

March 10, 2013 by Steve Brandon



The Truth Comes Out

Mark 15:1-21

Jesus is ...

1. The Sovereign One (verses 1-2).
... Submit to Him.
2. The Silent One (verses 3-5).
... Wait for Him.
3. The Rejected One (verses 6-14).
... Believe in Him.
4. The Substituted One (verses 15-21).
... Trust in Him.

In recent years our nation has become increasingly interested in our judicial system. We have cable channels that are devoted entirely to showing court in session.

Sadly, the interest doesn't center around court cases involving great matters of principle or morality. The interest has revolved around the trial of celebrities. Much of it started with the trial of O. J. Simpson. I remember listening to the trial on the radio as I worked as a computer programmer. In our office, we had it on in the background. Frequently there would be updates. Much of the time, the radio station broadcasted the trial itself. When the verdict was announced, I was standing in a room with twenty other people, watching the television. When O. J. Simpson was declared innocent, there was a shock in the room. Some said, "I can't believe it!" Others said, "I knew it!" During those days, I was working at a hospital. The head cook made arrangements that there would be free orange juice for the rest of the week in the cafeteria. (Get it? Free O. J.?)

Since the O. J. Simpson trial, there have been other high profile court cases. Scott Peterson and Michael Jackson. In recent days, it has been Jodi Arias. And I'm sure the trial of Oscar Pistorius (the blade-runner) in South Africa is going to bring much attention, even here in the United States.

This morning, we have the opportunity to hear about the most famous, the most interesting, and the most important trial of all time. I'm talking about the Roman trial of Jesus Christ.

The Roman trial of Jesus is filled with drama. We have an innocent man, who is accused by an envious group of men. The accused stands before the highest court in the land. The outcome seems to hang in the balance. At one moment, it appears that He will be let free. At another moment, it appears as if the crowds will get their way. Before the trial is over, the entire nation is involved, helping to decide the verdict and punishment.

The account of this trial is found in Mark, chapter 15 and verses 1-21. In this passage, we find Jesus standing before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Jesus had already been tried by the Sanhedrin and found guilty of blasphemy at his religious trial (Mark 14:64). In our text today, our attention will be focused upon the Roman trial. Let's first consider the text. As I read it, please notice what it teaches us about Jesus Christ.

Mark 15:1-21

Early in the morning the chief priests with 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 any one prisoner whom they requested. The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. 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 palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to

crucify Him.

They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

My message this morning is entitled, "The Truth Comes Out." The purpose of any trial is to understand the truth of the accused. Then, the verdict can be pronounced. In this text, we see four characteristics of Jesus. Each of them call us to action.

Jesus is ...

1. The Sovereign One (verses 1-2).

In verse 1 we pick up the scene in the inner chambers of the courtroom. The religious leaders, who had been trying Jesus, were in consultation with each other. They were seeking to determine a course of action based upon everything that they had heard. And they had heard much.

When you piece together the various gospel accounts, you see that there were two phases to the religious trial of Jesus. Initially, Jesus came before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:13-24). Then, Jesus appeared before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65). After counsel together, they concluded that they should send Jesus off to Pilate.

The religious leaders wanted to see Him put to death (Mark 14:64). They didn't have the authority to do so. But, Pilate did. And so, off Jesus went to visit Pontius Pilate.

In verse 2, we find Jesus standing before Pilate, being asked by Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" In reading Mark's account of this trial, this question appears to have come from nowhere. When standing before the religious leaders, Mark makes no mention of them accusing Jesus as being a king. But, I remind you that the gospel accounts aren't complete narratives of everything that happened. These writers have been selective in their material. Mark gets right down to his main point -- Jesus is the King of the Jews. Or, as I have said, "Jesus is the Sovereign One."

Luke fills us in regarding what happened before this. The Jews had come to Pilate and had told him of the wrong that Jesus had done. They knew that "blasphemy" (Mark 14:64) wouldn't fly as a charge in the Roman Courts. If they would have brought this charge to Pilate, he would have dismissed the case as a religious matter, which the religious leaders could decide.

