

Mark 15:1-15 - Barnabas and Pilate

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Preacher: Zac Prosser

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. I want to start off by throwing out a statement. Do you know that the most valuable resource in the world is worth \$4 trillion?! And it's not gold. It's not Bitcoin. It's not even printer ink. It is cookies. And I know that sounds kind of crazy. You're thinking, cookies? What's this going about? Well, it's not maybe the chocolate chip ones you get at Tesco.

We're talking about the ones that kind of pop up at the bottom of your Internet Explorer. And it's the most required resource in this century.

In fact, even AI and everything that's going into it is based off of data points and information that is collected from things like cookies. In fact, it was originally just used to store carts so that every time you went on a web page and checked out and maybe left something behind that you could go back to it and it wouldn't lose your information.

But now it has been taken over and it collects up to 5,000 data points per person. So each and every one of us has a unique amount of data points, whether it be your income, where you live, your activities behind, whether or not you go to the shop straight after you leave work, or if you text a message to somebody to say, oh, man, today's been tough. Ben and Jerry's advert pops up straight on your Instagram.

So data points are so important because they define who the person is and they can create a persona out of that. So it would therefore reflect identity as such an important thing in our generation.

[1 : 4 0] And yet it seems as though identity is what our world is having the biggest struggle with at the moment. And it's quite easy to take the low hanging fruit and sort of say, look, we can look into society and say, hey, you can't even define maybe what a woman is these days and say identity is a struggle in that sense.

But I want to maybe pick up on some lighter stuff that is the fact that I started to pick up on that being a sort of a movie guy that even villains in superhero films or anything just don't seem to be villains anymore.

I don't know if you've recognized that. They just seem to be misunderstood people, people that don't have necessarily, you know, like 101 Dalmatians back in the day.

Right. It was like we had Cruella de Vil wanting to skin dogs to make coats out of them. And there was no one out here saying, you know what, she's just misunderstood. She wanted everyone loves a good dog story and no one wanted fur coats out of that.

So we could clearly define the difference between good and bad. And yet nowadays it seems to be, oh, man, that person was going to take over the world. But you know what? They just had a really rough morning.

[2 : 5 2] And so actually they're entitled to do that. And so, you know, we can't judge them on the basis of the fact that they're not actually bad. They've just been through some stuff. And so the definition of what is right and what is wrong is getting blurred and our identity as to who we are.

And precise. These data points about us don't actually define us in a way that makes us feel any more unique than the next person. So why is that such a big deal? Why is that such an important point to open on?

Well, it's really damaging. It's really damaging to know that in a world that is so hell-bent on identifying who we are as individuals and proclaiming who we are that we actually don't know who we are.

And it chips away at us kind of piece by piece. And with this objective view that there isn't a right or wrong way to live, that everyone's just kind of finding their own path. Well, today we're going to be looking at the importance of knowing our identity and how privileged we are as Christians to know our purpose.

And we're going to be looking at Brabus. And it's easy to say that this is a story or an account that is very popular. And a lot of Christians growing up in the church, you probably heard the story hundreds of times.

[4 : 08] And so I could say, look, I've been researching this like crazy, and I want you to go away with something new. But actually, I want you to go away remembering a fundamental cornerstone content of your Christian faith.

I don't necessarily... I'd love it if you learned something new. But if you were challenged to go back to look at those first initial days when you became a Christian and to be reminded of the goodness of God and to reignite that passion and that love and that desire for your Christian walk today, then that would mean so much more to me.

So before we get into the passage, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, that you made us, each and every one of us, unique in our own ways.

Heavenly Father, thank you that this morning we can open your text, Lord, that we can look and we can see of identity strewn in so many different places, Lord. But Father, we know where our identity lies, Lord, with you.

And Father, we just pray, Father, that we would not run away from that truth. Lord, that we would embrace this passage not as a means of saying, look, Lord, these people did it wrong, Lord, and we are so much better, Lord.

[5 : 17] But we would look at it, we'd be challenged by it, Lord. And we would come away, Lord, with a new sense of life and purpose, Lord, in you. In your son's name, Jesus. Amen.

Amen. So if you open your Bibles, it's Mark chapter 15, verses 1 to 15. I'm going to read through the passage to start with, and then we'll sort of break down each of the verses as we go.

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

And Pilate asked him, are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, which is the key phrase of today's sermon, you have said so. And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him, have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further answer. So that Pilate was amazed.

[6 : 25] Now at the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them saying, do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him raise for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, then what shall I do with the young, with the man you call the king of the Jews?

And they cried out again, crucify him. And Pilate said to them, why, what evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, crucify him. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas.

And having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. So we can see from this first verse that there is a sense of urgency. We can see from a quick reminder of G's sermon, Jeff's sermon a few weeks ago, that Jesus had this mock trial in front of Annas at night.

[7 : 37] And basically everything that was happening was taking place that was illegal anyway. And so there was this rush to get everything through outside of what was actually properly should have taken place.

And so I encourage you to check that out if you haven't checked that out. And so this was the morning after. And the Jews weren't allowed to carry out capital punishment during this time.

So having gone from doing this mock trial, they're now looking to then create the power, give it to the Romans to basically condemn Jesus to death. Now, something about that is that the Roman trials would take place first thing in the morning.

I think mainly probably because of the fact that it was a really productive time of the day. I don't know. It just is one of those things that they tended to do. But it worked out in a way well for the Sanhedrin in this case, because it meant that there was a period of time in between where people could contest the judgment that was poured out in the court already to object to what had been basically brought about as the final outcome of this trial.

