

“What Will You Do with King Jesus?”

Mark 15:1-15

Sometimes when you're reading the Bible, a statement seems to jump beyond the page from the original audience to yourself. Like when God asks Job in Job 38:4 *'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?'* when Job thought He understood the way God works. Don't we all need to think about that question when we think we have God all figured out?

Or the end of King Jehoshaphat's prayer in 2 Chron. 20:18 when faced with a vast army that far outnumbers Israel's when he says to God, “We don't know what to do but our eyes are upon you.”

And Jesus' question to His disciples about His identity in Matt. 16:16 begs all of us to answer 'But what about you, who do you say that I am?'

As we draw closer to Easter Sunday and spend a few weeks going over Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, there are 3 of these kinds of transcendent questions that I found that we need to answer ourselves. The first question I want us to study that seems to transcend the page comes from the lips of Pontius Pilate, who asked the crowd at Jesus' trial *'What shall I do then with the One you call King of the Jews?'* It is a question everyone must answer one day; what will we do with Jesus whom God says is King of the world?

Pilate had to wrestle with this question for Himself too. Why didn't he respond as he should have? Why don't people receive Jesus as their king? Is Jesus actually our king, that we have submitted to His rule for our lives?

A simple question that should have a simple answer yet too many people like the crowd, the religious leaders and Pilate all choose to reject Him or ignore Him. But you can't do that with Jesus. We have to respond to Him.

As we come to Mark 15 we are told,

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.

Let's review what has happened up to this point. Jesus and the disciples shared the Passover meal the night before. Here at the meal Jesus exposed the plot that one of the disciples would betray Him. While the other 11 never suspected Judas, he had already arranged to betray Jesus that night for 30 pieces of silver. After supper Jesus takes Peter, John and James with Him while He prays in, appropriately Gat Semane [Gethsemane] which means olive press probably in a grove of olive trees. There, like the olives being pressed by a heavy stone so the oil can come out, Jesus feels the press of the coming cross weighing heavily on His heart so that He sweats drops of blood. Yet, assuring His Father He will drink this cup of suffering, they leave the olive grove where Judas is waiting with a gang of Jewish officials and temple guards who arrest Jesus and is taken to an all-night secret, illegal trial held by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the law keepers of the Jews.

The religious leaders then bring in numerous false witnesses so they can charge Jesus with something because their key witness (Judas) has inconveniently hung himself. Jesus remains silent until He is point blanked asked 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One!' To which Jesus breaks His silence and not only admits it but proclaims, "*I am . . . and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.*"

Citing Jesus has spoken blasphemy (which He has not) the High Priest claims Jesus must die and by now it is early in the morning and they knock on Pilate's door, who I'm sure was not impressed by the Jewish leaders who annoyed him to no end with all their rules and disrespect for Rome.

As the Roman Procurator of Israel, it was Pilate's job to keep the peace in Israel, a job he did not do well. Almost every time the Jews stirred up trouble Pilate overreacted with unnecessary or excessive violence. Some of his measures backfired and got him in trouble with Rome. So here was another Jewish uprising that Pilate needed to quell. Not surprisingly the Jewish religious leaders painted Jesus as a Roman threat so they could have Him executed.

Pilate hears the charges against Jesus as a rival 'King', asks Jesus Himself over three separate sessions who He was, to which Jesus did acknowledge that He was a king from a God Himself. Pilate was ultimately faced with a challenge; would he believe in Jesus as God's chosen king? Pilate shows us that when we are faced with the evidence of who Jesus is . . .

Our View of Jesus Must be Based on Faith Not Opinions **(15:1-5)**

V.1 tells us that the Jewish leaders had already reached their "decision". They decided based on false evidence that Jesus could not be the Messiah. Even though He performed miracles and made life better for everyone wherever He went and even though He eventually proclaimed He was the Messiah the Son of God, they refused to believe Him and decided He was a phony and needed to be put to death.

But what was the real reason they wanted Jesus dead? After Jesus brought Lazarus back from death (I would call that an improvement to someone's life, wouldn't you?!) the religious leaders met and we read in John 11:45,

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place [temple] and our nation." ⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

While some people see the evidence of Jesus' healing powers and encouraging teaching of the Word of God others reject Him because they see Jesus as one who will take away their power and people who listen to them. To believe in Jesus by faith is to . . .