Do you remember when Paul was standing before Agrippa, the Roman governor? The Jews made the accusation against him that pertained to the Jewish Law that Jesus was the Messiah and that Jesus was risen from the dead (Acts 26:22-23). Agrippa said, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment. [He] might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (Acts 26:31-32). In other words, the Romans weren't in the custom of trying Jews on matters pertaining to their own law. Those who brought Jesus before Pilate knew this. And so, they came up with another charge before Pilate.

Luke records how the religious leaders came to Pilate, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King" (Luke 23:2). I trust that you see the irony in these words. Should these things prove to be true, certainly this man is no friend of Rome. But, such matters aren't the things that would cause the religious leaders to be at odds with Jesus. The Jews hated the Romans. So, anyone leading people in rebellion against Rome was their hero, not their enemy deserving of death.

There must be something deeper going on. I believe that Pilate understood clearly what was going on with this conversation. Yes, these religious leaders were presenting Jesus to Pilate as one who was against Rome! But, Pilate knew full well that the issue wasn't that Jesus was against Rome. Pilate knew full well that the issue was that Jesus was against the religious establishment.

Of all the accusations that were brought before Pilate, he picks up on this aspect of Jesus claiming to be a king. Pilate asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (verse 2). Jesus answered, "It is as you say." (verse 2).

Jesus responds with clarity and affirmation. "Yes, Pilate, I am king of the Jews."

When Jesus walked this planet, His teaching was saturated with "kingdom terminology." He spoke much about the kingdom. The main message of Jesus was, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Jesus went about Israel "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). In the most famous sermon that Jesus ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, it was all about the characteristics of those who were in the kingdom and those who were out of the kingdom (Matt. 5:3, 19, 20; 6:33; 7:21-23).

Nearly an entire chapter of Mark is devoted to Jesus teaching about the nature of the kingdom of God (Mark 4). Jesus told His disciples of how the Son of Man will come in His kingdom (Mark 9:1). Jesus spoke about the characteristics of those who enter the kingdom (Mark 10:14-15) and those who didn't. Jesus challenged a rich man of how he might enter the kingdom (Mark 10:23). Jesus spoke of who would be in the kingdom and who would be out of the kingdom (Matthew 8:12; 21:43; 25:34). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus spoke about His return, when he would establish His kingdom (Mark 13). When celebrating the Passover with His disciples one last time, again the kingdom was the focus. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25).

Why was Jesus speaking so much about the kingdom? Because He, Himself is the King of that kingdom! Frequently Jesus presented Himself as the One who would determine who would get into the kingdom and who would be left out of the kingdom. As the king of the

kingdom of God, Jesus is "the Sovereign One."

I want for you to notice that this was the official charge in the death of Jesus. The Romans used to place placards above those who were being crucified to detail the crimes that they had committed so that those who walked could observe the crucifixions would know clearly why the criminal was being put to death. Notice in verse 26 that the sign placed above His head during the crucifixion read, "The King of the Jews." Jesus Christ was killed for being the king of the Jews. Pilate got it exactly right. Jesus is the king. He is the "sovereign one." He is the one who rules and reigns over all!

I do not believe that it was an accident that Jesus was crucified for being king. Do you remember the outcome of the religious trial? Jesus was charged with being the Messiah! The Jews got it exactly right, while getting it exactly wrong. Here, the Roman trial is exactly the same. Jesus was charged with being the King! Pontius Pilate got it exactly right, while getting it exactly wrong.

John's gospel tells us that Jesus told Pilate how His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). Jesus told Pilate that he had no authority over Jesus unless it had been given to him "from above" (John 19:11). Pilate should have bowed his weak and feeble knee to Jesus right then and there. A bended knee is how you respond to the king. But, he refused. Instead, "he delivered Him to be crucified" (Mark 15:15).

