

Series: “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*” Mark 15-16

Main Idea: In Mark 15:1-15, in Jesus’ civil trial before Pilate, we see Jesus experiencing three types injustice.

- I. We see religious injustice (1).
  - A. The Jewish leaders know their Bible, yet reject Jesus.
    - 1. We are born with a sight problem.
    - 2. We are born with a heart problem.
    - 3. We are born with a hearing problem.
  - B. The Jewish leaders lack authority to kill Jesus, so they take Him to Pilate.
- II. We see civil injustice (2-14).
  - A. Pilate questioned Jesus (2-5).
    - 1. Jesus answered the first question.
    - 2. Jesus did not answer the second question.
    - 3. Jesus chose to experience injustice.
  - B. Pilate used Jesus as a bargaining tool (6-14).
    - 1. The leaders wanted Jesus dead.
    - 2. The crowd previously wanted Jesus to be their king, but changed their minds.
    - 3. Pilate wanted what was best for Pilate.
- III. We see legal injustice (15).
  - A. The guilty one went free.
  - B. The innocent one was handed over to die.
    - 1. Jesus went to the cross because the Jews handed Him over.
    - 2. Jesus went to the cross because Pilate handed Him over.
    - 3. Jesus went to the cross because God the Father handed Him over.
  - C. The Lord did this for us.
    - 1. In dying He became a ransom payment (Mark 10:45).
    - 2. In dying He gave us an example (1 Peter 2:21).

Make It Personal: Let’s live in light of the injustice of the cross.

Today on this first Sunday of March we’re hitting the pause on our Christian Family series, which we’ll resume mid-April, the Lord willing. Actually, we’re turning to the most important subject a family can consider. To prepare ourselves for Good Friday, which is March 29, and Resurrection Sunday, which is March 31, we’re going to return to our study of the Gospel of Mark and work our way through Mark 15 and 16, in a sort of mini-series we’re calling, “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*.”

And that’s exactly what we’re going to do. *Survey*—consider, contemplate, look at, notice, watch, guard. The *wondrous*—marvelous, astonishing, source of wonder. *Cross*—two pieces of wood fastened together to become the death instrument upon which the Prince of Glory died. And as we survey the wondrous cross, this is what we will see.

March 3 – “The Injustice of the Cross” Mark 15:1-15

March 10 – “Mockery at the Cross” part one, Mark 15:16-24

March 17 – “Mockery at the Cross” part two, Mark 15:25-32

March 24 – “Forsaken on the Cross” Mark 15:33-41

March 31- “The Triumph of the Cross” Mark 15:42-16:8

The title of course comes from the well-known hymn by Issac Watts, which he wrote in 1707. This is what we’re after in this series. This is what happens when we truly see and savor the cross.

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,*

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2007.

*My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Dear friends, it's vital that we survey the wonderous cross, for it's the key to life eternal. And it's vital that we help others survey it too. This is why, in conjunction with this series, we have a special Good Friday outreach gift for you, and for this community.

We're calling it the "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" frame. Even now, a team of men from Wheelersburg Baptist Church are making this gift for you, one per family. And making extras too, so you can invite your neighbors and friends to your home and give it to them on Good Friday.

Would you pray fervently that the Lord would use this "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" project to help many people come to know the significance of what Jesus accomplished for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. Would you invite people to join us for this sermon series, "*When I Survey the Cross*," on Sunday mornings from March 3 through April 14, 2024, or listen to it at [wheelersburgbaptist.com](http://wheelersburgbaptist.com).

And would you (or perhaps a group of you working together in your community group) consider inviting neighbors and friends to your home on **Good Friday**, March 29. We will give them this special gift, and assemble it together. As we assemble, we'll discuss what happened on the cross, and why. This will be a "kid-friendly" event, so the whole family can come and participate. Just 20 minutes or so, but eternally significant.

*Scripture Reading: Mark 15:1-15*

We live in a society that is hung up on *rights*. "I've got a right to be treated fairly!" "I've got a right to be understood!" "I've got a right to be appreciated!" Rights, rights, rights. To people who dwell on 'rights,' the word 'injustice' is very distasteful. We don't tolerate injustice (at least when it happens to us). We fight injustice. And certainly, there are times when we should.

But are there times when we *shouldn't*?

How do you respond when you are mistreated? I confess that I get upset when as I'm driving down South Street, the other driver takes *my* side of the road and forces me to stop and wait for him to pass. "That's not right!" I mutter under my breath. "The law specifies (at least I think it does; surely there is some law somewhere that says so, and if there isn't, there *ought* to be one!) that the driver who has parked cars on his side of the road must stop and allow the other guy (that's me!) to pass first."

