

Jesus' New World Order

Message 13

The Murder of the King

Mark 14:1-15:47

Introduction

We come now in our studies in the gospel of Mark to the account of Jesus' death. You may think it a bit strange to focus on the end of Jesus' life in the season when we celebrate His birth, but not so. For Jesus was born in order to die for us, and it is very appropriate that we remember the reason for His life at Christmastime. Furthermore, all the merchants notwithstanding, we are actually approaching the Advent Season – the four weeks prior to Christmas which the church traditionally has reserved for reflection and preparation for the coming of Christ. We remember the long wait of the Jews for the coming of their Messiah, and we remind ourselves that He will come a second time. Thus Advent is a time of reflection on the state of our own souls as we question whether we are ready to meet Him when He comes again. With this in mind, then, let us turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14.

The Plot

¹ It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ² for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." ³ And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴ There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that?" ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me." ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹ And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." ¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Almost from the beginning of His ministry Jesus has been at odds with the religious leaders of Israel. They never grasped how He could forgive sins, because they were unable to accept that He was God come in the flesh. They were irritated that He refused to follow the fasting patterns of the Pharisees. Jesus tried to warn them that a new day had arrived. The bridegroom spoken of in the scriptures is here, and it is a time for rejoicing and obedience. The old ceremonies and traditions were about to be replaced with the new. But the religious leaders had a vested interest in the status quo, and they began to see that Jesus was a threat to their prominent position. Early on they desired to kill Him, and even consulted with the party of king Herod, whom they hated, to find a way to eliminate Jesus.

But Jesus avoided serious trouble for the next several years of His ministry. He occasionally ran into the scribes and Pharisees, and when He did He sharply condemned them for their hypocrisy. They claimed to love righteousness, but instead they were proud and selfish. Much of Jesus' ministry took place in Galilee, far away from the Jewish power center in Jerusalem. So it was astonishing when He set out for Jerusalem. His followers were afraid, for they knew that the Jews in Jerusalem would try to kill Jesus. To His own disciples Jesus explained that He would in fact die there – put to death by the chief priests and scribes.

Jesus hardly made any effort to endear Himself to the Jewish leaders. They, who loved the praise of men and sought out public adulation, were no doubt green with envy at the royal welcome given Jesus when He entered Jerusalem on a donkey and the people carpeted the road with their garments. They were livid beyond description when He took over their temple, drove out their merchants, and used the building to teach the people. And His teaching. He would waste His time on ignorant fishermen, women, and children, but He obstinately refused to answer *their* questions. He told parables against them, and said they did not know the scriptures or the power of God! They, the *teachers of Israel* do not know the scriptures! Finally He delivered a scathing insult, saying,

Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation. (Mark 12:38-40)

These men could have strangled Jesus by the throat! The only thing holding them back was a powerful sense of self-preservation. They knew that the crowd loved Jesus so much, they would kill anyone who made a move on Him. The only way they could get to Jesus was by some covert means, so they began to search for some sly means of capturing Him.

The stakes were extremely high. We are at the point where Jesus' life was worth a lot of money. Onto the scene steps a woman who deeply loves Jesus and gives Him a very valuable offering. A denarius was worth about a day's wage, so 300 denarii would have been over a year's salary – say between \$30,000 and \$50,000 for your average American. Can you imagine blowing \$30,000 on a brief act of worship? Can you imagine giving \$30,000 to Jesus for any reason? That is about the cost of one year at Lehigh. If Jesus called you to do so, would you give up one year of your education for Him? For \$30,000 you could buy two new cars. Would you be willing to go carless for Jesus? The point here is the unbelievable love this woman had for Jesus. He was priceless to her. Is He priceless to you?

Jesus was worth a lot to others as well. Not \$30,000, but a lot. Judas decided the money was worth more than Jesus, and agreed to betray Him to the chief priests.

The New Covenant

¹² And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶ And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" ²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The scriptures make careful note that the last supper Jesus ate was the Passover meal. The Passover was the primary feast of the Jews. It reminded them of God's amazing deliverance from Egypt, when He killed all the first-born males in Egypt, but "passed over" the houses of the Israelites. Without that first Passover there would have been no Israel, and God commanded the Jews to observe this feast every year to remember His faithfulness to them. On the Passover the Jews took an unblemished lamb, killed it, and ate the meat. It was the blood of the lamb which marked the Israelite houses and protected them from God's death angel in Egypt. So the lamb was the sign of God's deliverance.