Now, Jesus hardly looked like a king at this moment. When we think of kings, we think of royal crowns and majestic robes and authoritative words coming from his mouth! We think of servants scurrying around the throne, doing whatever is requested. We think of power and might. But here, we find Jesus, beaten down, humbled, and seemingly not in control. Remember, before Jesus came to Pilate, he was first spit upon and beaten and slapped in the face by the Jewish officers (Mark 14:65). He looked mangy and beaten, not at all like a king.

But, looks can be deceiving. Indeed, Jesus is the Sovereign One. In Mark 16, we shall see Jesus raised from the dead. We shall see Jesus in glory and honor and power. But not yet.

This is a great picture of Jesus at the current moment. Though Jesus is the sovereign one right now, it doesn't look like He is reigning right now. First of all, we don't see Him. Second, the world appears to be in such rebellion against Him. His commands are not being carried out. There is little respect for Him now. Rather than a name used with reverence, the name of Jesus is often used as a curse!

This is what it looked like on that day when Jesus stood before Pilate. So obvious was this that the charges of Him being a king should have been dismissed. But, I guarantee you that there is coming a day when the Sovereign One will begin to assert His reign. All of His subjects will be glad on that day. But, those who have rebelled against the King of kings and the Lord of lords will find themselves in trouble on that day.

The lesson for us is quite clear. He is "The Sovereign One" and so, submit to Him. This is the only way that you will obtain salvation: by submitting your life to Him. You do that by turning from your ways and trusting His ways; by believing in Him. You do that by bowing your knee and loving and worshiping Jesus. He is the sovereign one who is worth of our affection and praise. Submit to Him!

Not only is Jesus The Sovereign One (verses 1-2). Jesus is also ...
2. The Silent One (verses 3-5).

This is amazing. Mark records for us in verse 3 how "the chief priests began to accuse Him harshly." In verse 4 we read that Pilate questioned Him as well, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" And through it all, we read in verse 5, "But Jesus made no further answer." Pilate was amazed that Jesus gave no response. Verse 5 exactly tells us, "Pilate was amazed."

Let's just think about what was happening here. Verse 3 tells us that the religious leaders questioned Jesus "harshly." The New American Standard Bible gives the literal rendering, "of many things." He is accused of much. That's why Pilate said, "See how many charges they bring against You?" Can you imagine the wave upon wave of accusations that were being hurled at Jesus?

"Jesus, you said that you could tear down the temple in three days and build it again. When exactly are you going to desecrate this wonderful building that Herod (may he live forever) built for us? How do you possibly think that you will do this? Will you desecrate public property?"

"Jesus, you told us that you are our king! Pilate is our governor. Caesar is our king! We have no other (John 19:15). How can you claim to be king? You are being tried in a Roman court! What do you have to say for yourself now? You aren't even a lawful Roman citizen! When asked about paying taxes, you never came out and said that we should pay taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:17). Why don't you come out and tell this to Pilate? Are you scared?"

"Jesus, you are a law breaker! We have specific traditions that have been handed down to us by our fathers, and you transgress them. You eat your bread without first washing your hands (Mark 7:2). Many times you have broken the Sabbath. You associate yourself with sinners (Mark 2:15-17). You don't fast like our fathers have told us to (Mark 2:18). You have picked grain on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-27). You have healed sick people on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-5). You are no Jew! You have betrayed our nation!"

"Jesus, we saw all of those wicked things that you did. You cast demons out of people! Surely, you are ruled by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:23-27)."

"Jesus, we are the leaders of the Jewish people, and yet, on countless occasions, you have refused to obey us. We have asked you to give us a sign, and you have disobeyed (8:11). We have told you to stop people from worshiping you, but you have allowed it to continue (Matthew 21:16). We have asked you many questions, but you have refused to answer us (Mark 12). We have asked you to give us the source of your authority, but you have refused (Mark 12:27-33). You are a rebellious citizen of Israel. You are a disgrace to our people and ought to be ashamed to be called a 'Jew.'"

