

False Accusations

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Date: 21 May 2023

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[0 : 0 0] You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. We remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection, and we're moving slowly but surely through the week before Jesus' death and His resurrection, His last week here.

And last week, in particular, we looked at the fact that Jesus was betrayed and abandoned, betrayed by Judas and abandoned by His disciples. And so at the end, Jesus is all alone.

[1 : 1 2] We contribute nothing. We bring nothing to Him. We only receive. This week, we're continuing. We're going to see just another angle, another piece of Jesus' beauty as He walks towards the cross.

And this week underscores not that Jesus does it alone, but that He is innocent and willing. He's innocent and willing as He walks towards the cross, but He is not toothless.

And so He's going to tell us what's going to happen after His death. He has a warning for those who would put Him to death. And so with that, I invite you to turn with me now.

We're going to be in Mark chapter 14, and we're starting at verse 53. And as we turn to God's Word, remember what He tells us about it, that His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead He's given us His Word to show us the way to go.

And so that's where we read now, starting at verse 53. Verse 56.

[2 : 4 2] Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?

But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed? And Jesus said, I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

Verse 63. And the high priest tore his garments and said, What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?

And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, Prophecy.

[3 : 50] And the guards received him with blows. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for our Lord Jesus, for his sacrifice on our behalf, that you do make it just as if we'd never sinned.

We ask that you would open our eyes this morning, that you would help us to see Jesus clearly in this passage, that it would not be something we merely consider intellectually or theoretically, but you would use it to move our hearts, that you'd stir them up with conviction of our sin, with love for you, as we understand the grace that you offer to us in Christ.

We know that we can't earn or deserve any of these things. We know we don't. And so we ask instead that you would simply give them to us because we ask them in Jesus' name.

Amen. The action continues from last week. You'll remember that Jesus had his arrest.

And after that, after Judas had betrayed him and that his disciples had fled and abandoned him, and then there was a young man who even had to leave naked. Jesus shows up here immediately, verse 53, before the high priest, the chief priest, the elders, and the scribes.

[5 : 15] And this is, we're not told in the passage, but this is what we would understand as the Sanhedrin, which would be the highest court of the Jewish people. It would be similar in some ways to what we would think of in our nation today as a supreme court.

This is the Jewish supreme court. And so it's the most serious group of men before whom Jesus might stand. Now, as we get into this, it's important to know that this is not the first trial that we're going to, or not the only trial we're going to see.

It's only the first. Jesus is actually going to stand before two different trials. He's going to stand first here before the religious leaders, and then he's going to stand before the Romans, the civil leaders.

And there's a very simple reason for that. Remember, at the very beginning of chapter 14, verse 1, we were told the goal of the religious leaders, the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.

So they're clear on their goals. The problem is they actually don't have the power to make that happen. The Sanhedrin has not been given the authority by the Romans to put people to death. And so they're going to have to jump through a couple hoops here.

[6 : 23] Hoop one is to hold their own trial to come up with the accusation they're going to present to the Romans. And then they're going to have to move to step two, the Roman trial, because that is how they're going to reach their goal.

That is what is going to result in a death sentence, something that they cannot administer on their own. And so there's a chess game that's being played here by the religious leaders.

And in fact, Jesus is going to play into that chess game a bit. He also has goals. He also has an end state.

And so that's what we see in verse 53. And then verse 54 is simply something to keep in mind and remember for next week. Peter has not disappeared. You'll remember he promised that even if everyone else fell away, he would not.

And so he's trying to keep his promise in a sense, even after everyone abandoned Jesus in the last passage, apparently Peter has caught up and he is hanging close by. Commentators point out one thing that's important to remember for next week, and that is that he's warming himself at the fire.

[7 : 27] The importance of the fire has several pieces to it. One of them is that his face is extremely visible. Peter has put himself in a very bad position if he doesn't want to be recognized.

Okay, hold on to that. We'll come back to that next week. So Jesus' religious trial is underway, and it's a problem though. We see in verse 55 that the religious leaders have a purpose, and they also have a problem.