Why do I get so upset when that happens? The answer, using biblical terminology, is *idolatry*. There are idols in my heart.

Ken Sande observes, “An idol is not simply a statue of wood, stone, or metal; it is anything we love and pursue in place of God, and can also be referred to as a ‘false god’ or a ‘functional god.’ In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on...”<sup>2</sup>

Like ruling *my side of the road*...? Yes.

Richard Keyes elaborates, “An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as God... Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God’s existence or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly good.”<sup>3</sup>

Like *my rights*...? Yes.

Is being understood a *right* I have? Sure, it’s nice and even helpful in good communication, but is it a right? How about being *treated fairly*? Do I have a *right* to be *treated fairly* by my wife, or children, or my church family, or the guy in the other car?

You say, “What’s wrong with wanting to be treated fairly? That’s not idolatry.”

True. Not necessarily. But the desire for fair treatment can easily become an idol that rules my heart. John Calvin put it this way, “The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we *want it too much*.”

What does it look like to be a person who has rights, but does not cling to those *rights*? We see the vivid answer when we survey the wondrous cross.

In Mark 15:1-15, we see Jesus experiencing three types of terrible injustice. In a world that’s hung up on *rights*, it’s vital for us to sit at the feet of Jesus, to sit there regularly and with a teachable spirit, and to ponder how Jesus responded when people mistreated Him, and why.

### I. We see religious injustice (1).

Allow me to sketch the backdrop. It’s Passion week. On the day we call Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into the capital city of Jerusalem on a donkey to the applause of the emotional crowd. He headed directly for the temple, looked around, then left to spend the night in Bethany (Mark 11:11). On Monday, He cleared the merchandisers out of the temple (Mark 11:15). On Tuesday, He debated with the religious leaders (ch 12). Burial preparations occurred on Wednesday (ch 14). On Thursday, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus observed the Last Supper with His apostles, agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, and was there betrayed by Judas and arrested by a mob (all in ch 14).

Jesus actually had two trials, the first by the Jewish religious authorities, the second by the Roman civil authorities. Mark refers to both trials in verse 1. “And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council [the Jewish trial ends]. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate [to begin the civil trial].”

The Jewish trial was a travesty. The truth is that when the Sanhedrin tried Jesus, it broke its *own* laws. For instance, the Sanhedrin (made up of 71 Jewish leaders) did not meet in its own building which it was required to do. It met at night which was illegal. It met during one of the Jewish feasts which also was illegal. Jewish law stated that trial witnesses must be examined separately, and for their evidence to be valid it must agree in every detail—this too was violated in Jesus’ trial. If the death sentence was issued, a

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<sup>2</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

<sup>3</sup> Taken from message by C. J. Mahaney, *The Idol Factory*.

night was supposed to elapse before the execution was carried out so the court might have a chance to change its mind if necessary.<sup>4</sup>

Notice the time indicator. *As soon as it was morning.* The Sanhedrin held the real trial the previous night (see 14:53-65), but since that was illegal the Jewish court now reconvenes to make it official, or as Mark says in the NIV, “to reach a decision.”

We gain two insights into the Jewish leaders in verse 1.

**A. The Jewish leaders know their Bible, yet reject Jesus.** Mark mentions quite a line up in verse 1. The *chief priests* were there, the God-appointed men who were supposed to bridge the gap between sinful men and a holy God. The *elders* were there too, Israel’s experienced and respected leaders. The *scribes* (also called the *teachers of the law*) were also there, the Bible experts of the day.

These men were supposed to be Israel’s spiritual leaders. They knew the Scriptures better than anyone in the land, yet they concluded that Jesus was guilty and worthy of death. The question that begs to be answered is *How?! How* could men who know the Bible so well reject the very Messiah the Bible predicted?

We know the answer, and we know it because Jesus Himself gave it. Jesus actually told the Jewish leaders in earlier conversations why they rejected Him even though they were Bible experts. He put the spotlight on them and exposed three factors that were true of them from birth. Since the factors are ours as well, I’ll use the first person. These factors explain why the world is full of people who know the Bible yet reject Jesus.

1. *We are born with a sight problem.* Listen to Jesus in John 3:19-20, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but *men loved darkness* instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil *hates the light*, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

We all enter the world with a seeing problem. Our spiritual eyes don’t work. We are blind. What effect does a flashlight have on a blind man? None. Even an airport spotlight won’t phase him. He can’t see.