And so they were able to rush from the mock trial straight into the Roman trial. But also, those were the triumphal entry as Jesus came in to celebrate Passover.

[9 : 01] As he came in through, the Galileans would have been basically who were Jesus' people. They would have been based maybe outside of the city.

So we've spoken before about how it kind of gets crowded. It gets cramped around this time. And there would have been the main Jews of Jerusalem in the center. And then as it worked its way out further and further, it would have got busier up on the hills.

They would have been camping out on the hills. And this is important because it means that in the morning when they're rushing and getting things done as soon as they possibly could, it means that everything is taking place kind of in the center.

And these people outside on the hills wouldn't have even woken up at this point or maybe didn't have the time to travel down into the city as of yet. So the Jews in Jerusalem, I've got to admit, didn't have the best relationship with the Galileans anyway because of the fact of the North and South divide anyway.

But also because they believed that they were Hellenistic, that they were kind of filtered out, that their views and opinions were kind of getting tainted by the Greeks in that sense.

[10 : 06] And so they were getting more philosophical. They weren't sort of heading towards the Torah and understanding it in the sense that it should have been. So there was kind of like a superiority complex that we've already seen happening with the Sanhedrin.

And it's kind of this idea of like, I don't know if you've ever spoken to somebody from London. And if they're from central London, they will constantly say, oh, are you from London?

Oh, yeah, I'm from London. And they go, yeah, but are you from London? And like, you actually, if you're not pretty much in Buckingham Palace, you're not classed as a Londoner at this point. And so any like two or three stops out of the main center and it's like, come on, you're basically in Reading.

So it's kind of that mentality that the Jews of Jerusalem had about those that were visiting or that were outside of Jerusalem. It was kind of the hub of those that were considered, you know, the focus mainly of really religious people.

But notice that they bound Jesus too. They bound him with ropes. And as Jeff alluded to in the fact that in the Garden of Gethsemane, when they came and arrested as well, that they had all these soldiers around.

[11 : 18] And it was kind of like, why would you need all the soldiers around? Up until this point, Jesus has not been violent. He's not basically thrown anyone under the bus or said anything that has caused a riot.

But in this instance, it's kind of this one opportunity of power that they've bound him and taken him through. And they're taking him through to the pilot, to the courtroom.

And it's just this kind of switch of, look, this is a guy that up until this point, we've been kind of standing off in the crowds. We've been looking in, we've been saying, oh man, like he comes up with some great answers.

And now they get the opportunity to finally say, look, you know, we're not scared anymore. We're not scared of the masses. It's early in the morning. We can just take him, bind him. There's something in it for us. And we get to sort of parade him through the square.

So then they deliver him over to pilot. This is a new character that we sort of come across. So who is pilot?

[12 : 17] Well, he was a prefect. And in the sense of he's not one of those really annoying kids at school that has a badge that basically means that he gets to tell people that they shouldn't be out in the corridors during class time.

He was, I'm sorry if anyone was that. He basically, he was a prefect. It was a military position. So he, they were basically given a charge or, and so the best way to describe it is there was specific regions and responsibilities given to different prefects.

And so a prefectus equitatus was a cavalry commander. A prefectus maritime was defending the coast.

So you need to brush up on your duolingo Roman if you didn't, haven't picked up on that so far. But basically these were just people that had been given a role and a responsibility.

And pilot's role and responsibility was a provincial prefect, which meant that he kept law and order in the region. Now, was this a good job? I don't know if you've seen many videos of the U.S. Air Force when they get assigned their planes, basically, from the academy straight into graduating.

[13 : 33] But it's in a sort of a large hall similar to this. And all of the pilots are off to, the junior pilots are off to one side. They have a similar big screen coming up. And the way in which they sort of present it these days is they play like a clip of the plane or something that they're going to be a part of.

And so you've got people over here just absolutely hyped when they see like a fighter jet come up on the screen, because that means that they're basically going to be on the front line and get the coolest planes. And then you just see like the cargo plane pop up.

And the kid over here looks distraught because he basically has just been given a duff deal in like what could probably have been, you know, one of the greatest moments for him, especially like in front of the family and things like that.

So in this example, what would I equate pilots role and responsibility to? He would have been probably stood off to the side and then like head of air traffic control for Heathrow Airport pops up on the screen.

So basically, again, it's not necessarily like I'm not hating on the ATC guy at Heathrow. He's probably got an amazing job, but it was it was seen maybe more as a stepping stone into something greater.

[14 : 40] He had a huge role and responsibility. I can't take away from that. Basically, this region had immense value for military and economic value.

So everything kind of went through there, whether it be goods or, yeah, just armies and surplus and things like that. And there was a port that was built by Herod the Great that was, in fact, one of the ancient wonders of the world or considered like one of the greatest ancient wonders of the world, which was this absolutely massive port in Caesarea Maritima, which was in the region that Pilate was part of.

And basically, that just meant that that was where he stayed for the most part, away from Jerusalem and dealing with a lot of that stuff going on. So this pilot get a bad rep.

We oftentimes look at this story and go, yeah, he condemned Jesus to death. And I think that from a perspective of a Christian and in hindsight, I know a lot of the studies that we've been doing recently, we've seen that actually, whether we look at the disciples, whether we look at Peter, it's kind of hard to sort of pass judgment on these people that had roles and responsibilities and had doubts and fears like we all do and put ourselves in that situation, God.

