



SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 2026 | PASTOR JONATHAN BARBER

MESSAGE TITLE: LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

MESSAGE SERIES/OCCASION: BUILDING DISCIPLES SERIES

MESSAGE TEXT: MARK 15:1-15

INTRODUCTION:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Long before Jesus ever appeared before this council, the prophecy had been written down. What seemed like utter chaos was actually playing out like a scripted play. God is always in control and His plan always goes forward.

Mark 15:1–15 ¹And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried *him* away, and delivered *him* to Pilate. ²And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest *it*. ³And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. ⁴And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against

thee. ⁵But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. ⁶Now at *that* feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. ⁷And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them. ⁹But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? ¹⁰For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. ¹¹But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. ¹²And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the King of the Jews? ¹³And they cried out again, Crucify him. ¹⁴Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. ¹⁵And *so* Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.

The council, the condemned, the criminal, the crowd, and the crucified...

The council condemns the innocent

Introduction: The Story of Two Goats

There was one day each year in Israel when the problem of sin could not be ignored. It was the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest would take two goats and stand them before the Lord. Lots were cast. One goat was chosen for the Lord and slain as a sin offering. Its blood was shed. Judgment fell.

The second goat was kept alive. The priest laid both hands on its head and confessed over it all the sins of the people—their transgressions,

their iniquities, their rebellion. Then that goat was led away into the wilderness, never to return. One was "for the Lord" to be sacrificed, and the other was "for **Azazel**" (the scapegoat). Azazel refers to a going away or, "outside the camp," symbolically carrying the world's sins away forever.

One goat paid for sin. The other removed sin.

The message was clear: sin brings death, and sin must be taken away.

But year after year, the ritual had to be repeated. The blood of bulls and goats could never truly take away sin—it only pointed forward to something greater.

And then we come to Mark 15.

Another judgment scene. But this time, there are not two goats. There is only one Savior. **The two goats were replaced by one Lamb, and He will fulfill both roles.** Who was Barabbas then? He was not the other goat. He represents something far more encouraging for us today.

Let's look at the characters in this story and draw some applications.

I. The Council

Mark 1:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

This council is made up of the most respected "holy men" in all of Judaism. No one knew the Scriptures better. They had given their lives to wholly following, memorizing, and interpreting the Scriptures. And yet...

- Men love power and control
- Our expectation often skew reality
- Pride blinds the eyes from even the most obvious of sights

Jesus is bound—not because He is guilty, but because He is a threat. A threat to their power, their control, their prestige, their way of life.

The religious leaders have already decided the verdict. The trial is over before it begins. But they need Rome to do their dirty work.

Application:

- Pride will blind your eyes to what is otherwise obvious
- The subtleties of the heart are very real
- Religiosity is just another veil for power, control, and greed
- The council was no closer to God for their outward show of devotion than you are.

II. The Condemned

Though innocent, Jesus was condemned as though guilty.

Isaiah 53:3-6 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Pilate questions Jesus:

- “Art thou the King of the Jews?”
- And he answering said unto him, “Thou sayest it.”
- Again and again, Jesus refuses to defend Himself.
- “But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.”

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Jesus understood His mission and He set His face toward it.

Pilate can see what is happening.

“For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.”

- This is not about justice.
- This is about control.
- This is about protecting power.

And standing there—silent, bound, accused—is the only truly innocent man who has ever lived. Jesus is already beginning to fulfill the role of the sin offering. The spotless, blameless Lamb prepared for the slaughter.

Isaiah 53:8-9 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ⁹And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

III. The Criminal

Barabbas: Not the Scapegoat, but the Sinner

Mark introduces another figure:

⁷And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

Barabbas is everything Jesus is not.

- **He is guilty.**
- **He is violent.**
- **He is an insurrectionist.**
- **He tried to bring freedom by force.**
- **He took matters into his own hands.**
- **He sought deliverance through rebellion.**

Pilate offers the crowd a choice. “Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?”

This is where many people misunderstand the scene. Barabbas is not the scapegoat. Barabbas does not bear sin away. Jesus, the Lamb, does the work of both of the Old Testament goats. So what is the significance of Barabbas then?

Barabbas represents us.

He is the sinner who goes free while another takes his place.

¹⁵**And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus... to be crucified.**

Barabbas walks out of prison a free man. Jesus walks toward the cross. Barabbas did nothing to earn it. Barabbas did not repent on record. Barabbas did not ask for mercy.

He was simply released—because someone else took his place. This is the gospel.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we* are healed. ⁶All *we* like sheep have gone astray; *we* have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid *on him* the iniquity *of us all*.