In John 8:12 Jesus got into an argument with the Jewish leaders when He said, “I am the light of the world.” Just think of it. These men had the Light of the world shining right in their eyes, but they couldn’t see Him. Why not? Because they couldn’t *see*.

2. *We are born with a heart problem.* We don’t come to the Bible neutral. Our hearts are tainted and turned off to the things of God from birth. Our default is to *love darkness* rather than light. We inherited this sight and heart problem from Adam who was the first to turn from the light and whose choice plunged the world into darkness.

In John 8:34-37 Jesus said this to the Jewish leaders, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because *you have no room for my word.*” That’s the heart condition with which we enter the world. We’d rather sin than submit to Jesus and His Word.

3. *We are born with a hearing problem.* Listen again to Jesus, this time in John 8:43, “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are *unable to hear what I say.*” There’s why the Jewish leaders read their Bibles and heard Jesus speak, yet rejected Him. They *could not hear Him*. The reason they could not hear Him was because they were already listening to another voice, the voice of their father, the devil (verse 44). They had selective hearing.

Did you realize there is a prerequisite to being able to hear God’s Word? Jesus tells us what it is in John 8:47, “He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you

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<sup>4</sup> See Barclay, pp. 349-50

do not hear is that you do not belong to God.” Don’t miss that. Only those who belong to God can hear the Word of God.

Some of us are greatly burdened for our unsaved loved ones. We tell them about Jesus. We present to them the words of Jesus. But it’s as if their ears can’t hear. And that’s because they can’t. They need what we needed, for the Spirit of God to open their eyes, to regenerate their heart, and to unclog their ears. That’s their condition, beloved. That was once our condition, until God in His grace rescued us.

So ends the Jewish trial. The Jewish leaders, men who know their Bibles, reject Jesus and propose to kill Him. But they have a problem. They can’t.

**B. The Jewish leaders lack authority to kill Jesus, so they take Him to Pilate.**

Mark says, “They bound Jesus [they treated Him like a dangerous criminal who might try to escape], led him away and handed him over [note those words *handed Him over*, for we’ll see them again later] to Pilate.”

So ends scene one. We see religious injustice, everything from *when* Jesus was tried, to *where*, and *how*. This brings us to scene two, and a second example of injustice.

II. We see civil injustice (2-14).

Pilate takes center stage in scene two. Who was Pilate? Mark doesn't tell his readers, apparently assuming the first readers knew. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. He lived at Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea, but came to Jerusalem at Passover to be available in case there were crowd control problems. The palace of the high priest was in the southwest part of the city, and Pilate probably stayed in the palace of Herod in the northwest section of the Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> After the Jews condemned Jesus, they led Him through the city to Pilate who typically held morning trials.

In Jesus’ trial Pilate took two courses of action.

**A. Pilate questioned Jesus (2-5).** Verse 2 says, “And Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’” That’s interesting.

*1. Jesus answered the first question.* In the Jewish trial while His prosecutors attacked, Jesus stood in silence answering only one question, “Are you the Christ?” Here Pilate asks a question, but it’s not whether He is the Messiah. It’s whether He is the *king*.

The Jewish court found Jesus guilty of *blasphemy*, for claiming to be the Christ, the Son of God (see 14:64). But what crime did they accuse Jesus of before Pilate? Not blasphemy, but high treason. Which explains the first question that comes from Pilate's mouth, *Are you the king?* The Romans wouldn't execute a man for a religious issue like blasphemy, but they wouldn't overlook some person seeking to rival Caesar.

And how did Jesus answer? In the ESV, “You have said so.” In the NIV, “Yes, it is as you say.” Literally, “Thou dost say it.”<sup>6</sup>

Why does Jesus say *yes*? Earlier, after the miracle of feeding the 5,000, the Jews tried by force to make Jesus king. But He refused (John 6:15). Why does He now say *yes*? For two reasons. One, He *is* King. And two, by answering this question *yes*, He is bringing about His own death.

“Why would He do *that*?!” you say. “He’s innocent! Why doesn’t He stand up for His rights? Why would do something that would result in His death?”

Jesus Himself gives the answer in the words He spoke in what is the theme verse of the book. In Mark 10:45 He says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and *to give his life* as a ransom for many.”

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<sup>5</sup> Wessel, p. 773

<sup>6</sup> Young’s Literal Translation

This is why He said *yes*. This is why He came, *to give His life as a ransom payment*. By giving His life, He is going to pay the necessary price to set hostages free. What hostages? The ones with blind eyes, dead hearts, and waxed ears we mentioned earlier. He has come to save Adam's helpless race. He has come to die the death that sinners deserve to die so that sinners can be set free and reconciled back to God.