During this meal Jesus did a curious thing. He introduced two new signs and announced that they belong to a *new covenant*. Whereas before they ate the body of the lamb, now by eating bread they will eat the body of Jesus. Previously they were saved by the blood of the lamb, but now by drinking wine they will be saved by the blood of Jesus. Jesus does not elaborate on the meaning of these things, but simply says they point to the Kingdom of God. Later in the epistles, the apostles show us that the death of Christ saves us from our sins, and this Lord's Supper is the new feast to show us God's mercy and faithfulness.

The Betrayal

²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" ²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹ But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same. ³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?" ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." ⁴³ And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵ And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁴⁶ And they laid hands on him and seized him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?" ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." ⁵⁰ And they all left him and fled. ⁵¹ And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, ⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. ⁵³ And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even about this their testimony did not

agree.⁶⁰ 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?”⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”⁶² 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.”⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need?⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came,⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.”⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.”⁷² And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

Have you ever been let down by someone you were depending on? Maybe you told a secret to a friend and he spread it around to other kids. Did someone ever promise to hand in your paper and then forget, leaving you with a lower grade? Have you ever been double crossed? Did a friend actually betray you for some personal gain? If so, you know how it feels to be misused by someone. It is one of the most wretched experiences you can have.

In this passage we see Jesus abandoned by everyone in the world. When He tells the disciples that one of them will betray Him, no one thinks it is he. Then when He tells them that they all will run away from Him, they protest with increasing forcefulness. Peter, with customary brashness, says, “If I have to die with you, I will not deny you!” But Peter immediately fails the first test. Jesus took them to Gethsemane and took Peter, James and John aside so they could pray with Him. Facing death, Jesus did what anyone would do – He went to His father for guidance, strength and comfort. Here He poured out His soul, longing to be spared the horrible death awaiting Him, but willing to die out of love for His father. Meanwhile Peter went to sleep. What a friend!

Then Jesus is betrayed in the slimiest way possible, by a kiss. Judas turned Him over to the mob from the chief priests. The disciples took no thought for their bold assertions made so few minutes ago, but fled for their lives. One followed at a distance, but also ran off when the mob tried to grab him. He was so eager to escape he even left his robe and fled naked! Of all Jesus’ friends, only Peter refused to flee. He sneaked into the high priest’s courtyard to see what would happen. What was happening was a kangaroo court. These priests who appear so holy by day are nothing but a bunch of thugs by night. But try as he might to remain incognito, Peter’s cover was blown, and that by a servant girl! Once he managed to keep his cool. Twice he issued a plausible denial, but moved outside onto the cold porch. But by the third time he lost his composure. Cursing and swearing, he denied his Lord, whom he had sworn to serve, even to death. The rooster crowed, notifying Peter that he had failed in the only thing in his life which really mattered anymore. There was nothing to do but go out and weep – for himself and his despicable cowardice, for Jesus and His imminent grisly torture and death, for the hope of God’s Kingdom dashed forever. But the worst is still to come.

The Murder

“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.^{28 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!"⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Crucifixion was specially devised by the Romans as the most hideous form of execution. The Romans were master rulers. They did not conquer the whole Mediterranean world and rule it for 1,000 years by taking government casually. They were fair to their subjects, as much as can be expected of pagans, but they insisted on peace. Their legions were war machines, equipped, trained, and deployed throughout the empire to maintain that peace. Those who would disturb the peace were made an example to other would-be revolutionaries that insurrection is not only impossible – the consequences are too horrible to contemplate.

Crucifixion was also a dehumanizing form of execution. The victims were naked, exposing the flesh

torn open by the preliminary lashing. They were subject to the mocking and ridicule of all passers-by. Roman citizenship carried the benefit of protection from crucifixion, but Jesus' citizenship was merely in the Kingdom of God.

The Atonement

But the real heart-wrenching aspect of Jesus' death is not the physical and social suffering of crucifixion – it is the abandonment of His father. Isaiah helps us understand what is really going in here. Reading from chapter 53...

