

March 29, 2015
 Sermon for Palm Sunday
 St. Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Mark 15:1-39

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

¹ And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. ⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. ¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. ²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!” ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ³³ And 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 with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Do you remember the TV show; *The Weakest Link*? It pitted contestants against one another to see who has the quickest and best mind.

Throughout the show, the slow or the unintelligent are ridiculed and sent off the stage, with those cold, yet iconic words: You are the weakest link! Goodbye.

Today is Palm Sunday, when we celebrate Jesus' triumph ride into Jerusalem, palm branches waving and shouts of Hosanna!

We know those shouts didn't last too long as the voices in the background, led by the devil, soon had hosanna's changing to crucify Him.

It's not much different today. As far as the world is concerned, Jesus is the weakest link. His message is laughable and the kingdom He proclaims is ridiculous.

But those who put their faith in Him find this King of Peace to be God's own wisdom and their own salvation.

But listen to our Text assigned for this Palm Sunday.

The Chief Priest Says Jesus Is a Blasphemer.

Jesus is the wrong kind of king. He just isn't the one that they wanted.

He does not intend to establish the peace envisioned by the religious leaders—the peace that keeps them in “control” of God and His Word.

Throughout Mark's Gospel, what gets Jesus into trouble with the religious leaders is His attitude toward *them*.

They aren't interested in proclaiming God's Word. They aren't interested in showing the world the Messiah.

They are interested in preserving their positions as leaders. But for this Jesus consistently condemns them: for their hypocrisy, traditionalism and legalism (7:1–23).

They demand for signs (8:11–13) for their own use, not for the glory of God.

Their spiritual corruption of the temple (11:12–18).
Their stewardship of God's vineyard and their rejection of Him (12:1–12).

But Jesus intends to establish the peace of God for all people and nations. This peace is established by the uncontrollable grace of God. This made Jesus the enemy of their "institutionalized religion" that turns the Word of God into a means to control people in order to perpetuate the system of the religious leaders.

The consequence for Jesus' proclaiming the truth: He must die.
Human pride and human greed allows no challengers—even God.

And since they couldn't kill Him themselves, they found a puppet ruler to carry out their actions.

Pilate Says Jesus Is a Fool

But he is sadly mistaken.

To Pilate, it is obvious that the peasant Jew, the itinerant preacher standing before Him is no king at all—even of the Jews.

Kings have bodyguards and armies and money and power.
Jesus has none of this.

Any reasonable person would simply defend himself against the aggression of his enemies and save his life.

But not Jesus. He refuses to be reasonable in Pilate's eyes.

He claims to be a king, but His peaceful refusal even to talk or argue, like a lamb before the slaughter, shows Pilate that if Jesus is a king, His kingdom must be one not of power and might, but of clowns and fools.

Again, the consequence: Jesus will die. In the governments eyes. He is a fool, too unreasonable to tone down His language or even to compromise in order to save His life.

Jesus Says He Is the King of the Jews

He is the Son of God who is the King of the Jews.

He is more than the king of the Jews as the Jewish leaders and Pilate understand. Throughout Mark's Gospel, Jesus refuses to accept the title of king and messiah as they are understood by the people.

He is a different kind of King of a different kind of kingdom.

He is the Son of God and the king of the kingdom of grace and peace. And nothing will prevent this kingdom from being permanently established.

Strangely enough, the event intended to put an end to this liar and fool becomes the means by which the kingdom of peace puts an end to all of the kingdoms of pride and power.

The consequence?: Salvation for all who put their faith in Jesus as their Savior.

To put one's faith in Jesus is to be saved from sin and death and delivered into the kingdom of God.

The late Dr. Malcolm Muggeridge, the grumpy old man of the British journalistic establishment, once gave a speech in Washington, D.C., in the latter half of the 20th Century, in which he made a number of comments about the current state of the world's affairs—all of them negative.

Afterward, one person asked him if he had any reason for optimism. Muggeridge responded, "My friend, I could not be more optimistic than I am, because my hope is in Jesus Christ alone."

He paused for a moment to let that sink in, then finished: "Just think if the apostolic church had pinned its hopes on the Roman Empire!" The kingdom of Jesus, a liar and fool to those who deny him, is the eternal kingdom of God whose truth we must live out in our lives (from Richard Halverson, "The Living Body," *Christianity Today*, vol 39, no 9).

Think of the church today...so quick to bow to governmental mandates and to change our Theology to fit government standards.

Our world today says that what Silvia did today, by bringing Sophie and Christopher to the waters of Holy Baptism, where by the power of the Holy Spirit, they were cleansed of their sins, marking them as one of God's children forever.

Forever!

God's Word has not changed and will never change. (Is 40:8, 1 Pet. 1:25, Mt. 24:35)

What we look for in a king will determine what we say about Jesus. If we look for one to uphold our position in the world, we'll say he's a liar and an enemy.

If we look for one who sounds reasonable to our human ears, we'll say he's a fool.

But for those who know their need for peace with God and long for the peace of God to lead and hold them through this life and into eternity, we'll say He's our King.

A King that truly cares for His people. Who died for their sins. Who forgives all who call upon His name for salvation.

Today is a day of celebration, but tomorrow we begin the long trek into Holy Week. A week of repentance. A week of reflection.

A week of suffering, a week of dying...dying for your sins. They are paid for, you know. Jesus gladly did it all for you.

And finally, we look forward to that glorious Easter morning, when we remember once again, that God accepted Jesus sacrifice for your sins, for the sins of the whole world, and we can celebrate with trumpets sounding, the forgiveness of our sins, and life everlasting.

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

Who really is the weakest link?

Mark 15:1-39

1. The Chief Priest Says Jesus Is a Blasphemer.
2. Pilate Says Jesus Is a Fool.
3. Jesus Says He Is the King of the Jews.