

## SERMON

This morning, we're not going to concern ourselves with theories of atonement (explanations of how Christ's death on the cross works), we're simply going to tell the story.

C.S. Lewis: you don't need to understand how Jesus' death on the cross accomplished our salvation for it to work. (*Mere Christianity*, 54.)

N. T. Wright: One further—it's not just that you don't need to know the theory, it's that the theory is just an abbreviated version of the story. (*The Day the Revolution Began*, 223.)

### **Tell the story from Mark (and Mark alone)**

14.1-2: The political and religious leaders plot to arrest and kill Jesus.

14.3-9: In the house of Simon the leper, An unidentified woman pours costly ointment on Jesus' head. Some present think it's a waste, Jesus interprets it as preparing him for burial.

14.10: Judas makes a deal with the authorities to betray Jesus.

14.12-21: While they celebrating the Passover (the feast celebrating God freeing the people of Israel from slavery), Jesus announces that one of the twelve will betray him.

14.22-25: Jesus explains his death through a meal—what would become Holy Communion.

14.26-31: Jesus predicts that they will all abandon him. Peter vehemently says that won't happen. Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times before the rooster crows twice. Peter says he will follow Jesus unto death and all the say the same.

14.32-42: In great distress, Jesus prays that the cup might pass from him. He finds the disciples napping. He wakes them up. He prays again. He finds them asleep again. Rinse and repeat and his hour of betrayal comes.

14.43-50: Judas returns with an armed mob in tow. He betrays Jesus with a kiss. One of the disciples draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the slave of the high priest, but we aren't told anything more.

Jesus points out that he had been in the temple teaching day after day, and they did nothing. He then surrenders without a fight. The remaining disciples desert him and flee.

14.53-65: With Peter just outside in the courtyard, Jesus is put on trial in a kangaroo court by the Jewish authorities. Some false witnesses are bought in, but they can't keep their stories straight. It turns out they don't need to. Jesus' testimony is brief but incriminating. His claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God enough to have him executed. Jesus is spit upon, blindfolded, struck and beaten.

14.66-72: Out in the courtyard, Peter is given three chances to proclaim his allegiance to Jesus. Instead he denies Jesus three times. Just after the third denial the cock crows a second time. Peter breaks down and weeps.

15.1-5: Not having the authority to execute Jesus, the Jewish leaders take him to Pilate, a Roman official who didn't care about the charges of blasphemy, but did care about the charges of insurrection inherent in the claim that Jesus is the king of the Jews.

15.6-15: Pilate, aware that Jesus had only been brought to him because the religious leaders were jealous, tries to release Jesus, but the crowd demands that the rebel Barabbas be released instead. The crowd then demands that Jesus be crucified. Wanting to appease them, Pilate releases Barabbas, has Jesus flogged and then sends him off to be crucified.

15:16-21 — The Soldiers mock Jesus and his kingship with a crown of thorns before leading him out to be crucified. Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus was tasked with carrying the cross. Alexander and Rufas were probably part of Mark's community.

15:22-39: Read the Mark's Story

<sup>22</sup> Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). <sup>23</sup> And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." <sup>27</sup> And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup> Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in

three days, <sup>30</sup> save yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup> Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

<sup>33</sup> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>35</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." <sup>36</sup> And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>37</sup> Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

And thus, our Messiah, our Lord, our King died for us.

He took the full weight of evil, sin, and death upon himself and exhausted them and defeated them. Sacrificing his life in the process of freeing us to be the people God created us to be.

At any point, Jesus could have avoided crucifixion and death. He could have stopped it while eating his final meal, while praying in the garden, while facing down the mob. He could have put an end to it at his trial before the religious leaders, at his trial before Pilate, or on the way to the Golgotha. He could have shocked the skeptics and come down from the cross.

He could have stopped it. He could have avoided death. He was the son of God. But he loved so much that he chose our salvation again and again and again. Time and time again he chose to save us. Over and over he chose us.

We can't ever repay him. All we can do is give thanks for his loving faithfulness, give thanks that he chose us and choose to live as his disciples.

Amen.

## Works Consulted

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