And I know because I know the end of the story that I would have done better. Well, Pilate, in my opinion, was like a die for the cause, like loyal soldier. He was like a strong, like to be able to be placed in this place was not an easy deal, was not an easy deal at all.

[16 : 15] But he had a misplaced identity. I mean, if we think about it, somebody that we've seen from the Bible, the soldier, the centurion with the sixth servant basically went to Jesus and said, you know, I've got the sixth servant and he says, OK.

And he says, no, just give me the command and I can go back. Like that is the commitment of a centurion with a heart and an identity and who Jesus was and what he could potentially achieve for him.

And Jesus was amazed at this guy's faith. So it's just understanding from that perspective how powerful it could be if someone of this authority and position, if they had their faith and their trust in who Jesus was and their identity in him, how actual effective they could have been as not only a soldier, but a massive tool for God to be able to use.

In sports times, I sort of think of Pilate as somebody that you hate to play against, but someone you love to have on your team. I don't know if anyone's sort of if you're big on team sport.

It's one of those players that would like dive about on the floor and you'd be like, oh, man, we're losing one nil. And they take ages to pick the ball up for the throw in. And then they would put in a crunching tackle and then pretend as if nothing happened.

[17 : 28] You're like, oh, man, that that player is just so frustrating. And then they play for you and you're one nil up. Waste all the time you want, mate. Like, that's great. Like, you're adding time to the court for me.

So he's kind of one of them players that you would expect. He's diehard for the cause. But actually, he's just so frustrating because it's just like we just want that kind of mentality on our team.

We just can't achieve it through what you're doing on the field currently. So but he was on tough times with the Jews, though. And this is the main problem of it.

His allegiance was to the Caesar at the time, Tiberius Caesar's name. And there's actually a stone. I think I've got a picture of it with an inscription that says that there's Pilate in the middle there and Tiberium at the top.

I'm picking out certain words. I don't speak Roman. But as you can see, it's kind of, again, evidence towards the case for Pilate as a whole.

[18 : 31] And there's not a lot of records across the board, which is quite crazy, considering that this guy was considered to be one of the most influential people of that region during that time. In fact, he was so loyal to Tiberius that he wanted shields with inscriptions of the soldiers and what they died for in Herod's palace.

And obviously, the Jews were not happy with that one bit because they would believe in the fact of making these graven images in places of authority. Herod found out about it.

Basically, him and some of the Jews from around the area wrote to Tiberius. That did not end well. And ended up basically creating not only a divide between Pilate and Herod, which we read in Luke, but also this mentality behind Tiberius was not happy at all with Pilate and his response.

Because, as we mentioned earlier, his role was to basically keep law and order in the region. And he was about to start something that was contrary to what would basically have kept that.

And so Tiberius was not basically incensed with Pilate for disrupting the peace. He ended up taking the shields out of Herod's palace and he took them back to Caesarea.

[19 : 56] And it says that he was chased back by the Jews to Caesarea. And to make it up to Tiberius, he basically had these standards, which I think is in the next picture.

You might see that they're carrying kind of these poles at the front. These are called standards. It comes from a word basically to stand hard, stand firm at the front of the battlefield.

So that it's and it's where we get the word from. But basically, he wanted to put these all throughout the city and have the likeness of Caesar on these.

And again, if he hadn't already noticed or recognized from the first instance, it's not a good thing putting graven images of people in this land. And so he ended up again saying, look, anyone that wants to oppose me on this, you can pick a fight and basically come to the amphitheater.

So all the Jews came into the amphitheater and protested basically. And having tried to learn from his first lesson as to the power of the Jews and the people themselves, Pilate said, look, I don't really care.

[21 : 12] I'm going to take violent action here is understood. But they just lay down on the ground and bared their necks ready to be killed. Now, in that instance, he's got the opportunity to show his authority and his power.

But he's also, on the other hand, got this keeping the peace. But he's also a soldier at heart. And so he understands and can reflect on that what these people are doing here is valiant.

And so he decides to relent. Now, I don't know if you, maybe as a parent, understand. But when you have your kid and they're like, please can I have an ice cream?

Please can I have an ice cream? Right? And it's time and time again that you're just thinking, this is a time and an opportunity for me as a parent to go, look, there's chalk ices in the freezer at home.

You know, whatever the case may be. And the kid is just relenting and relenting. And then, oh, you know, what difference does it make? It's a screwball or something like that.

[22 : 16] I don't know what they have in them anymore. But it's like it's the bare kind of standard ice cream. The second you do that, there's like that opening, the crack in the door.

And so I want to give you more of a background on these kind of things because I want you to understand the tension between who Pilate was and who the Jews were and how in these examples already, there's kind of been a shift between there's a Roman authority trying to basically inflict power in areas where they need to.

But also at the same time, there's a very unsettled people that are happy to be unsettled for the sake of knowing that they can enforce and empower, inflict their views and their opinions despite the Roman government.

So he was kind of between a rock and a hard place. And if he killed them, there would be riots. And that's kind of what he wanted to avoid. But yeah, like we said, if he held back, what would be said about his honor as a Roman that was reflecting Tiberius and wanted to give him the glory that was due, in Pilate's opinion, to his name.

So we read on in verse two. And Pilate asked him, are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, you have said so. So basically up until this point, as we're going to get onto later, that there's an accusation that is made.