Their purpose is to put Jesus to death. They want testimony that's going to help them do that. However, run into a problem, but they found none.

And why do they find none? Because they're just surrounded by these false accusations in verses 56 to 59. The problem with these accusations is that the Old Testament law is very specific.

To put someone to death, to find them guilty of a crime, you need to have two or three witnesses. It appears that in this situation, they have a number of witnesses who've been standing by just at the ready to step in when they deliver Jesus to have this trial.

[8 : 36] And the problem is though that they have not made their testimony agree. They haven't gathered beforehand to make sure that they're saying the right thing. And so no one is able to fully agree with anyone else.

These witnesses are contradicting each other. Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 17, the Old Testament law clarify for us that you have to have witnesses that agree.

You can't just execute someone on the testimony of one person. Even 57 and 58, this accusation here would seem at first glance to be true.

Verse 58, they say that Jesus said, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands. And in three days, I will build another, not made with hands. Now, if you're a student of the Bible, you might think to yourself, wait, that's a true accusation, right?

Didn't Jesus say that at some point in the gospels that he was gonna destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days? Well, close, not quite. Jesus says something like that in John chapter two, but what he says is this, destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up.

[9 : 47] Jesus does not say, I will destroy it. He just says, you destroy it, destroy it, and I'll build it back up. So even that, they are not able to trap Jesus.

Question though is this, why do we need to know all this? We have, you know, a couple chapters in the gospel that talk about Jesus last week before his death.

And there could have been a whole book that was written, which tells us that the details that are included bear importance for us. There's something that we're meant to gather from each of these stories.

There's a reason that Mark included these details and not other details. There's reasons that he said what he said here, and there's perhaps other testimony that doesn't make it into the gospel.

And so that's the question we've been asking. We're going to continue to ask with all of these stories leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection. Why do we need to know these things about this trial?

[10 : 46] And the answer is surprisingly simple. We need to know that Jesus is innocent. We need to see false accusations brought against him so we know that he was not put to death for any legitimate cause.

Why? Jesus had to be innocent to save us. Jesus had to be innocent to save us because if he were found guilty, if he were found guilty of a legitimate offense, what would he be doing?

He would be dying for himself. And so it's critical for Mark to show us the details of this trial and the disagreement of the witnesses to put into the spotlight for us how innocent Jesus is, how falsely accused he is.

Reminding us of the very simple logic of the gospel, the innocent dies for the guilty. The innocent dies for the guilty.

That is the logic of the gospel, and it's also the scandal of the gospel. If you find the gospel, if you find these stories boring or irrelevant or old hat, the reason is this.

[12 : 24] You don't believe you're so guilty you need an innocent man to die for you. If you find these stories or the gospel boring or irrelevant or old hat, it is because you do not believe deep down that things are so bad that an innocent man had to die.

Yeah, Mark here is reminding us, no, things actually are that bad. That is actually what you need. This is how deeply broken and sinful and rebellious the world is.

An innocent man had to be condemned as guilty. And so this story is here to remind us of a simple but profound truth.

Things are that bad. We are that bad. The world is this sinful and rebellious. Nothing less than the death of an innocent man would do.

And so, if you are always the hero of the story and never the villain, if you have got it all figured out and you're just waiting for everyone else to catch up with you, if you have lots of questions, excuse me, lots of answers, but zero questions, lots of success, and no betrayal, the gospel will not be relevant to you.

[14 : 14] The church might be a place of duty and pride and identity, but it will not be a place of love and joy and affection.

The church might be a place of duty, of pride, of identity, but it will not be one of love and joy and affection.

We have a rule in our society when it comes to the death of someone, especially the death of someone famous. That is, in the weeks following their death, what is it that you are not allowed to do?

You're not allowed to say anything mean about that person. Okay? The weeks following someone's death, you can only speak well of them. If you want to trash them, you need to wait one month, two months at least, right?

Now, this rule is disappearing a little bit, I've been told, as Christianity is struggling in the West. This is less and less true, but it's still a rule that's in place. Okay? In our denomination, our Presbyterian church, you might be aware, we had two titans of the church die this past week within 24 hours of each other.