"Pilate, we present this man to you. He has been rebellious to our authority all along. You will certainly find him rebelling against you and your reign as well. We suggest that you dispose of Him today."

And among all of these accusations, Jesus never once opened His mouth. "Jesus made no ... answer" (verse 5).

It is the natural response of people to defend themselves. I know that when I am accused of a wrong that I did or a sin that I committed, my natural tendency is to put up my defenses and tell this individual why it is that he is wrong in what he is saying. It is my tendency to point out the speck in your eye, while ignoring the log in my own. It takes a great deal of self-control to remain silent when being accused; especially when such accusations are so obviously false.

In the case of Jesus here, He was fully capable of refuting every single one of these accusations. He could have demonstrated how each one of them were false. He could have demonstrated how it was that He was being slandered in such things! He could have turned the tables and caused the chief priests and elders to look like fools. But, to do so would have meant that He wouldn't have gone to the cross. And so, Jesus was silent.

Jesus didn't even respond to Pilate. Mark writes of how "Pilate was amazed" (verse 5).

This silence is so contrary to human nature! But, this is exactly the point. Jesus was truly divine in this moment. James said, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). At this moment, Jesus was demonstrating His perfection as a man. He was able to keep silent when being accused unjustly.

In remaining silent, Jesus fulfilled yet another Scriptural prophecy regarding the Messiah. The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Thus ends the first phase of the Roman trial. From other gospel accounts, we learn that Jesus was carted off to Herod at this point, who questioned Jesus as well. Jesus refused to say anything to Herod as well. Listen to Luke's testimony:

Luke 23:8-11

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

Thus ends the second phase of the Roman trial of Jesus. Through it all, Jesus was silent. He was the meek and humble lamb, who was prepared to be a sacrifice for our sins.

Should Jesus have spoken, His words would have stopped the trial in its tracks. Remember when the religious leaders all came up to Jesus to ask Him their most difficult theological questions that they were sure would stump Him? He answered the questions so well that "after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions" (Mark 13:34). Should Jesus have defended Himself at the trial, "no one would dare from that day on to accuse Him anymore." And He never would have died for our sins! How important it was that Jesus remained silent.

Again, like our first point, this is such a good picture of our Lord right now. He is "the Silent One." Right now, His voice doesn't boom out! Right now, Jesus isn't thundering wrath to the world for all of its rebellion against Him. His word is in the pages of the Bible. They are waiting to be read. They are being expounded by men across the planet. He is quietly waiting at the right hand of God. There will be a day when He returns to set things straight.

In the meanwhile, our application is clear: He is "the Silent One," we ought to wait for Him. As Jesus was patient and meek and humble, so ought we to wait for Him in patience and humility and meekness.

This is often the testimony of God's people. Consider the following Psalms. Psalm 130:5 says, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word do I hope." Psalm 25:5 says, "You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day." And we read again of waiting in Psalm 37:7, "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him".

Jesus is The Silent One (verses 3-5). Wait for Him. Thirdly, Jesus is ...
3. The Rejected One (verses 6-14).

This couldn't be any clearer. Jesus was rejected by the Romans. Jesus was rejected by the Jewish people.

Verse 6 begins the third phase of the Roman trial. At this point, Pilate knew two things. First, he knew that Jesus was innocent. In verse 14, Pilate said to the crowd, "what evil has He done?" Second, Pilate knew that the religious leaders were trying to pull a fast one on him. In verse 10 we read that Jesus was delivered over to him "because of envy." In other words, it's because the religious leaders hated Jesus that they turned Him in.

You don't get to Pilate's position of power without a sense of right and of wrong, without a sense of justice. And so, Pilate initiated His plan to free Jesus. The Passover was "national amnesty day." It was the day in which Rome would extend an act of kindness and good will to the Jewish people in an effort to keep them happy. They would release a prisoner of choice to the Jews. Verse 6, "Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested."