[23 : 43] But the point that stands out most to Pilate is, are you king of the Jews? Because of the fact that, again, his loyalty is to Tiberius. His loyalty is to the Caesar at the time.

And he wants to basically push onto him, look, are you king of the Jews? Because that's the one time and the one area where he can be challenged to say, as a Roman, I have the authority to say, look, Caesar's the one king.

Right? So Mark 14, in the garden, it's the same sort of response that Jesus gives, similar, where basically he said, you have said so.

And here he says, and in the garden, they said, are you Christ, the son of the living God? And he said, I am. And the difference is that Pilate wants an easy point to agree on with the Jews on this instance here with the king.

Because, again, he knows that he's got to keep control. But he wants to kind of show in a way that he's being just to both the Roman government and to the Jews of his region. Because he wants to get out of there onto greater things.

[24 : 46] So when Jesus says, you have said so, it doesn't answer the question that Pilate wants him to answer. It basically puts back into the core of, Pilate, you are the one that has basically suggested this.

It's kind of similar to that image of a police officer pulling someone over and then pulling up to the side of the car and say, do you know why I pulled you over back there?

And then the police officer off the block is just waiting for that guy to list. Oh, it's because my tints in my window are terrible. I was going like 20 over the speed limit and I've got like illegal plates on the back.

It's like, I was just going to basically say you left your indicator on. But like up until this point, you've basically just convicted yourself of three things. So it's similar to that. Pilate wants to hear from the mouth of Jesus that he accepts his kingship.

And this is, again, the same kind of conundrum with the rendered to Caesar that which is Caesar's. It's saying that, you know, he knows that the king of the region is Caesar, but he's saying king of the Jews.

[25 : 50] In a way, he's saying an amazing answer because he's not denying that he is king of the Jews, but not in the sense of what they see him as. So verse three, and the chief priests accused him of many things.

So in certain terms from the verse, we can see that these terms were basically inciting riots, that he told them not to pay their taxes, and that he saw himself as a king in direct opposition to Caesar.

Now, what's crazy about this is that actually the claims that they make against Jesus are exactly the claims that they want from a Jewish Messiah. They wanted that kind of a person.

They wanted somebody that was inciting riots against the Roman government that they could see was going to come in and push out anything Roman and reestablish who they were as people.

So actually, they're kind of sort of saying he's guilty of being the man that we want him to be, which is a zealot and free from Roman oppression. But Pilate had probably heard of Jesus up until this point.

[26 : 51] We know that Herod Antipas, who was in the northern region in Galilee, had heard about him. And so it wouldn't be crazy to say that his reputation and all of those kind of miracles that have been taking place were somewhat kind of mentioned to Pilate on a level.

So what's crazy about that is that he's looked at them and gone, look, I can see through your first two arguments. He's not inciting riots. He's not told them to pay the taxes.

You know, there was the rendered to Caesar that which is Caesar's. But again, the direct opposition to Caesar, he's like, oh, man, I wish I could just let that slide. But I love Tiberius, you know.

So here we learn from Luke after that verse. The pilot finds out that actually Jesus is Galilean. And so it's like, well, I don't know if you've seen in the films when the police force turn up at a crime scene.

And then it's like, oh, CIA. And then they say, oh, move aside. It's FBI's jurisdiction here. So he's basically saying, look, like, hands off. I can wash my hands here. Here's an easy out.

[27 : 56] He's Galilean. Like, send him back to Galilee. Or to judgment by the Galilean tetrarch, which was Herod Antipas. Now, Herod Antipas was actually in the region at the time because it was Passover.

But we pick up in Luke chapter 23, I think. The verse should be on the screen, 6 to 12. And he says, when Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him because he had heard about him.

And he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing him.

And Herod, with his soldiers, treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day.

[29 : 02] For before this, they had been at enmity with each other. So, as I explained earlier, Herod's, this is Herod Antipas, the one who basically passed judgment on John the Baptist and got John the Baptist killed.

Had an incestuous relationship that John the Baptist basically called out. And there was all the dancing that went on. The lady said, basically, he said, oh, I'll grant you anything.

And she said, I want John the Baptist's head on a plate. And so that is how John the Baptist ended up dying. And this is the same Herod Antipas. His father was Herod the Great, who built the Caesarea Maritima.

And he's basically continuing the abuse. It's just carrying on. He's already come straight out of the Jewish Sanhedrin judgment. And now he's been in with, obviously, with Pilate.

And Pilate sent him off to Herod. And Herod is now dealing with him harshly. And the palace was, again, nearby in the city, in the center. And so at this point, everything's taking place very much in the center of Jerusalem.

[30 : 10] And Pilate, again, in verse 4, and Pilate again asked him, have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further answer so that Pilate was amazed.

It's almost like you can hear the tone in Pilate's voice. You know, up until this point, Jesus had prayed in the garden, if any way let this cup pass from me.

And it's clear that Jesus is set on his purpose and his mission here. And so nothing needed to be said. But it almost seemed as though Pilate could relate at knowing the passion that went into dying for a cause as a soldier himself.

And so he was amazed. He was amazed at what had already taken place. And he was amazed, like we've spoken earlier about, when the Jews bared their neck. He seems to be somebody that has a compassionate side towards those that he can relate to on a level of, this is somebody that is truly set in their ways as to what they believe to be true.

So verse 6, it says, Now at the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. So it was custom that Rome wanted to be kept in a good light.