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted....
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth....
Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring. (Isaiah 53:4,7,10a)

“Smitten by God.” The harsh reality of the crucifixion of Christ is that it was God all along who was behind it. The chief priests, the scribes, Pilate, the Roman soldiers carried out the judgement and bear responsibility for putting to death the Son of God. But they were also instruments of God in carrying out His ancient plan. This is the ultimate betrayal. God, whom Jesus trusted, turned against Him. And not only that, but His own heavenly Father. Can you imagine your father doing this to you? Don't you think your father would give up his own life for you? I sure would for my children. Most fathers would unhesitatingly suffer so their children could escape. But God *intentionally* sent Jesus to the cross. Furthermore, the death of Jesus brought pleasure to God. Isaiah said, “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him.” How can we possibly understand this?

We usually think of the crucifixion of Christ as executed by the Jews and Romans, because these are the characters in the forefront of the narrative. We would never naturally think of God as Jesus' executioner because the thought is too repulsive. But when we notice Jesus' words, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” we can tell this is not an ordinary execution. And Isaiah makes God's role clear. The explanation for God's role in the death of Christ is also found in Isaiah 53.

But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
...and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
...by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:5,6,8b,11b)

Everybody had his own reason for wanting Jesus to die. The chief priests and scribes saw Jesus as a threat to Judaism and were acting to protect their position among the Jews. The Romans saw Jesus as a

disturber of the peace and were motivated to maintain that peace. But God saw Jesus as His own innocent, beloved Son. And it was just that innocence which made Jesus the candidate for God's death. For only an innocent man could pay for the sins of man. And only an infinite God could pay for the sins of all mankind.

When Jesus died, it was not for His own sins, or even His indiscretions. He died for *our* sins. "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities; The chastisement for *our* peace was upon Him." All of us, everyone in this room, every man, woman, and child that ever saw the light of day are like sheep. Sheep do not stay together in a flock – they wander off. We wander from God. We do not follow Him. We do things our own way and get lost in sin. Everyone of us is guilty, and everyone of us was destined to die. Forever. But Jesus "bore our iniquities." He took our place. He suffered the punishment we deserve so that we might live. When He hung on the cross, He was not suffering for Himself, but for our sins.

Now do you see why the Lord was pleased to crush Jesus? It was not His Son, but the sin He bore that caused God to send Him to the cross. God's pleasure in killing Christ was partly the satisfaction of justice rendered – but more, the salvation of His people. It was by putting Christ to death – and *only* by Christ's death – that God freed us from death and sin. And the pleasure of our fellowship was worth the horrible death of His own Son.

Application

Do you love anyone enough to put your child through such torment? No, you do not. Human beings are capable of human love, but this is divine love. It is too high for us. But we human beings are capable of responding to divine love. And we are also capable of shutting our hearts to God's love. Where are you? Are you trying to earn your salvation by noble acts of virtue? Do you think that God is so impressed by your love? Your love is fairly worthless. John said in his first letter, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (4:10) Your love for God is not the main issue. God's love for you is the primary thing. *He* loved you, *He* died for you, *He* took away your sins. God's work, not yours, is what saves you. Do you believe this? Do you worship God for saving you apart from your good deeds? If you are trying to impress God by your diligence, your enthusiasm, your knowledge, or your love, you have not understood anything we have said here. Pray for God to grant you repentance so you might be saved.

Are you enjoying life, trying to stay out of serious trouble? Are you counting on God to grade on a curve? Do you think that He will overlook your small sins? Do you think He will be satisfied with your small love? If so, why do you think He killed His own Son for those sins? John continued in his letter, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." (4:11-12) See, you *must* love each other. This is an inescapable command. Furthermore, if you do not love others, that is iron-clad proof that God is not in your life. You are an imposter! If you are counting on God to wink at your little sins, you also have not understood anything we have said here. Pray for God to enable you to repent so you might be saved.

Whether trying to impress God or hoping God will overlook your sins, both are suffering from hardness of heart. God will destroy you if you do not believe in His Son Jesus Christ. God killed Him for you! What do you think He will do if you despise His infinite love? How can you not love Him, how can you not love others, how can you not worship Him – unless you are His enemy? And if you are His enemy, do you really think you can trifle with Him?

The gospel is the good news that every wicked, hard-hearted enemy of God is welcome in His Kingdom. That means you. That means your friends. That means everyone at Lehigh. No matter what you

have done, no matter how much you have despised God in the past, God says, "Come, my child. Forsake your miserable life, and find true, eternal life with me. I, who killed my Son for you, will always love you with a bottomless love. Come, walk with me." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

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