

March 25, 2018

Mark 15:1-47

Palm Sunday

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The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Mark

¹⁵ As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ² Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." ³ Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁷ Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹ Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ They shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸ Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

“The Passion of Our Lord”

Palms. They were a sign of welcome, but they were also a sign of hope and expectation. In fact, by Jesus time they had also become a symbol of Judean nationalism.

Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem by the crowds because they knew he was coming, and news had already spread throughout the Galilee and all the Judean countryside about this man of God, this miracle worker and descendant of David.

And so, what the people expected; was a Messiah. A King; and a Saviour.

But Jesus brought no army, and the resistance that he did show, his resistance in the temple to the money changers, would be better described as political than militant.

When given the opportunity by the temple authorities to publicly denounce the paying of tax to Caesar his position is moderate.

And when the soldiers finally come to seize him in the Garden of Gethsemane, he rebukes his disciples use of violence and professes to the guard that he is not a rebel who needs be taken by force.

And so, as Kings go, as Saviours go, Liberators go; he is a disappointment to the people, and they reject him. Choosing Barabbas the rebel for release over Jesus.

And when Pilate asks what they would have him do with Jesus, they reply by shouting: Crucify Him, Crucify Him. Undoubtedly many of the same voices who rejoiced at his arrival only days before.

And it was not just the crowds that turned, it was Judas who was the first betrayed him, and the rest of the 12 fled too at the first sign of trouble.

And yet Jesus is never heard to condemn their treachery, nor does he curse those who curse him, he does not rebuke those who mock him, he does not even fight back against those at work to humiliate and murder him.

Instead he suffers. He suffers before them, he suffers because of them, he suffers with them, and he suffers for them. This is the way of our God, in response to the ways of his people.

And this story is our story, we can each find our place among the crowds and among his disciples.

For how often do we put our expectations upon God, how often do we dictate the way in which we are to be saved, the kind of Jesus we are willing to follow.

And when things don't go our way, when God doesn't perform the way we expected him to, are we not just as quick to cry out: Crucify him!

When we feel pressed to choose between his way and ours, do we not turn and flee from the foot of his cross.

But Christ suffers for us too, Christ endures this for us too, His passion is for us too.

Amen.