## JESUS WAS TRIED IN OUR PLACE

Mark 14:52 – 15:15
Key Verses: 61-62

**“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”**

Up until now Jesus’ ministry was very successful, he taught many people the Word of God and raised twelve disciples. He cared for others and healed countless people who needed both spiritual and physical healing. But now this passage has a dark turn of events. It is about Jesus’ unjust trial, which would lead to his painful crucifixion. It was a time when Satan was trying his hardest in his ongoing chess match against God. He was moving his pawns into place, and calculating how he could gain the upper hand, hoping to collect the spoils of many – that he hoped to cast into doubt and despair and to fall away. It was a desperate attempt, and we would see just how dark and desperate it is, using any and all available means to fight with, particularly ones that are very sinister and unfair. Which is the way Satan fights against us too. He uses lies, false accusation, persecution, injustice, and betrayal. Yet Jesus’ trial is full of deep meaning. It reveals his divinity and that he is the Lamb of God. It also reveals his great love for us.

**First, Jesus’ Trial Reveals Who He Is.**

Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and the chief priest. It was late at night but they all came together now for this assembly at such an odd hour. They must have been waiting a long time for this moment. Verse 55 reveals why they were so motivated, it says **“……the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so they could put him to death, but they did not find any.”**  This verse reveals their twisted mindset, that even though they knew there was no wrongdoing their minds were full of murderous thoughts. Knowing they had no evidence is the reason they should repent. It defies the imagination that people who claimed to serve a righteous and loving God had thoughts of murdering an innocent person. How had they become like this? By focusing too much on themselves, and their position of power, and Jesus was a threat to their power. They were selfish which made them blind. Jesus often rebuked religious leaders, publicly. He said the religious leaders of his time would make long public prayers for pretense, to look good, but then go and foreclose on a poor widow to take her house away if she could not pay. It seems they often dealt in finance and lending money as well. When their corruption and sin was exposed it made them angry to face this. If they repented, God would have been merciful to them but they remained as hypocrites. Hypocrites who did very little to lift a finger to help someone they did very little to help someone, but rather hurt people. Now we see them changing into their fine robes late at night to put Jesus on trial.

The verdict of this trial was determined before it started. The Sanhedrin had prepared false witnesses to testify. Many testified falsely against him but their testimony did not agree, which shows that they were lying. Their stories fell apart under pressure and made no sense. People telling the truth have clear consistent stories, but theirs weren’t. Even some submitted twisted evidence. One person said, “*We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another not made with hands.*’” But this was not accurate. Jesus did say he would raise the temple of his body in three days, but he did not say he would rebuild one “*not made with hands*.” Satan twists and manipulates in order to accuse us falsely. He takes a small amount of truth and turns it around. Often he does this with the word of God to confuse many, causing many conflicting opinions and distortions.

How did Jesus respond at this time? In the face of these accusations he was silent, which is amazing. False accusation is painful and usually evokes a lot of emotion from people. When accused falsely people respond and defend themselves passionately. Recently I was “falsely” accused of parking in a handicapped parking space and was given a very expensive ticket. The parking space had no signage, it was not a legitimate spot, and it was not compliant with ADA codes for handicapped parking spaces which require a sign. So I contested it in the administrative court, and then after that fought in the district court as well. I fought knowing that the law was clearly on my side. I stayed up late and researched legal procedures. I became passive aggressive and indignant, I despised my accusers. Defending myself against something I knew I was not guilty of. I really don’t have the time for that level of effort and multiple court hearings, but I did it anyway. I could not remain silent when faced with even a small accusation.

Jesus’ silence, although making no sound, actually speaks at a very high volume. That he is the Lamb of God, sent to this earth to willingly subject himself to this injustice, for our sins. Everything that was happening at this time was heartbreaking, yet nothing that was happening to him was a surprise. He was prepared and ready to be a ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world. He could have fought back, with twelve legions of angels if he chose, as it says in Matthew 26, but he did not. It was actually his love for us that made him silent, and unwilling to resist. There is a saying that it was not the nails that held Jesus to the cross but his love. Likewise it was his love that made him silent in the face of accusation. This reminds us of Isaiah 53:7, **“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”**

The high priest asked Jesus a question so as to charge him with blasphemy. He asked, **“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”** “The Son of the Blessed One” is the Messiah to come, a clear Biblical reference. Was Jesus silent with this question? No, he wasn’t! Look at verse 62, **“I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’**” He was not silent when it came to testifying publicly who he is. He identified himself as the Christ at this moment, on public court records. He not only answered the question by saying, “**I am**”. But he went even further and spoke of his Second Coming when he would sit at the right hand of God to be the judge of all humanity. He testified how powerful he truly is as the Christ. His arrival will not be ordinary, but will be spectacular arriving on the clouds of heaven. All people will see him and bow down to him at this time. Jesus sat on trial before his accusers , and looked helpless standing all alone as one person against an angry court. Ironically one day these angry accusers would be judged by the Son of God at his Second Coming.

There are many opinions about Jesus, many believe in him as the Son of God, but not everyone. Some doubt him and say he was just a good, moral teacher. Kind of like Socrates or Confucious was. Some say he was only a prophet and not the Son of God. However the Scriptures are clear about Jesus’ divinity. The fact that he fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies written about the Blessed One (Messiah). And he performed so many miracles. And now, Jesus testifies about his divinity while on trial. Those who examine the Scriptures and read especially this passage with an open heart discover that He is the promised Messiah. Have you examined the Scriptures, and do you believe in Jesus from your heart that he is your Savior and Messiah?