Believe He improves not threatens your life (John 11:45-50)

When we intellectually understand the gospel and who Jesus is for the first time, we can see Him as a threat to the way we want to live our life, wrestling with 'Will Jesus improve my life or not?'

Many people reject Jesus because they think a life of living for Jesus will be boring, joyless and rob them of the things they want to do. The things they want to do which they feel they won't be able to do if they believe in Jesus don't improve their life anyway. Which is ironic! Why do we want to do things that will not improve our life at all; now or for eternity? Jesus said in John 10:10,

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

This was a huge verse for me at the age of 24 as I wrestled with choosing to live for Jesus or myself. Can Jesus improve my life? Can He really bring abundant joy into my life that I can't find on my own? Absolutely! I have never regretted that decision and have never enjoyed life more. One of my favourite verses is Ps. 16:11

"You have made known to me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy and at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Doesn't mean we won't experience problems in this life (Jesus said we would John 16:33) but He did say he would be with us in them, He would bear them for us if we let Him take the yoke and that God is using them to make us more like Jesus.

But as Pilate weighed all this he too had a choice to make; could believing in Jesus improve His life? And could

He believe Jesus made a better King than himself (vv.1-5)

When Pilate directly asks Jesus if He is the king of the Jews, Jesus affirms it while remaining silent about the accusations against Him. Why respond to lies? Jesus' life and teachings have already attested to who He was. Now Pilate had to decide for himself. But for Pilate to believe Jesus was a King meant trouble for him from Rome. Pilate probably had aspirations himself of moving up the political ladder. Did he see himself as a potential Caesar one day? We don't know. But all of us think at one time we are doing a good job of running our own life; of being our own king. Until we experience problems that we can't control, and then realize we're not our own kings.

For Pilate to choose Jesus as his Lord and King would have been the end of his political career for sure. Surely, he heard of Jesus' miracles. Herod did and wanted to see some himself, but Jesus said nothing to Herod. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod after his first session with Jesus and when Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate having dressed Jesus in a royal robe as a joke, we read in Luke 23:12 that Pilate and Herod became friends that day. Why? Because they both agreed that Jesus being a king was a joke. Shouldn't surprise us. People who don't want Jesus to be their king will make friends with those who also don't want Jesus as king and strengthen each other's unbelief by their mutual mockery of Jesus.

Pilate thinks he is being smart by letting the people decide for themselves what to do with Jesus. He did tell them that he found no crime that warranted a death sentence. So, to gain favour with the Jews Pilate had instituted this plan to release one prisoner for them at Passover; I can only guess that he may have said something like 'In honour of your celebrating your God's passing over the death sentence for those of you who spread the lamb's blood on the doorpost so I will pass over the sentence of death for one you choose to spare. So, he suggested they choose between Barabbas, a rebellious murderer or Jesus. But Pilate was wrong like so many people are wrong about Jesus;

Jesus is Not One of Many Options

(15:6-11)

I think Pilate actually thought the people would choose Jesus over Barabbas. He knew the Sanhedrin hated Jesus and so that's why we read here "*knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests handed Jesus over to him*" (v.10). The religious leaders stirred the crowd up to ask for Barabbas' release because Barabbas was a zealot who was out to get rid of the Romans. That's what the people wanted. But . . .

Jesus gives us what we need not what we want (vv.6-8)

What we want is rarely what is good for us. Jesus came to offer people the kingdom. The Jewish religious leaders already thought they were holy enough to gain access into God's kingdom. But Jesus 'lowered the bar' on entrance into His kingdom. You must be poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for righteousness, be willing to suffer for His Name sake and your righteousness must exceed the Pharisees. Which wasn't hard because their righteousness was based on works not faith. But faith is also a high bar because one must place their trust completely in God's hand, believing His words are literal and true.

Jesus came to offer hope and abundant life through faith in Him. Jesus said love for God and neighbour was the proof of Kingdom entrance not whether you washed your hands or tithed your garden produce!

When the people choose Jesus over Barabbas the irony of course was that Jesus literally died in a guilty sinner's place. His blood was shed for Barabbas's crimes when Barabbas should have paid the price himself. That's why Jesus is not just an option. He alone can give us eternal life and forgiveness of sins – what we really need!