[15 : 30] And what is everyone saying about them? Wonderful, glorious, beautiful things, right? People who disagreed with them, who were their enemies and opponents, are posting these tributes about how wonderful these people are.

Why? Because you don't dishonor the dead, right? You don't speak ill of them. Why is that the rule, though? What does that rule imply? The rule implies there are nasty things you could say, right?

The rule's a reminder, all of us are a spotted record. As one person has put it, everyone has a rap sheet. The rule implies there are things you could say about someone to tear them down.

There are criticisms you could make of every man and every woman. You can read these glorious tributes of these men and also know the truth. They have been faithful, and they also had great failure.

All of us have lives that have the stains of failure and offense and betrayal.

[16 : 41] In fact, Peter is going to show us next week his catastrophic failure. All of us have our Peter moments.

I had a friend whose daughter was getting married, and he kind of described her future husband to me this way. He said, you know, he's a really good guy.

I like him a lot. I mean, you know, he's had his conversations with the devil. We've all had our conversations with the devil. And I've never forgotten that. Because I thought, what a great description of humanity, right?

Even the people we would describe as good, upright, outstanding citizens. We have all had conversations with the devil. We all have lives that are spotted with the stains of failure and betrayal.

I tell you those two stories, and I bring all this up to say one simple thing. There's only one type of person in this world.

[17 : 45] And that type of person is the person who needs the death of an innocent man. That's true of you, and it's true of me.

There's a reason that we confess our sin together every week in our worship service. It's because we need it, and it's also because it's true.

We're people every week who come with failure and sin and betrayal. And we do it with hope and confidence, right? We do it with hope and confidence because we know that there's forgiveness and a Savior.

You'll remember 1 Timothy 2, verse 15, I mentioned from time to time, where the apostle Paul says this, I'm the chief of sinners. And he writes this near the end of his life.

It's one of the last letters that Paul writes when he tells this to Timothy. Why? Because as Paul has grown, as he's this great apostle of the church, as he's continued in his life, he never believes he has reached a point where he is finished with sin.

[18 : 56] No, he still needs an innocent man to die. That's the scandal of the gospel.

Scandal of the gospel is that many good people will not make it, and many bad people will because there's only one type of person, a person who needs Jesus to die.

This passage doesn't simply remind us, though, of Jesus' innocence. It's also another display of his great love. The religious leaders are playing a chess game, as I mentioned, but Jesus is playing a chess game, as well.

Verses 60 and 61, the high priest, in frustration, asks Jesus this, have you no answer to make? Which raises an important question for us, as well.

Why doesn't Jesus respond? We've seen Jesus over and over in the gospels come back with these devastating one-liners, right?

[20 : 12] No matter what question they brought to him, he was able to defeat it. No matter what accusation had occurred, Jesus would come out on top.

Jesus' verbal skills were better than theirs. His logic was stronger. And so why, in this situation, does Jesus choose to remain silent?

We know he's capable of defending himself. He could have stood up and said, look, I don't need to say anything. Look how ridiculous this is. And yet he remains silent.

Why? Some say that's Jesus' way of saying that he's innocent, that these accusations are not worth responding to.

I think we have to admit that it's also telling us that Jesus is willing. Jesus is willing to be sentenced to death.

[21 : 12] In fact, there's an irony here, which is that Jesus and these men, at least in the short term, want the same thing. Their goal is to put Jesus to death. Jesus' goal is to die for the sins of his people.

And so why would he stop his enemy when they're succeeding? There's an old line that says, never get in the way of your enemy when they're making a mistake.

And Jesus does the same thing here. He doesn't get in their way when they're making a mistake. He remains silent. Why would he defend himself?

Why would he try to get free? No, Jesus once again is showing his willingness to head to the cross. And so we've seen it in previous weeks.

We'll see it again. We've seen it over and over. Jesus is choosing to die. Jesus chooses to go to the cross.

[22 : 13] Jesus chooses not to defend himself. Jesus allows himself to be sentenced to death. This was not an accident. Jesus didn't stumble into this.

