LESSON *twelve*

IT'S NOT OVER

Mark 15:1–16:20

GETTING STARTED

What are some of the ways that you have seen people still mocking Jesus today?

Setting the Stage

Mark devotes two chapters (one eighth of his book) to the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The plot against Jesus, which kicked into high gear with his arrest at Gethsemane, now unfolds at a breakneck pace. Mark reveals the unlikely alliances and strange bedfellows that were created to get rid of Jesus.

The complexity of the plot against Jesus may give the illusion that Pilate, Herod, the Jewish religious leaders, and the Roman soldiers somehow held Jesus' fate in their hands. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of them recognized it at the time, but each person involved in Jesus' trial, torture, and crucifixion was playing a role in God's plan of salvation. Jesus was not a helpless victim of Jewish and Roman scheming. He was an obedient servant of His heavenly Father—a willing sacrifice.

The Roman soldiers mocked and beat Jesus because He allowed them to do so. They drove spikes through His hands and feet because He permitted it. His enemies taunted Him while He hung in agony on the cross because He agreed to let them do so. In fact, Jesus asked God to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing (see Luke 23:34).

Look at Jesus' words to Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). With a single word from His lips, Jesus could have ended His suffering and exacted a holy retribution on His torturers. Yet He remained silent. He understood that His death, and His resurrection, was the only way to bridge the gap that sin had created between God and humankind.

Exploring the Text

Jesus Before Pilate (Mark 15:1–15)

[1] Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound

Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. [2] Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

He answered and said to him, "It is as you say."

[3] And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. [4] Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!" [5] But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

[6] Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. [7] And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. [8] Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. [9] But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" [10] For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

[11] But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. [12] Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"

[13] So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!"

[14] Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?"

But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!"

[15] So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

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1. How would you describe the actions and attitude of the Jewish religious leaders in this passage? How would you describe the actions and attitude of Pilate?

2. Why do you think the crowd refused to answer Pilate when he asked what crime Jesus had committed (see verse 14)?

The Soldiers Mock Jesus (Mark 15:16–32)

16 Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and
they called together the whole garrison. 17 And they clothed Him
with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head,
18 and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 Then they
struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing
the knee, they worshiped Him. 20 And when they had mocked Him,
they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led
Him out to crucify Him.

21 Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the
father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country
and passing by, to bear His cross. 22 And they brought Him to the
place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. 23 Then they
gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.
24 And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting
lots for them to determine what every man should take.

25 Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 26 And the
inscription of His accusation was written above:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right
and the other on His left. 28 So the Scripture was fulfilled which says,
"And He was numbered with the transgressors."

29 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

31 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

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3. Wine mixed with myrrh was a painkiller that was offered by certain respected women of Jerusalem to people who were condemned to die. Why do you think Jesus refused something that would ease His suffering (see verse 23)?

4. How would you describe the treatment Jesus received beginning at the Praetorium and continuing even on the cross (see verses 16–20, 29–32)?

The Death of Jesus (Mark 15:33–47)

33 Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the
whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried
out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which
is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

35 Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look,
He is calling for Elijah!" 36 Then someone ran and filled a sponge full
of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying,
"Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."

37 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

38 Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
39 So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried
out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the
Son of God!"

40 There were also women looking on from afar, among whom
were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of
Joses, and Salome, 41 who also followed Him and ministered to Him
when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with
Him to Jerusalem.

42 Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation
Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a
prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom
of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for
the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and
summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for
some time. 45 So when he found out from the centurion, he granted
the body to Joseph. 46 Then he bought fine linen, took Him down,
and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had
been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of
the tomb. 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses
observed where He was laid.

5. Read Psalm 22:1–31. How do some of these verses relate to the events of Jesus' crucifixion?

6. In what ways was Joseph of Arimathea's request to take the body of Jesus an act of courage? How did Pilate respond to his request (see Mark 15:43–45)?

Jesus Has Risen (Mark 16:1–20)

[1] Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the
mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come
and anoint Him. [2] Very early in the morning, on the first day of the
week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. [3] And they
said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door
of the tomb for us?" [4] But when they looked up, they saw that the
stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. [5] And entering
the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting
on the right side; and they were alarmed.

[6] But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of
Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place
where they laid Him. [7] But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that
He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He
said to you."

8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they
trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for
they were afraid.

9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He
appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven
demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they
mourned and wept. 11 And when they heard that He was alive and
had been seen by her, they did not believe.

12 After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as
they walked and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it
to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and
He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did
not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15 And He
said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every
creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he
who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will
follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons;
they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and
if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will
lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received
up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they
went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them
and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

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7. The angel instructed the women to "tell [Jesus'] disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee" (verse 7). Why did the angel specifically mention Peter?

8. Why do you think the disciples, of all people, didn't believe the witnesses who said they had seen the risen Jesus (see verses 11–13)?

Reviewing the Story

On Friday, Jesus' enemies walked away from Golgotha believing they had accomplished their mission. They had turned the people—the very ones who had cheered Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem only days earlier—utterly against Him. They had caused His disciples to scatter in fear. They had exacted their revenge for Jesus' public challenges to their authority. They had rid themselves of the nuisance from Nazareth forever and put an end to His radical teachings. On Sunday, however, Jesus' enemies discovered just how wrong they had been when reports started circulating about an empty tomb and numerous sightings of the resurrected Jesus.

9. How were the Jewish religious leaders able to stir up the crowd outside of Pilate's residence so easily (see Mark 15:11)?

10. Why do you think Jesus quoted from Psalm 22 as He hung on the cross (see Mark 15:34)?

11. The mother of James and John was present at Jesus' crucifixion (see Mark 15:40–41). Earlier, she had asked Jesus to give her sons places of honor on either side of Him. What do you think was going through her mind when she saw what it actually meant to be on either side of Jesus at Golgotha?

12. How did Jesus' resurrection impact His disciples (see Mark 16:20)?

Applying the Message

13. How would you explain to someone what Jesus did for each of us on the cross?

14. People talk about keeping the spirit of Christmas in their heart every day. How can you keep the spirit of Easter in your heart every day?

Reflecting on the Meaning

Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection have life-changing implications for you. First, it reveals that *you have immeasurable worth to God.* As the apostle Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 6:20, "You were bought at a price." That price was the life of Jesus Christ. God saw such value in you that He sent His only Son to die in your place so you could have eternal life with Him.

Second, it reveals *you have a unique story.* If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you have an experience that is unlike any other. At one point in your life, you were lost and now you are saved. The details behind that transition—the condition of your life beforehand, the realization that something was wrong, the circumstances that caused you to turn to Jesus, the changes in your life that resulted from your decision—make your story unique. You have no idea how powerfully your story will resonate in someone else's life . . . until you share it.

Third, the death and resurrection of Christ reveal that *you have a benevolent Lord.* Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:19, that "you are not your own," describe the implications of what it took to make heaven possible for you. If you are a Christian, you have submitted to Jesus' lordship. This means your life is no longer in your own hands. Jesus' priorities are now your priorities. His will is now your will.

Fourth, it reveals *you have an essential responsibility.* If you recognize your worth in God's eyes, embrace the uniqueness of your story, and have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, your job is to help others do the same. You do that by the way you live your life—the way you treat others, the loving concern you show, and the priorities you embrace.

Journaling Your Response

How will you celebrate today what Jesus did for you at the cross?