Wesley said it well...

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain,  
For me who Him to death pursued.*

*Amazing love! How can it be that Thou my God should die for me?*

So Jesus answered the first question. That's amazing. This is even more amazing.

2. *Jesus did not answer the second question.* Notice verses 3-5, "And the chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup> 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."

The chief priests tried to paint Jesus as a troublemaker, as a threat to Rome. This was a serious charge and Pilate knew it. But Jesus stood there in total silence. Why didn't He respond to the accusations? If I was Pilate, three potential answers would come to mind.

*Potential Answer #1:* These are legitimate accusations and there is no defense. For instance, if you accused me of being a *sinner*, I would have to drop my head in shame, and my silence would be an admission of guilt. But verse 10 indicates that Pilate saw right through the tactics of these prosecuting attorneys, knowing that these Jewish leaders could care less about someone causing the Romans trouble!

*Potential Answer #2:* These accusations are bogus and not worthy of a response. In this case, that's true. The accusations were groundless. But this is a trial. Jesus *must* respond if He wants to save His life.

*Potential Answer #3:* Jesus is choosing *not* to give a reply because He is choosing *not* to defend Himself. In other words, He is not tongue-tied. He is intentionally refraining from any type of self-defense.

Of these three potential answers, the third of course is the correct one.

3. *Jesus chose to experience injustice.* Pilate had never met a 'criminal' like this. This man was in total control of Himself. He could have avoided death had He chose to defend Himself. But He didn't. Here was a person who didn't deserve to die, yet did nothing to prevent His death! That *amazed* Pilate, and he's not an easy man to amaze. He's a shrewd politician in a cut-throat world. He's seen it all. But he's never seen this.

Why didn't Jesus defend Himself? Why didn't He demand His rights? Pilate didn't know the answer. But we do, for the Bible makes it clear.

Seven hundred years before this moment, the prophet Isaiah penned this prophecy in Isaiah 53:7-8. "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. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; *for the transgression of my people he was stricken.*"

There's the answer. In that final phrase we see the reason why Jesus did not open His mouth. He was stricken, Isaiah says, *for the transgression of my people*. That's what this is all about. Jesus, though innocent, is dying for people who are not innocent. He is enduring this *for their transgressions*.

I ask you, *is that just and fair?* Is it right that the innocent Jesus would die because of sins that others committed? No. And yet He did, willingly, with joy in view according to Hebrews 12:2.

Joy? Yes, joy. A person can endure a lot of agony if they know God intends to us it for an eternal good. Dear friends, some of us right now are experiencing injustice. Perhaps it's you. You're thinking, "My spouse is making my life miserable, and I'm through working on this relationship. I have a right to be happy."

Or perhaps you, young person, are thinking something similar about your parents. "I can't wait to get out of this home. I've got a right to a better family." Oh, dear friends, the next time we find ourselves consumed by our rights, let us survey the wondrous cross.<sup>7</sup>

Sadly, in the case of Pilate, there's more. After the questioning ended...

**B. Pilate used Jesus as a bargaining tool (6-14).** Notice verses 6-7, "Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.<sup>7</sup> And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas."

Barabbas. An intriguing name. It means 'son of abba' (son of the father). One suggestion is that he was the son of a famous rabbi. Some manuscripts preserve his name as 'Jesus Barabbas' (Jesus was a common Jewish name). That's conjecture, but this isn't. Barabbas was a member of the Jewish resistance (perhaps the Jewish sect of Zealots) which hated and sought ways to eliminate the Romans. He had murdered a man, was captured by the Romans, sentenced to death, and was now awaiting execution.

He was also a bargaining chip for Pilate. Let's read what happened next in verses 8-15, paying particular attention to the words that communicate what people are *wanting*:

"And the crowd came up and began to **ask** Pilate to do as he usually did for them.<sup>9</sup> And he answered them, saying, "Do you **want** me to release for you the King of the Jews?"<sup>10</sup> For he perceived that it was out of **envy** that the chief priests had delivered him up.<sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.<sup>12</sup> And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"<sup>13</sup> And they cried out again, "Crucify him."<sup>14</sup> And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him."<sup>15</sup> So Pilate, **wishing** to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

So what were the people at Jesus' trial *wanting*? There were three different wants.