At this moment the high priest decided to act outraged and put on a show tearing his clothes and charging Jesus with blasphemy. These theatrics were to stoke up the others to condemn him also. And they did. They condemned him to death and spit on him, blindfolded him and struck him and mocked him. These priests and elders tried to look good in their fine clothes which showed their high status. But they were full of hate and murder and instead looked ugly and wretched. They were not men of faith at all, but very far from God and tormented by many demons.

**Second Peter Denies Jesus Three Times.** As we saw at the beginning of the passage Peter had followed at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. Peter was protective of his teacher whom he loved. Even drawing his sword and striking the servant of the high priest, Malchus, cutting off his ear, was actually a misguided affection and concern for Jesus. Yet it is not clear if hitting the ear of the man means he had good aim or bad aim. Peter tried to stand out among other disciples. Apparently one way he did so was by talking big. He said, **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”** He also knocked down the other disciples basically saying if they ran away like cowards he would be strong and tough, that he would never “fall away” like “those guys.” Probably the other disciples were not happy to hear him say that.

But Jesus knew Peter, and that he was not quite ready. And said to him in verse 30, **“Truly I tell you, today – yes tonight - before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.”** Then it happened, just this way. When a servant girl identified Peter, he denied it and walked out to the entryway, maybe that was where he could run quick if he had to. And she saw him a second time later and told others, and Peter denied being a disciple yet again. Then a third time Peter denied it and even called down curses he was so adamant. At that moment the rooster crowed twice. Then Peter remembered Jesus’ words and he broke down and wept. We see that Peter’s denial was not just a small white lie. But here the word, “disown” is used, which means to completely dissociate oneself as if they would never have any further connection or contact anymore. We should not distance ourself from God and be closet Christians even if we will be persecuted. It is important to acknowledge Jesus, as he says when we do so he acknowledges us. We want to be acknowledge by God. Peter was ashamed of this and realized he was a terrible sinner. He put himself on trial and found himself guilty. So, he wept.

Maybe some of us can identify with Peter in some way. Swearing loyalty unto death to someone we love. Maybe a close friend we are protective of, or an older sibling or a younger sibling. We want to protect the ones we love at all times. And we feel good when we are protective them, thinking we will execute vigilante justice like Peter, if we have to. But our love is imperfect, and often misguided. And we also have our own selfish inclination to protect ourselves too. Peter failed to do what he said he would do, and he failed not in a small way either but a big way. But he had to fail to burst his ego. What Jesus wanted more was actions not words. To be obedient to his Word and to extend God’s love to others.

Later, post crucifixion, Peter thought his future as Jesus’ right hand man was completely over. So he went back to his old life of being a fisherman, because that was the only thing that was familiar to him. He was broken by this event still, and he was less proud. Jesus appeared to him in resurrected form and asked Peter *“Do you love me?”* At that moment Peter did not boast, but rather deferred a little and said, *“Yes Lord, you know I love you.”* (John 21:16). He could not prove it himself, so he had to say, “You know”. We see quite a different Peter here, one that is not boastful. He had repented, and he loved Jesus even though he made a mistake. So Jesus could finally use him greatly and he founded the church in Rome which was a strategic spot, it spread the gospel to the whole Roman world. From then on Peter was clear about his faith to the end, we know this because he was ultimately martyred.

Like Peter when we examine ourselves before God we know we fall short. Our conscience condemns us of our sins. But God does not give up on us. He sent his Son Jesus to be tried in our places and to be crucified. It is amazing that we do not have to stand trial, even though we are guilty, because Jesus stood trial, when he was innocent as the Lamb of God. To learn that we are sinners, like Peter did, is the starting point, from then on we can be forgiven and live a new life, and be fruitful like he was.

**Third, Jesus Before Pilate**  Jesus was handed over to be tried by Pilate because he was the one who could order executions. Pilate asked him, “*Are you the king of the Jews.”* He replied, “Yes it is as you say.” He continued to be accused by the chief priests, but remained silent again. For sure this was amazing to Pilate. No one on trial for their life is silent, instead they offer their best defense extensively. Seeing this Pilate tried to get a response - but none was given to him.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. An annual custom at the Feast saw the release of a prisoner whom the people requested. Pilate planned to make use of this custom and release Jesus. The crowd came up to Pilate and asked him to do what he usually did for them to release one person. The chief priests had already anticipated Pilate‟s political maneuver and incited the crowd to ask for a prisoner named Barabbas, who was an insurrectionist Some records say he was a bandit, depending on how the Greek word is translated. This put Pilate in a difficult situation that he tried to get out of. It was a tense political situation to him. Not a matter of conscience as it should be. We see the sad fate of Pilate in verse 15 (of chapter 15), which says “**Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”** Pilate showed he was spineless and is considered responsible for the death of Christ in the Apostles Creed. Because he “wanted to satisfy the crowd”. Wanting to satisfy the crowd, or to satisfy other people around us so often leads us to turn away from God, and make many mistakes. We must keep our moral Christian principles and be an example to others, rather than trying to please others. In this passage we see that a criminal was released, Barrabas, and Jesus died in his place. He died for the worst sinners, and he died for all of us no matter what wrongs we have done.

There appears to be nothing good on the surface about Jesus’ trial which is so full of injustice, and so dark. But out of it we see the real meaning why he came to this earth, to suffer in our places as the Lamb of God. His unjust trial represents the ugliness of our sin and shame, which was all washed away when he died on the cross. We thank God for sending Jesus so that we can live a new life, and that we also have eternal life in him. Amen.