[31 : 28] Again, it seemed to be that everything that Rome did was as a means of trying to control people. I don't know if you've managed to visit Rome and see the Colosseum itself.

It was originally built basically to hold these gladiator fights, the chariot races, all of these kind of things. And it was Caesar's joy, basically, as an emperor, because he wanted to keep up a good image, to share with his people these kind of entertainment for free.

So that all of the Roman citizens, no matter how much tax they were paying, no matter how much kind of oppression they were under, they were given this entertainment for free. And so it's kind of like this control that they didn't know, that they were kind of subtle in the way that they did it.

And it gave off a good impression for the emperor. And here, the Romans had this tradition that they would release one of the prisoners in this area for the sake of keeping the peace within the people.

So we read on in verse 7, and it says, So Barabbas actually means son of the father, bar and then Abbas, right?

[32 : 46] So where we get the word Abba from as well. Not from Barabbas' name, but it's the same word. And he was basically a terrorist against Roman rule.

He had committed murder. We can read that. And he was just genuinely a well-understood, I think it says in Matthew, an understood criminal, somebody that was seen as an objective person that was everything anti-Roman.

And so again, we come back to this image that the Sanhedrin claimed who Jesus was in Barabbas, in his character. And so it was almost as if Barabbas was, you know, he was a murderer, he was violent, and that he hated the Roman rule.

And so he's basically, he is the Messiah to the Sanhedrin in a sense. And so they, that's their vision and who they think and see as the person that would be perfect for them.

And yet in this instance, they kind of don't give him the light of day. They just know of him as this murderer. So we read in verse 8, And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.

[33 : 56] And he answered them saying, Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews? For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. So this releasing a prisoner, there's lots of fights that go on on a level of kind of exegesis with this to say whether or not, you know, there's backup for this claim that this was a tradition.

But like I said earlier, Pilate was one of the most influential people at that time. And there's almost next to nothing written about him. And so it would just give off the impression that just because of the fact that there's not a coverage of it, that that doesn't mean that it didn't take place.

And in fact, a lot of this stuff, including that stone, was obviously discovered post the Bible. And so giving proof and evidence are secondary to what the word says.

So they notice the crowd. Pilate then turns to the crowd. And this is the difference between the Sanhedrin and the crowd here is that Pilate is now relenting of seeing the envy that is built up within the Sanhedrin, that they're making all these claims.

And he then looks to the crowd as a means of finding someone else that is surely like these are people that were up until a few days ago were laying down palm leaves and singing out Hosanna, you know, and ultimately welcoming the king of the Jews into the city.

[35 : 27] And so surely, surely the crowd has like a sense to them, an understanding that these guys are going to come through and be the sense in this senseless argument.

So Pilate is kind of done with the Sanhedrin. He's kind of over everything that they were trying to represent and what they were trying to say. And he was seeing, as we read in that last, in that verse 10, the envy that chief priests had.

And understandably, this isn't his first rodeo. This is somebody whose job it is to basically keep the peace in the region. And so it would be understandable that he could look through the arguments of people, even if they came to him in the first thing in the morning, trying to present them in a way that was convicting of Jesus.

That doesn't necessarily mean that he's just going to give over to him. But then we read in verse 11, it says, But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them, Barabbas, instead.

So Barabbas goes free here, and the Sanhedrin are very much interwoven within the crowd of people and rallying them.

[36 : 38] And again, these are the Jews of Jerusalem that are mainly making up the crowd. So if you were to look over and see, excuse me, I don't know, Archbishop of Canterbury, Billy Graham, like all of these people influential in Christianity and Christian faith, not that they would be doing this.

This is exactly not what they would be doing. I don't want to say that. But if you're in and they're shouting something out and you are Christians or in this instance, Jews that highly respect these leaders, you're going to like chant along with them and get on board with what they're saying.

So they've tactically done this here and interwoven themselves in. But those closest to understanding the freedom in faith were the furthest from the truth and the furthest from mercy.

They had basically created this narrative that we had found and followed through to this point. That they weren't, in fact, following any rules.

It was just literally, yeah, it was a desire of these people to get rid of Jesus because of the fact that they felt of him as a threat to their views and their ideology.

[37 : 54] And the views and their ideology that they believed in were that filled with mercy. And yet they couldn't see that in this instance. And I think sometimes the more we get puffed up in our understanding of what the Bible represents and our knowledge and understanding the Christianese language, as it were, and all of the terminology and everything, we can kind of get lost in that.

And I think that has been a repetitive theme throughout, that we can look at these chief priests and these Sadducees and these Pharisees and call them out and say, like, it's so far from it.

But for ourselves, when we look into what it is that we desire in life and what we look to, is it that we make an idol out of biblical knowledge?

Because that can be a thing. We can make an idol out of just knowing everything about the Bible, but not knowing the author of the Bible at the center. It seems that, like, the less we care about those that are in need of mercy, we can kind of lose the ideology of Jesus within himself and who he was.

And we can focus mainly on what it is that we feel that we need to say rather than what God's calling us to say to individuals and how we share the gospel with others. I was once at a church meeting that I'd gone to at this church, and we broke out into small groups.

[39 : 23] And basically, the question that was presented to everyone was, like, what do you love so much about your church? And it went around in the discussion, and someone said, I love that church is small and that everyone knows everyone.

And I'm not saying that those aren't great things to love your church for, but there's a sense in that, that with your church being small, you're happier that it's small than that it's growing.