1. *The leaders wanted Jesus dead.* They've wanted that for a long time. They just couldn't get rid of Jesus without looking bad, since the common people were enamored with Jesus. But now, their plot is coming to fruition. They want Jesus out of the way. Do they have legitimate reasons for this desire? Not one. Even Pilate picks up on their motivation, that it was *out of envy*. Jesus is taking away their power over the people, and this they can not tolerate.<sup>8</sup>

2. *The crowd previously wanted Jesus to be their king, but changed their minds.* Keep in mind that this wasn't Jesus' first time in Jerusalem, and this wasn't the first time the folks in this crowd had seen Jesus. How had crowds responded to Him before? Everywhere He went, they applauded Him, for His teaching, but particularly His miracles, and especially when He put free food in front of them. And they wanted more

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<sup>7</sup> Luke's parallel account (Luke 23:6ff.) says that at this point Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for a second opinion. But Jesus did not open His mouth to Herod and was sent back to Pilate.

<sup>8</sup> Envy clouds reason. Envy corrupts justice. Envy ruins relationships, for envy says, "If YOU are in the way of what I want, YOU must go." (see James 4:1-3)

of it. After He fed 5,000 hungry men with the boy's sack lunch, they would have made Him king.

But here was the problem. What they wanted and what He wanted were miles apart.

Have you ever wondered, "How could the crowd shout 'Hosanna' on Sunday and then shout 'Crucify Him!' only five days later?" I want you to notice something. It's possible that the people that showed up at Pilate's hall on Friday morning were not the same people who applauded Jesus during His Triumphal entry. Truly pious Jews had more to do at Passover time than get up early and go to a Roman trial.

According to Josephus, there were hundreds of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem at Passover time. Not all of them wanted to see Jesus crucified. But this group, comprised of fans of the high priest, did.

In fact, many in the mob on this fateful day had not come to accuse Jesus so much as they had come to show their support for Barabbas. According to verse 6, they were there because they knew Pilate's custom. They knew a prisoner would be released. They wanted to make sure that this prisoner was their hero Barabbas (7). Verse 8 specifically says, "The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them as he *usually* did."

I think a case can be made that this, for the most part, is a different crowd. Most of those who were sympathetic to Jesus aren't there. On the other hand, apparently some were. Note particularly verse 11, "But the chief priests *stirred up the crowd* to have Pilate release Barabbas instead." This seems to indicate that at least some in the crowd changed their mind, that the work of the priests to *stir up* the crowd caused them to call for Barabbas, indicating that that course of action wasn't on their mind previously.

It's the power of the mob. How much injustice has occurred in this world because of the power of the mob. How many lynchings. How much destruction of reputation and life. There's something almost demonic about this mob's response.<sup>9</sup> When asked by Pilate, "What do you want me to do with Jesus?" they could have said, "Forget about Him. All we care about is Barabbas." Or, "Do whatever you want with Him. Just give us Barabbas!" But no. Their brutal reply pierces the air, "Crucify Him!"

Pilate tried to backpedal in verse 14, "Why? What evil has He done?" But there is no reasoning with a mob. One commentator offered this insight, "When people cannot reason, they emote. The fewer the reasons the higher the volume. In any argument, the quieter side is almost always right."<sup>10</sup>

3. *Pilate wanted what was best for Pilate.* Verse 15 (NIV), "Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them." It's called people pleasing, and most of us struggle with it. Pilate did, and here it becomes obvious that there's one person he wants to please most. *Himself.*

This is the root problem of a people pleaser. To use biblical language, it's called *idolatry*. Remember our definition? "An idol is something *other than God* that we *set our hearts on.*" Pilate set his heart on pleasing the crowd because he set his heart first on pleasing himself.

I cringe when I think of the many times I have done that, when I did something motivated by a desire to please people, which means I functioned as an *idolater*. Idolatry, of course, was punishable by death in the Old Testament. And our idolatry is why Jesus is enduring the injustice of the cross. He's there in our place, bearing our sin.

This brings us to scene three, and the third injustice. Religious. Civil. *Legal.*

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<sup>9</sup> Bruner, p. 1031.

<sup>10</sup> Bruner, p. 1032.

### III. We see legal injustice (15).

Verse 15 again, “So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.” If ever there was legal injustice, it was on this day. Note the tragic outcome of this trial.

**A. The guilty one went free.**

**B. The innocent one was handed over to die.** Flagrant, inexcusable, unthinkable injustice.

And there’s more, too. Think about this. Jesus did not die alone. He was crucified between two criminals. Who were they? Quite possibly, accomplices of Barabbas.<sup>11</sup> And the fact that they were crucified indicates they were guilty of greater crimes than robbery.