This might sound a bit strange to us. We don't usually release any criminals, especially if they are guilty. Though, admittedly, the president can offer full pardons. But, this type of thing still takes place in Israel today. The land of Israel today is much like it was during the days of Jesus. The Israeli government controls the entire land, but, they do give a bit of self-rule to the Palestinians, who live in the land. This is much like it was in the days of Rome's occupation of Palestine. Furthermore, the Palestinians hate the Israelis who govern them. This also is much like it was for Israel when under Roman occupation. As a result, there are many Palestinians who are captured doing things against the Israeli government. Israel has captured these men and have imprisoned them. From time to time, Israel will release a bunch of these prisoners, often to free a hostage that the Palestinians have captured. They may release dozens of prisoners in return for the hostage. It's an effort of the Israeli government to show that they are interested in peace.

In the days of Jesus, such a thing happened on a yearly basis. In this case, Jesus was a prisoner. Pilate considered Him to be a great candidate to be released. Now, there was another man who was being held. His name was Barabbas (verse 7). Matthew called him "a notorious prisoner" (Matthew 27:16). Certainly, the jail was no strange place for Barabbas. He had probably been in and out of jail on many occasions. He was probably on a first-name basis with all of the prison guards.

Barabbas was the scum of society. He was a no-good, dirty, rotten scoundrel. And everyone knew it. Pilate knew it. The religious leaders knew it. And the crowds knew it. He was your Al Capone. He was your Charles Manson. He was your Jeffrey Dahmer. These are all names so familiar to us that their crimes need not be mentioned.

On this occasion, Barabbas was "imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection" (verse 7). Perhaps there was some doubt as to his involvement in the murders, themselves. But, he certainly had some sort of hand in it. In some regards, he might be like Osama Bin Laden's son, who was recently captured, and is now facing trial in New York. The big question is this: "How much involvement did Osama Bin Laden's son have in the terrorist attacks against our country?" Such may have been the question with Barabbas.

And so, when the crowd began asking [Pilate] to release a prisoner for them (verses 6, 8), Pilate presented Jesus to everyone. In verse 9, Pilate asks, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" I believe that he was fully expecting the crowds to say, "Yes! Release Jesus!" This was the point of verse 10, "For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy."

Certainly, Pilate knew of the hero's welcome that Jesus had received only a few days before as He entered into the city (Mark 11:1-9). Jesus came rolling into town, riding on a donkey and the crowds were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:10).

But, such was not the case. Instead, the crowds asked for Barabbas instead (verse 11). Now, it wasn't because they thought of this idea themselves. It was the chief priests who "stirred up the crowd to ask" for Barabbas (verse 11). Pilate couldn't believe it. Verse 12 records that he asked the question again. "Then what shall I do with Him who you call the King of the Jews?" "If you want Barabbas, what do you want me to do with Jesus?" They all said, "Crucify Him!"

Even when Pilate tries to reason with the crowd by asking, "Why? What evil has He done?" (verse 14), it doesn't work. They continued shouting all the more, "Crucify Him!" This became their chant.

From Luke's account, we read of Pilate telling the crowd, "I have found in Him no guilt demanding death" (Luke 23:22). They responded, "Crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21, 23). Pilate also said, "I will punish Him and release Him" (Luke 23:22). But, again, they cried out, "Crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21, 23).

From John's account, we get yet another slant. Pilate presented Jesus before the people and said, "Behold Your King!" (John 19:15). They cried out, "We have no king but Caesar ... Crucify Him" (John 19:15).

Pilate was getting nowhere. Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere. The mob mentality was taking over. In fact, he was losing ground. This is what Matthew tells us, "Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather ... a riot was starting" (Matthew 27:24). The last thing that Pilate needed was a riot, which would get back to Rome that he wasn't doing a very good job governing the nation. So, "wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:15).