That everyone knows everyone, that to see somebody that they don't know would be kind of an inconvenience. I work with a guy who's actually got a membership at Wimbledon, which is kind of crazy, right?

And he basically played in the Army services as their sort of tennis representative. And when I say that this guy's house is full of crystal wear, like, I was thinking, you know, I'll get 30 seconds if the door's shut to be locked in a room because it felt like a crystal maze.

Like, there was literally all of these bowls and jars everywhere saying Wimbledon, not Wimbledon champion, that would be crazy, saying Army inter-services champion, inter-services, like, all of the years.

[40 : 50] He's a super humble guy, but I asked his wife, like, what is it that he does so well? Because, like, there's different parts of the game, right? There's, like, the serving, there's being able to rush up onto the net, there's, I don't know, I'm not a huge tennis fan.

I just know he's got a lot of trophies. And she said the fundamentals, the fundamentals, the basics. He did the basics well. He was able to not necessarily be out here like Nadal grunting and hitting it to corners and things like that, but he knew that if he applied the basics of tennis, the principles, the cornerstone content, again, that he would do well.

And so with that, I want to sort of come into an application section of this sermon, which kind of sounds crazy because it is straight back to the fundamentals, and it's that God loves you.

He loves you, and he will love you. And I know for some people that's like nails on a chalkboard, and I don't mean it in the sense of the message itself, but just the way that we receive it, sometimes it's so hard to understand that.

And I know as guys, when we hear, you know, we're the bridegroom of Christ, it's not like an easy settle in. We're kind of like, oh, man, I don't really want to be wearing, like, a veil and a brides-up, like, not knowing that, but, like, obviously understanding the relationship there.

[42 : 13] So when we hear things like, you know, God loves you, it's also the fact that maybe the words God loves you has kind of taken this bigger picture approach nowadays that so many people are like, who is God?

What is love? Like, it's the blurred lines again between the villain of the old times versus the villain of today. It's like God is the universe, and he loves you.

And when he says he loves you, it doesn't mean that he puts up with the, you know, the things that are wrong about you, but he just loves, like, everything, including your sin and all of that kind of, you just be you.

And so it can kind of sometimes get into these areas where we just, as Christians, really, like, messes with us in a way, because it's easier to say we're sinners than we are loved sometimes.

And I think sometimes it's because we deal on the polar ends, and we want to say, look, we believe that God is good, and we believe that aside from God, we aren't good, and we're sinners.

[43 : 15] And therefore, does that, like, where do we sit in that? Where do we sit as Christians? Are we, if we're not seen as good, does that mean that we're worth anything? And so when we hear you're loved, it's kind of like we want to go towards either end.

We say, okay, yeah, like, I'm loved, but, like, I'm not good. I'm a sinner. Like, it's like, and we quickly disregard what it means to be loved. And I think what's so great about this account is that Barabbas was a murderer and an insurrectionist, and nothing about who he was or what he did contributed to why Jesus took his place.

I was oftentimes watching a series or so on Netflix, and one I've been watching recently, I won't spoil it for you if you haven't seen it. So, but it was made up of three seasons, and the first season was the focus of everything around this one character, that everything seemed to be all to do with that one person.

The second season was all about another character within this person's life, and everything was about that person. And then you're thinking, I don't know, like, what's going to happen.

It's so vague, but I don't know what's going to happen between these two characters. But surely it's got to be one of the two. And then the final third season comes out, and it has nothing to do with either, and everything to do with it, just a completely different cause.

[44 : 35] And I think for some people that's like, why bother with the first two, right? But because of the fact that oftentimes we get caught in this place of, we've got to be, at this end, we've got to be sinners, or we've got to be, it's only Jesus in us that makes us good, that we kind of forget the picture in the middle, which is that God loves us, and he loved us in our sin, and he died for us in our sin.

And it's that kind of completely different perspective that doesn't disregard either end, but qualifies either end of that polar opposite. We see in John 3.16, again, sort of bringing through the fundamentals, for God so loved, God loved first.

How many times we read that passage and forget that the first four words give us a direction behind the heart of God. Psalm 139, we'll read through a passage here.

It says, For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you. When I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

[45 : 58] Do you know how many young people today don't see that? Don't know that for themselves. It's so sad. It's so sad. And it's sad because of the fact that we have it written here and we have a hope and we have a joy and a purpose and a peace that surpasses all understanding that they don't have.

And that even those maybe within the faith can sometimes forget and lose sight of that. Before you saw my unformed substance, how vulnerable can you get?

Does that sound like a God who doesn't love? I mean, the intricate detail there that David goes through at probably one of the toughest times as well.

1 John 4.19 says, We love because he first loved us. And I think if I can take, if I can give you any message from this, it's that I would love to say that, you know, the fruits of who we are as Christians, our outworkings and our who we are and how we reflect Christ is oftentimes done in the workings.

But what I want us to focus on today is that God loved us first. Like, and stop there before we feel like, you know, there's a lot of us sometimes, I don't know if anyone's like me, you see some, like for me, for instance, when I'm video editing, I'll see some really cool edit and be like, I really want to be able to do that.

[47 : 28] And so you get to the first minute of the video and it's like, okay, put a square here and then go through all these settings. And I'm like, yeah, but that doesn't give me like the Iron Man guy at the end, the edit that I want of this really cool.

So like, I want to, I want to skip forward. I want to skip forward to like four minutes and see what I can be doing. Okay. And then I lose sight of everything because I've got no basis for my foundation. And I think that sometimes we can get that way.