D. A. Carson suggests, “The fact that three crosses were prepared strongly suggests that Pilate had already ordered that preparations be made for the execution of the three rebels. If so, Jesus the Messiah actually took the place of the rebel (Jesus) Barabbas because the people preferred the political rebel and nationalist hero to the Son of God.”

Legal injustice, and there’s more. Don’t minimize the little phrase, “And having scourged (NIV, *flogged*) Jesus.” When the Romans scourged a man, they beat him half to death. They stripped and tied the victim to a post, with arms raised and back exposed. A whip of leather straps embedded with bone and metal fragments was used to literally turn the flesh into a bloody pulp. The Jews limited beatings to 40 lashes, but the Romans had no limit. Some men actually died during the scourging.

This was the inhumane treatment, the injustice, that Pilate authorized, and Jesus endured. But it still wasn’t the worst. The worst injustice was still coming. Notice again the final words of verse 15, “He delivered him to be crucified.”

Why did the cross happen? For three reasons.

1. *Jesus went to the cross because the Jews handed Him over.* We’re told in verse 1 that the Jewish leaders “delivered Him over” to Pilate. That’s why He died. But so is this.

2. *Jesus went to the cross because Pilate handed Him over.* Verse 15 says specifically that Pilate “delivered Him to be crucified.” That too is why He died. But not ultimately. There’s another reason, which is spelled out in Romans 8:32. “He who did not spare his own Son, but *gave him up* for us all.” Who is the One who *gave him up* in this verse? It’s God the Father.

3. *Jesus went to the cross because God the Father handed Him over.* Why would He do so? Why would the Father hand over His Son to wicked me, and why would the Son allow those wicked men to nail His body to two pieces of wood?

**C. The Lord did this for us.** He endured this injustice for us, for our gain, in two ways.

1. *In dying He became a ransom payment (Mark 10:45).* Ponder this observation by John Calvin, “God’s Son stood trial before a mortal man and suffered accusation and condemnation that we might stand without fear in the presence of God.”<sup>12</sup>

Think of it this way. The Just (that’s Jesus) died for the unjust (that’s us). Why? So that the unjust might become just. It’s true. God *justifies* sinners on the basis of His Son’s substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection.

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<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, p. 569.

<sup>12</sup> *Harmony of the Gospels*, 3:179.

My friend, the payment has been made so you can be justified. The question is, have you accepted the payment and the One who made it for you?

Yet there's more. There's something else we gain from His injustice.

2. *In dying He gave us an example (1 Peter 2:21)*. Listen to this reminder given to us by Peter in 1 Peter 2:21-24: “**To this you were called**, because Christ suffered for you, **leaving you an example**, that you should **follow in his steps**. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

The only *right* that's really ours is the right to experience eternal judgment, and Jesus took that for us. Now He calls us to walk in His steps.

Make It Personal: Let's live in light of the injustice of the cross.

**Testimony of salvation:** Ross and Jennifer Bradley

**Closing Song:** #185 “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*” (all four verses)

**Closing charge:** Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

Community Group Discussion:

On this first Sunday of March, we're hitting pause on our Christian Family series to prepare ourselves for Resurrection Sunday (which is March 31). During the Sundays in March, we want to finish our study of the Gospel of Mark with a mini-series entitled, “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*.”

1. There is much injustice in today's world. How would you define injustice? How do people typically respond to injustice? What are some examples of injustice that stand out to you?
2. In today's passage, Mark 15:1-15, we see Jesus Himself experiencing blatant injustice in several ways. After reading the passage again, identify the injustices.
3. What words would you use to describe Pilate? What kind of person was he? How did he treat Jesus in verses 2-4, and how did Jesus respond?
4. Who was Barabbas, and what do we learn about him in verses 6-15? Why did Pilate release Barabbas and condemn Jesus to be crucified?
5. Why is it significant that our Savior personally experienced terrible injustice? What effect should this have on us?
6. Good Friday (March 29) is a significant day for us as Christians to remember what our Savior endured. Good Friday is also a significant day to reach out and share the message of His cross with our neighbors and friends. To help us do that at WBC, we're once again encouraging families to consider hosting a good Friday outreach with neighbors using the “*When I Survey the Cross*” woodworking project. You'll be hearing more about this in the next couple of weeks. For now, spend time as a group praying about this outreach event. Begin to brainstorm the possibility of working together as a community group to host such an event.