledging of a woman's worth than Christianity. Jesus could have first revealed Himself to anyone – He chose it to be a faithful woman.

¹² After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. ¹³ And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either.

This is an abbreviated version of another gospel's accounting of Jesus meeting with two of His followers on the road to Emaus. After realizing they were talking with the risen Jesus, they went to tell the disciples. After being told by Mary Magdalene and these two men that Jesus was risen and alive, the disciples were *still* not believing. If you recall from earlier in this gospel, Jesus *Himself* told them *three* times that He would rise three days after being killed. Yet they *still* did not believe. I'm glad I'm not the only thick-headed cynic in the world.

¹⁴ Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Jesus finally appears to the eleven – the other gospels tell us Judas went and hanged himself. The Lord gave them a bit of a tongue-lashing for their hard hearts and unbelief of the news that He had risen.

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Jesus gives the disciples the great commission – to preach the gospel to the entire world. Verse 16 is quoted by those who support baptism as being a necessary act to secure one's salvation. I can see how they might think that from the first half of the verse. However, the second half of the verse notes that it is *only* through unbelief that people will be condemned. If baptism was a mandatory component of salvation, then, I believe, Jesus would have said he who does not believe *and doesn't get baptized* will be condemned. It is by faith alone that secures one's salvation.

¹⁷ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." ¹⁹ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Jesus completes His teaching and then ascends into heaven before the disciples' eyes. I think it's important that we read that Jesus sat down at the Father's right hand. The act of sitting down is symbolic of a finished work. There was nothing more for Jesus to do to make a way for people to believe and be

saved. However, this absolutely does not mean Jesus is just lounging around until it's time for Him to return. I'll wrap this up with a couple of verses that proves this:

Philippians 1:6: "He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;"

The good work in you is your salvation. He's at work, moment by moment, in each of your lives loving on you, teaching you, correcting you, and guiding you – never leaving your sides and then will welcome you home when you breathe your last breath.

This next verse pretty much sums up not only the gospel, but also the mindset and heart set of the Lord's as to why He did what He did.

Hebrews 12:2: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I need you each to listen this. The joy that was set before Jesus that strengthened Him to go to the cross was His love for each of you. If you don't take anything else from this last 12 weeks, please, please understand that Jesus loves you, and you are a source of joy to Him. If you continue to stay in His word, I believe you will grow in your faith in Him and resemble His love to those He brings into your life.

Vickie and I cannot thank you enough for joining us on this journey. We've truly enjoyed getting to know each of you and hearing your sharing. We're abundantly blessed by you.

Starting on September 9th, I believe, in this room at 7:00pm, we'll be going through Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians. There will be childcare during this time. We understand some of you have groups to return to, but please know you are welcome at all times.

As for questions, I only have a couple.

1. Have you ever realized when Jesus said it was finished that He is in heaven working on your behalf?
2. What one thing – perhaps a new truth or a deeper understanding of a truth – did you get from this Summer's session?