Before delivering Jesus up, Pilate took one last opportunity to declare how innocent Jesus was. He took out a pitcher of water and washed his hands for all to see, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood." (verse 24). "I have found Him to be innocent. You have resisted my findings. Here, have it your way. But realize that you are the ones killing Him, not me! I'm innocent of this whole matter." The Jewish crowd clearly understood what Pilate was saying. They accepted full responsibility for the death of Jesus. They said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (verse 25). In other words, "We accept full responsibility!"

Clearly, Jesus is "The Rejected One." Can you see the contrast between these two men? Jesus was the pure and righteous one. Barabbas was the evil and wicked one. Jesus had done no wrong and deserved to be set free. Barabbas had done much wrong and deserved to die for his crimes.

Here is our lesson: Jesus is "the Rejected One," so we ought to believe in Him. Don't be like the crowds who chose Barabbas over Jesus. We say, "Oh, but certainly, I would never make such a choice!" But, in reality, you make this same choice every day when you are confronted with a decision of whether or not you will sin. Every day and in every way, you are constantly making a choice between these two. Whenever you are confronted with an opportunity to sin or to walk in righteousness, it is a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. These crowds were unbelieving and haters of Jesus, as they chose Barabbas instead. So, too, when you choose sin, you are choosing Barabbas over Jesus.

Stuart Townend captured it well in His song, "How Deep the Father's Love For Us."

Behold the Man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice,
Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that left Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished [\[1\]](#)

When you sin, your mocking voice cries out, "Crucify Him!!" along with the crowds.

But the good news of the gospel is this: Many of those who shouted out, "Crucify Him!" repented fifty days later. On the day of Pentecost, which is 50 days after the Passover, Peter preached to a crowd of people who had assembled in the temple. He said, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Peter said that "you crucified" Jesus Christ. I believe that many of the same people who heard Peter preach were in the crowd that shouted, "Crucify Him." On that day, three thousand souls repented of their sins, were baptized and added to the church.

The same is true for you. Though you sin and choose Barabbas over Jesus, there is still hope. It's in the crucified and resurrected Messiah! Believe in Him!

I have one last point this morning. Jesus is ...
4. The Substituted One (verses 15-21).

Look at verse 15 again, "Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified." I want for you to notice here how the one who deserved to die was set free. Notice also that the one who deserved to go free was delivered over to be killed.

Scripture tells us that Jesus wasn't the only one who was killed on that day. In verse 27, we read that "They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left." I'm sure you have seen the pictures or seen monuments with these three crosses. The Romans had prepared these three crosses for these three criminals. I believe that these three crosses were for the two thieves and for Barabbas. Catch this, not only did Barabbas go free, but Jesus took his place on the cross.

When you see these pictures or monuments of the three crosses, I know that you rightly think about the two thieves and Jesus. And this is good. However, I think that it would do you a world of good to think of their original intention. It was two thieves and Barabbas to be crucified upon these crosses. But, somehow, in some way, by some miraculous turn of events, Barabbas never made it to the cross assigned to him. Jesus became his substitute, dying in his place.

This is a great picture of what Christ has done for us who believe. He has taken our place! Every single one of us without exception deserve to be nailed to a cross and to die for our own sins. But Jesus willingly took up the cross for us. He became our substitute.

This is a key concept to understand and embrace. Charles Spurgeon once summarized the theory of atonement by one word. He said, "There are in the world many theories of atonement; but I cannot see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of substitution." [\[2\]](#)

This is the good news, Jesus, dying in your place as your substitute. An often quoted verse is 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This is the glorious truth that compels us to gather each week on Sunday mornings. This truth is what drives us to the Bible to read of everything that God has done for us. We believe that Jesus took our place on the cross. This truth is what drives us to meet with other Christians and to spread this news.

The number of passages in the Bible that contain this concept is amazing. This morning I will give you ten verses that say this. However, understand that I could give you three times as many!