We can oftentimes think God loves us. Yeah. Okay. Well, like, okay, what do I do? How do I do it? It's contrary. His love is contrary to anything that we could ever know or understand because it meets us at our most vulnerable.

It meets us with nothing to offer and gives us everything. We read in John 15, 13, it says, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Now, when I was out in New Zealand, there was a Bible school that was there. And basically, they had a process for allowing the students to watch films that they thought basically were appropriate and were reflective of the Bible school.

[48 : 43] And so oftentimes it would be the PG movies or the U movies, like things like this. But every once in a while, there would be like one that the guys would want. And this happened to be, you had to kind of pitch a case to the leaders there.

And Pacific Rim was the film. I don't know if you've seen it. It's a terrible movie. But basically, it's about these big old robots that, like, fight against aliens that come out the sea.

And I looked up some Christian reviews on it on a Christian website. And this was the first that came up. So we said, look, I think Jen was the name of the lady at the time.

We said, look, Jen, greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. But it's true, like, we see in movies, we see this played out. And it's very much something that we love to relate to, things that we can kind of get behind and see.

Wow, like how, you know, even Joe last week was talking about Narnia, these imagery and just relatability and seeing people that aren't even Christians relate to that. That's the crazy part about and the power behind being able to write in that way with C.S. Lewis was the questions that people ask of Aslan in comparison to what they would probably ask of Jesus.

[49 : 55] It's just a great way and a great imagery. And it's because maybe sometimes it's within our nature as those created in the image of God to desire that deeply within us.

1 John 4, 7 to 8 says, Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

I think sometimes it's so important to understand, you know, from that reflection on Psalm 139, that there are people in this world that don't have a faith or a hope and a joy.

I think oftentimes in my life I've found that it's the greatest witness and evangelism tool to be able to share with people that are broken. I think we oftentimes believe that the voices of this world are doing the job for the people that don't know Jesus.

That they can find peace in whatever substances or whatever they're going to in order to find the satisfaction that can only be found in God. And so I've got this image of like a puzzle box, basically.

[51 : 07] And I know Big Bill's a keen on the puzzles, so hopefully you can relate with this one. But if you were given a puzzle box that was wrong to the puzzle that was inside, it doesn't necessarily mean that you don't have an opportunity to create the puzzle that's inside.

But it does not give you an advantage to see where your purpose, where your meaning and where your direction is coming from. Whether you're going to start on a specific, I don't know, castle over on the right hand side and then carry on to the lake because there's a big old blue bit in the middle, right?

But oftentimes for other people, the box that they have isn't the image that we have. We have this great image that is our purpose and our plan.

And we have this book, the Bible, as a means of direction for that. And we can see, look, okay, there might be a darker patch over here. There might be a time, a struggle that we have to go through. But, like, I can see the bigger picture of what this is and I can see that God is involved in this.

And I don't need to worry or be anxious. If this is somebody that doesn't have that, we want to give them that. We want to give them the puzzle box. We want to give them the best opportunity, the chance, the word of God that brings hope and clarity to what this life is really about.

[52 : 23] So that they can piece together through the power of the Holy Spirit what it is that God has called them to be. And so it's in our nature. I think sometimes we talk about having a sin nature.

Again, that kind of focus on everything is like, yeah, I can really relate to having a sin nature. But we also have another nature. We were created in the image of God with a purpose to give God glory.

I was driving home from the beach kind of trying to contemplate my thoughts with some of the passages that I've gone through today.

And it opens out, the specific road I go down opens out into a field. And either side is these giant grain fields. And at the time, they were just well ready for the harvest. And over to the left was the beautiful seafront city of Portsmouth.

And it was so beautiful because the cloud cover had come down and the sun was behind the cloud. And so you could almost see like a giant Lion King kind of sun. And I thought to myself, like in this field, I'm pretty lost.

[53 : 34] Like someone might be able to pick me out because it's a massive field and say, look, it's actually over there. It's kind of small. But like on the scale of things, when I look to the left and see the sun, I'm like reminded of the solar system, the fact we're on a floating rock.

And all of a sudden, I go from being someone that can be seen to being maybe like a speck of dust in comparison. And I think as Christians, we get this perception that if we phase from just being in a field, the bigger the scale goes, the less our meaning drops off, who we are and our value drops off.

That everything around us is far greater and bigger and that the grace of God is huge. The mercies that he pours out to us and knew every morning and everything just stacks up in his space of like, am I just this insignificant speck?

But the reality is, is that we were created in the image of God. The things around us give God glory and are great things like steak or driving fast down the microwave with the windows down.

Like all these individual things, beauties of the sunrise, the smell of fresh cut grass or just after it rains. Just every individual blessing that we have in our life is because God has created.

[54 : 54] All of these things to give him glory that are great things are good things. We are the only ones that created in the image of God and the wonders of this world can't compare to the love that he has.

So just to summarize, what was Pilate's mistake? He made an idol out of something that didn't love him. His purpose was distorted and the promise of great things quickly turned into empty things that quickly destroyed his promise.

Barabbas, starting out, maybe as Christians, we can see ourselves as Barabbas, as this person that was offered and taken in replacement for who Jesus stepped into his position.

And we can say, wow, we are saved, we are forgiven. And sometimes that love and that desire overwhelms and overflows within us. But the more we sort of progress as Christians, we kind of do head into this sort of pilot area of like mistaken identity, seeing things in the world that maybe offer something that actually, you know, I've got a Tiberius over here.