Only Jesus dies in our place to free us from our sins (vv.9-11)

The religious leaders wanted Jesus dead. They stirred up the crowds to ask for Barabbas' release. They were totally unaware that they themselves were part of God's plan to make forgiveness of sins available through Jesus' death. To reject Jesus is to reject God, the Bible and eternal life. The writer of Hebrews warned people who heard the gospel of Jesus but rejected Him as the sole means to forgiveness of sins:

Heb. 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Jesus proved His deity and His Sonship to the Father through His signs and sinless life. He often commanded people after He healed them not to tell others what He did because He wanted them to believe for themselves based on the evidence and comparing it with what the Scriptures said. Ironically, the religious leaders saw and acknowledged Jesus' miraculous powers yet refused to accept Him as their Lord/Messiah and in doing so sealed their own eternal destiny away from the presence of God.

When we have an opportunity to share the gospel this has to be our goal at some point; to

explain to people that none of us can have our sins forgiven without accepting Jesus' sacrifice for our sins.

As Pilate turns to the crowd once more he asks them

¹² *"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.*

Every person has to choose what they will do with Jesus, the One God declares as king of the world. Many people, when hearing the gospel by themselves want to accept Jesus but then they start listening to the majority of people or their unsaved family and friends and are intimidated or scared to make Jesus their Lord and King. We learn from Pilate and the crowds,

Don't be Intimidated to Choose Jesus as Your King **(15:12-15)**

Pilate was intimidated by this rebellious crowd and knowing what would happen to him if he didn't put this riot down, intimidated by his Romans superiors. This is nothing new. People are often afraid to choose Jesus as Lord and Saviour because they are afraid of what their families or friends or teammates or co-workers will say. There are far more people who reject Jesus than believe, so the majority can't be wrong, can they? Of course they can! Jesus warned us in Matt. 7:13-14,

¹³ *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

Pilate shows his weakness here; he doesn't make the right decision. He claimed Jesus was innocent. He had the political power to save Jesus' life but out of fear he asked the crowd what they wanted. Pilate didn't make a decision;

And no decision is a decision (vv.12-14)

Asking the crowd again what they wanted – even though he directly asked them 'What crime has He committed' – he allowed them to have their way in his life. Would choosing Jesus as his Lord resulted in Pilate losing his job? Probably. Losing his life? Possibly. But this was 1985 years ago. He could have enjoyed the presence of God and Jesus all these years (and for the rest of eternity) had he decided to believe in Jesus for himself. But he let the fear of people (instead of the fear of God) make his choice for him.

"Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified."

Pilate and the people (who were intimidated by the religious authorities) should have chosen to

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Live for the satisfaction of God not people (v.15)

The rewards of faith in God and belief in Jesus as Lord and Saviour are forever and the consequences of denying (or making no decision) for Jesus are also eternal and unchanging. We need to make sure we have placed our faith alone for the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus Christ. To think that you can get to God without Jesus is pointless. We can't pay for our sins.

Most of us here this morning have already made that decision so there are two things we need to take away from here.

1) People need Jesus in order to find true meaning in life and receive forgiveness of sins. One of the best ways we can communicate the message that Jesus improves their life is to live a joy-filled purposeful life of serving Jesus as our Lord and King.

2) Living for Jesus as Lord and King is a daily discipline not just a one-time decision. The daily discipline of obedience is the evidence that we made that decision to submit to Christ.

What areas in your life and mine do we struggle to give Jesus control over? He is King, we will give an answer to Him as to how we lived for Him. Jesus is Lord of my thoughts. Jesus is ruler of my words and actions. We must submit to His Word when He says 'Don't go there or do this' as well as 'Go and make disciples', 'Love one another as I have loved you', 'get rid of all bitterness, anger, malice', 'love God with all our heart [passions], soul [breaths/time], mind [decisions] and strength [resources].' While many of us have answered correctly the question 'What will we do with King Jesus', we need to ask ourselves each day, 'What will I do today to show Jesus is my king' so that the fellow disciples are encouraged and built up and the lost see that Jesus improves one's life and brings us true satisfaction & joy.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net