IV. The Crowd

The crowd cries out: “Not this man, but Barabbas.” (John 18:40)

Fickle - The people are easily influenced by the religious leaders of their day. Many of these people only followed Jesus in the first place because of what He could do for them. Ultimately, they wanted better lives. They had hoped that Jesus would be compatible with the priests, but when they found it not so, they flipped to the priests side so as to not upset their lives.

Convenience. Ease. Safety.

These were the priorities of the people. What are your priorities, and what will you do for them?

So many people follow Jesus for as long as He is helping *them*.

Faithless – The people did not have the faith to stand on their own. They put all of their faith in their religious leaders.

¹¹But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

You must know the Scriptures for yourself and be willing to stand upon it like Joshua. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The human heart has not changed.

We would rather have a savior we can control than a Savior who demands surrender.

- We would rather trust strength than grace.
- Effort than mercy.
- Revolution than repentance.

Fleeting – The crowd shouts: “Crucify him.” How can they turn on Him so quickly? Easy. Self-preservation. To stand with Jesus was to be thrown out of the temple—expelled from respectable society. No employment, no rent/housing opportunities, no education for you children, nothing. The priests had them over a barrel, and they delivered.

“Crucify Him!”

How fickle, faithless, and fickle are our hearts? How quickly do we turn on Him today?

Then there is Pilate. Pilate is a tragic figure. He is just like the crowd. He knows Jesus is innocent. He knows the accusations are false. But Mark says: ¹⁵“Pilate, willing to content the people...”

He chooses popularity over principle. Peace over truth. Approval over righteousness. The fear of man traps him.

And how often does it trap us?

How often do we know what is right—and still choose what is easy?

V. The Christ

On the Day of Atonement, one goat died and one goat was sent away.

But at Calvary, Jesus does both. Two goats replaced by one Lamb. He both suffered for our sins, and He took them away.

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- **He bears the penalty.**
- **The judgment falls on Him.**
- **The blood is shed.**

But He is also the One who removes sin.

Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

- **Jesus does not merely cover sin.**
- **He does not merely postpone judgment.**
- **He takes sin away.**

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The Lamb stays. The sinner goes free. Barabbas leaves with no chains. Jesus leaves with a cross. And every believer stands in Barabbas' place.

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God...

What men mean for evil, God means for salvation. The cross is not an interruption of God's plan—it is the plan. And that means we can rest.

If God could work salvation through betrayal, injustice, and crucifixion, He can be trusted with our lives.

Takeaways:

- **A Warning Against Ignorance of Scripture**
 - The priests knew the words—but missed the Messiah.
 - We must not assume familiarity equals faithfulness.
- **A Warning Against Blind Religious Deference**
 - Truth is not determined by titles or traditions.
 - Stand where God stands.
- **A Warning Against the Fear of Man**
 - Like Pilate, we are tempted to please people instead of honoring God.
 - Fear of man always leads to compromise.
- **A Comforting Hope in God's Sovereignty**
 - No plan of God has ever failed.
 - No purpose of God has ever been thwarted.
 - Rest in Him.

Closing Gospel Call

The gospel is not that Jesus helps you save yourself. The gospel is that Jesus saves sinners who cannot save themselves. Barabbas walked free because Jesus stood in his place.

And so do we. The Lamb stayed. The guilty went free. That is grace.

Adult Bible Study Questions

1. Why do the chief priests move so quickly to deliver Jesus to Pilate (v.1)? What does their urgency reveal about their motives and their fear of losing control?

2. Pilate seems to recognize Jesus' innocence (vv. 10, 14). Why do you think he still refuses to act justly? Where do we see similar pressures influencing decision-making today?

3. Jesus remains mostly silent before His accusers (vv. 3–5). When is silence an act of faith rather than weakness? When is it not?

4. Barabbas is described as an insurrectionist and murderer (v.7). Why do you think the crowd preferred a violent revolutionary over Jesus? What does that say about human expectations of deliverance?

5. The text says the chief priests "moved the people" (v.11). How easily are crowds influenced by perceived authority? How can Christians guard against being led by voices that are loud but not truthful?

6. Pilate offers the crowd a choice (vv. 9, 12). In what ways do we still face choices between truth and convenience, obedience and approval?

7. Verse 15 says Pilate wanted to “content the people.” How does the desire to please others subtly affect Christian leadership, parenting, friendships, or church life?

8. What role does fear play in this passage—fear of Rome, fear of losing status, fear of the crowd? Which fears are most likely to shape our own decisions as believers?

9. This passage shows religious leaders acting unjustly in the name of God. How should Christians respond when religious authority conflicts with Scripture or conscience?

10. Despite human sin, manipulation, and cowardice, God’s redemptive plan still unfolds perfectly. How does this truth encourage you when circumstances feel chaotic, unjust, or out of control?