And, you know, it's great to be able to be a Christian like Barabbas, I'm saved, but I might have like mixed views as to what I really desire. And that gets distorted.

[56 : 13] So don't get lost completely like the Pharisees, but focus on who or what gives you identity. Focus on Jesus Christ and his resurrected power within us to be able to equip us each and every single day to live out a life overflowing with the love that he has given to us.

And so finally, we read these last few verses of Mark giving a complete representation of somebody who stood in the place of our sin.

This is in verse 12. And Pilate again said to them, Then what shall I do with the man you call the king of the Jews? And they cried out again, crucify him. And Pilate said to them, why? What evil has he done?

But they shouted all the more, crucify him. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas. And having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

That scourging is almost being taken to the point of death. He would have been beaten and flogged with whips with animal bones on to the point where almost his internal organs would have been shone.

[57 : 31] And they had to act quickly at this point afterwards to be crucified because of the fact that he probably could have died from his injuries up until that point. But Matthew tells us that the crowd were yelling so loud that Pilate got fearful that there was going to be a riot.

So what's crazy about that is that the underlying fear that Pilate had, that there was going to be a riot if he didn't give Jesus over to the Sanhedrin to be crucified, that he wanted to maintain control, ended up being that it almost caused probably one of the bigger riots.

And our focus, although I want to take away from that, is that conforming doesn't change anything. Like if we're in a region where we feel as though, okay, we need to listen to these external voices and everything that's telling us otherwise, that at the end of the day, the people that miss out are us.

Like deep down, because it's the love of God within us that gives us the power in order for us to be able to serve in a way that is effective not only in our lives, but in sharing the gospel with others.

Christ died for you so that you may live. You know, Barabbas doesn't get a speaking role here, like in this passage. It's just the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Jesus gets one line.

[58 : 55] And so it's almost like they don't even care for him. But the reality is, is that Jesus did care.

And he loved Barabbas, despite everything that everyone else probably saw in him as a criminal, as an insurrectionist. He loved him before the foundations of the earth.

Whatever your Tiberius is, whatever your identity is that is in this world, like all I can say is just leave it behind.

And I know it's not an easy thing to do, but if we truly, truly understood the love of God, if we truly understood what the price that was paid, and why Jesus went to the cross, and why even when he was pleading to the Father in the garden that he still took the cup on our behalf, then there's nothing in this world that can satisfy on that level.

You weren't designed for that. Finally, my last point. Studying through this passage, I don't know if Mark intended it, or if the translation is this way, but him is used more than Jesus in this passage.

[60 : 22] They don't give an identity to who Jesus is. They call him King of the Jews and him. Everyone else gets their name. Pilate gets their name. The governor officials get their name. Barabbas gets his name, but Jesus just gets a hymn.

How are we as Christians changing Jesus from just a hymn into Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior? How are we representing him in a day-to-day basis? Are we people that know the love of God?

Are we people that personify the love of God through each and every way and unique design that he's made us to be? He said, you have said so to Pilate.

If you had a description to present for Jesus today, for him to say, you have said so, for you to walk out of this place, what would your words be from your heart?

Would it be something that is purely transactional? Would it be the knowledge and the understanding that it's given you? Or would it be, you are my everything?

[61 : 30] So as Jenny comes up to sing the last song, I just want to pray. And if it's been laid on your heart this morning, that there's things in your life that distract you from the basic fundamentals of who Jesus is, of what he accomplished on the cross.

If there's things in your life that you feel, I'm too far gone, like, or, I just need to distance myself from this. Or even down to the fact that I can't come to God in prayer because I'm too broken.

This time now, I just want to say to you that there's plenty of people in the Bible that felt that way. There was plenty of murderers. Paul was a murderer. David was a murderer.

Moses was a murderer. And what God was able to accomplish with those who knew the love of God was truly impactful, not only for them, but for the kingdom as well.

You are never too far gone. So let's pray. Heavenly Father, Lord, thank you, Lord, that we can come to your word this morning, Lord, that we can see, Lord, a variety of different people from different walks of life, Lord, with different commitments, Lord, and we can see, Lord, what each and every one of them offered to the person to have their identity in.

[62 : 52] Lord, we know, ultimately, Lord, to have our identity in you is to have our identity in eternity, Lord, with our Savior and our Creator. And we're so thankful for that, so grateful, Lord.

Father, I just pray for anyone in this room today, Lord, that, Lord, feels either a resistance to, Lord, feeling as though you're far from them.

Lord, that they've, their actions don't reflect, Lord, who you are. Father, I pray that you would remind them, ultimately, that you love them. Father, that they can be people that reflect your image, Lord, that live out your life day to day, Lord, because you love them, not because there's anything that they can do to deserve or earn that, Lord, but it's a free gift from you.

Father, it's so easy to forget these fundamentals, Lord, it's so easy to get caught up in the day to day and think, what should we be doing? What can we be doing? How can we be doing this? All great views and opinions, Lord, but if we don't do it in love, Lord, we don't do it for the right reasons.

And so we just pray this week, Lord, that you would work within us, Lord, work within those that were sat next to you. Lord, that we would see everyone that we come across with the same image of God that you've created each and every one of us to be, and that we would show the same compassion that you did for Barabbas, Lord.

[64 : 18] We'll give us hearts and minds for you today in your son's name, Jesus. Amen.