He didn't find himself in a courtroom not knowing what to do. No, this was the plan all along. There's a quote on the back of your worship guide from John Calvin, which basically says this, Jesus was mute then so that we can speak to Jesus, to God now.

He was mute then so he can intercede for us now. Jesus remained silent then so that he could later speak to God the Father on our behalf.

Jesus was silent. And because he was silent, Scott prayed for us earlier this morning in the service. And because Jesus was silent then, he interceded and intercedes for us on our behalf.

Jesus remained silent so that God could hear us now. And so we see crystal clearly Jesus' love for us.

[23 : 39] Romans chapter five reminds us of this. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God chose his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Brothers and sisters, either you believe that you need his death or you believe you don't. It is that simple.

There's no complicated secrets for me to reveal to you in this passage. It's the simple, offensive, counterintuitive message of the gospel.

The message that there's not two kinds of people or three, there's one. The person who needs Jesus to die. Either you recognize that and admit it or you don't.

Either you follow Jesus or you don't. Those are two and the only two options.

[24 : 52] Mark does not leave open the door for merely an intellectual exercise. No, he presents this question over and over. Remember, especially in chapters one through eight of who is Jesus?

That's the question that we asked over and over again. And Jesus finally, finally in chapter 14, gives his own answer.

And his own answer reminds us of the urgency of following Jesus because the day of judgment is coming. And that's what Jesus goes on to see, to say.

Remember verse 55, I told you they had a purpose and a problem. Their purpose was to get testimony to put Jesus to death. Problem was they couldn't find any. Jesus here solves their problem for them.

Verse 61, he remained silent and made no answer. Again, the high priest asked him, are you the Christ, the son of the blessed? In the past, we would have expected Jesus to dodge this question.

[25 : 58] Remember, he would perform a healing and then he would say, don't tell anyone about this. Don't tell anyone who I am. But here he doesn't hide it. Verse 62, I am and you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

And the high priest understands Jesus' meaning all too well. Verse 63, tore his garments and said, what further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy.

What is your decision? And what is Jesus' blasphemy here? Jesus is saying, yes, I am God. Yes, I am the son of God.

Even more than that, he makes allusions to two Old Testament passages. He alludes to Daniel chapter 7 and Psalm 110, which both drive home at the same point.

This is on verse 7 of your worship guide. In both of these, the Messiah comes as a judge. Therefore, by replying as he does, Jesus is saying, I will come to the earth in the very glory of God and judge the entire world.

[27 : 14] Jesus comes in his first coming to receive judgment. That's why he remains silent here. But he is reminding us and these religious leaders that he comes in his second coming to bring judgment.

Jesus is a sacrifice, but he is neither powerless nor helpless. He is going to play their game for a time to achieve his ends, but the tables will be turned.

The fortunes will be reversed. The man who sits right now in this trial and is judged will come one day as the judge.

The man who sits in this trial and is judged will come one day and be judged. Yes, Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart, and he is coming to judge the world and bring an end to all evil.

Jesus and the religious leaders want the same thing, his death, only for a time. Jesus has a long-term plan.

[28 : 28] Yes, he is going to die for his people, and yes, he is coming back as the judge. A day that will be wonderful for those who follow him and terrible for those who do not.

John chapter 5 tells us a little bit about what this day will be like. Jesus says this in John chapter 5, Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

judgment. Which resurrection will you experience? The resurrection of life or the resurrection of judgment?

The resurrection of life is not for those who have done enough good. The resurrection of life is for and is only for those who know they're so bad that they need an innocent man to die for them.

The resurrection of life is for those who are able to sing In Christ alone my hope is found. Let that be our hope as well.

[30 : 05] Let's pray. Our Father in Heaven we praise you and thank you that you give us your word about your son that you remind us of our great need and his innocence and your grace to us that he goes out of his love to the cross for us that he takes the punishment we deserve so that we could have his life.

We ask that you would stir up that truth in our hearts that we would embrace Christ more and more that we would admit our need and look forward to the resurrection of life.

We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.