1. John 10:11 - I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for His sheep. (i.e. He lays it down in our place).
2. Romans 5:8 - God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (i.e. Christ died instead of us dying).
3. 1 Corinthians 15:3 - Christ died for our sins. (i.e. our sins deserved death. But, Christ died instead of us).
4. Galatians 2:20 - The Son of God "loved me and delivered himself up for me.
5. Ephesians 5:2 - Christ gave Himself up for us. (i.e. He was delivered up in our place).
6. Titus 2:14 - Christ gave Himself up for us.
7. Hebrews 10:12 - Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for all time.
8. 1 Peter 2:21 - Christ suffered for you.
9. 1 Peter 3:18 - Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous.
10. 1 John 3:16 - He laid down His life for us.

I want for you to think about the freedom that Barabbas experienced. One moment he is on death row, awaiting his cruel death in the morning. The next moment, he is set free! He can go home to see his mother. He can get on his donkey, and ride into town, where he can order a falafel at his favorite restaurant. He can go carousing with his friends once again. The freedom that redeemed souls face is no less real than the freedom that Barabbas faced.

If you have trusted in Christ, you are free from your sin! Jesus took all of your punishment. You no longer have a sentence of death against you! You are free! How are you going to use that freedom?

The lesson for us is clear. Jesus is "the substituted one." So, we should trust in Him.

In the last few verses of our text, we see the suffering of Jesus. Before the Romans would place anyone upon the cross, they would first beat them down, that they might be lifted up in a weakened state.

Mark 15:16-17

The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;

He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear the crown of glory (verse 17).

Mark 15:18

and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

He was mocked that we might be honored (verse 18).

Mark 15:19

They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.

He was beaten that we might be healed (verse 19).

Mark 15:20

After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him.

He was stripped of His royal clothes that we might be clothed with His (verse 20)

Mark 15:20

... And they led Him out to crucify Him.

He was put to a painful death that we might enjoy pleasures forevermore (verse 20).

Mark 15:21

They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

He was weak that we might be strong (verse 21).

Jesus is The Substituted One (verses 15-21). Trust in Him.

I want to close my message with an illustration from verse 21. In recent days, I have been reading about Charles Simeon, a pastor in England in the late 1700's and early 1800's. He was a faithful man, who influenced many during his lifetime.

In his church, he faced much conflict. Initially, he wasn't received well into the congregation, because he wasn't the man that the people wanted. But, as he was appointed to the position, the people had little choice. So, they protested any way that they could. For the first dozen years of his ministry, they locked their pews. Meaning, that nobody could sit in the pews during the Sunday morning worship services. He preached to the aisles!

Furthermore, the congregation refused to allow him to preach on Sunday evenings. They hired their own man to do this for them. There were two voices -- two opposites -- preaching to the congregation. Yet, Simeon endured the trials that he faced, and ended up pastoring Trinity Church in Cambridge for 54 years (1782-1846).

He found particular strength in verse 21. Listen to what he wrote, ...

Many years ago, when I was an object of much contempt and derision in this University, I strolled forth one day buffeted and afflicted with my little Testament in my hand. I prayed earnestly to my God, that he would comfort me with some cordial from his Word, and that on opening the book I might find some text which should sustain me. ...

I thought I would turn to the Epistles, where I should most easily find some precious promise; but my book was upside down, so without intending it I opened on the Gospels. The first text which caught my eye was this, 'They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross.' You know Simon is the same name as Simeon. What a word of instruction was here--what a blessed hint for my encouragement! To have the Cross laid upon me, that I might bear

it after Jesus -- what a privilege! It was enough. Now I could leap and sing for joy as one whom Jesus was honouring with a participation in his suffering. ...

And when I read that, I said, Lord, lay it on me, lay it on me; I will gladly bear the Cross for thy sake. ^[3]

Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 10, 2013 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] "How Deep The Father's Love For Us". By Stuart Townend. © 1995 Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing).

[2] "The Death of Christ," delivered on Sunday Morning, January 24, 1858, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

[3] Derek Prime, Charles Simeon: An ordinary pastor of extraordinary influence, p. 80.