**Uniquely Jesus**  June 4, 2017

Mark 14:53-65; 15:1-20

Read the passage.

Away from the public eye, the true intent of the religious leaders was made obvious – they were on a quest to find evidence that would allow them to have Jesus put to death.

The fact that they met through the night, tells you there was an urgency to their gathering and deliberations.

What had to be done, had to be done quick.

There were many who testified falsely about Jesus.

However, Jewish law required that any accusation, be corroborated.

And although they tried, the religious leaders were unable to find two witnesses who could agree.

Jesus was of no help to them.

He never reacted to; never responded; never argued about the false accusations being made about him.

He simply stood there.

Jesus did the same when he was brought before Pilate.

It was this that caught Pilate’s attention, and compelled him to ask of Jesus: *Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.*

This amazed Pilate.

Coffee/Question: Why do you think Pilate found this so amazing?

When the high priest, asked Jesus a direct question, that was a truthful question, Jesus did answer.

He did the same when Pilate asked him: Are you the king of the Jews?

The high priest asked: *“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”*

Jesus said, *“I am.”*

Then Jesus said, “*And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

Here Jesus melded together two OT messianic passages – Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 – which left absolutely no doubt regarding who Jesus considered himself to be.

Psalm 110:1 – *The LORD says to my Lord:* ***Sit at my right hand*** *until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.*

Remember – “LORD” is the English word for Yahweh; and “Lord” is the English word for Adonai.

In this Psalm, Yahweh speaks to Adonai... sit at my right hand.

Daniel 7:13-14 – *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a* ***son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven****. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations, and those of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

What Jesus had hinted at, the last 3 ½ years, through his parables, he stated clearly that night: he is the Lord (Adonai), who is the son of man, God’s Messiah.

The reaction of the high priest tells us that he understood what Jesus said:

*“Why do we need any more witnesses?”*

*“You have heard the blasphemy.”*

*“What do you think?”*

What is blasphemy?

gotquestions.org says: “To blaspheme is to speak with contempt about God. Blasphemy is criticism of God's name, character, work, or attributes.”

God instructed the Israelites in the third commandment, *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

“For the Israelites blasphemy of God was a serious crime, deserving of capital punishment.” https://www.gotquestions.org/blasphemy-blaspheme.html

The religious leaders condemned Jesus to death, not for any crime he had committed, but, because of who he claimed to be.

This is extremely important for you and I to recognize.

People’s offense against Jesus is not typically because of anything he has done, but because of who he claims to be.

The religious leaders couldn’t find anything wrong.... in Jesus’ character, or in what he had said or done.

That’s because...Jesus is faultless.

Pilate also came to the same conclusion.

After speaking with Jesus, both Luke and John record, what Pilate said to the religious leaders: *I find no basis for a charge against him.* John 18:38.

Pilate did give in to the wishes of the religious leaders, but not because he agreed with them, but, because as they stirred up the crowd to call out for Jesus’ crucifixion, *[he] saw that he was getting nowhere, [and] that instead an uproar was starting.* Matthew 27:24.

It wasn’t like Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah came out of the blue.

The religious leaders had personally seen some, as well as heard of many more miracles, which Jesus had performed.

Think about it!

Who can give sight to a blind person?

Who can cause a deaf person to hear?

Who is able to make a mute person speak?

Who can heal a paralyzed person so they can walk?

Who can free a person from the control of an evil spirit?

Who can heal leprosy?

Who can raise a dead person to life?

Who can walk on water?

Who can tell a storm to be still and it is?

Who can turn water into wine?

Who can multiply a meal for one, so that it is enough for 10,000?

I can’t. You can’t.

No ordinary person can do these kinds of things!

The miracles Jesus did were a testimony to who he is.

And Jesus’ miracles still confront people today.

He is no ordinary man.

He says of himself, I am God.

And this confronts us with a dilemma.

We can laugh at him; we can dismiss him; or we can fall before him.

Why didn’t the religious leaders fall on their faces before Jesus and worship him?

Was the fault in Jesus? Was he stark raving mad?

Or was it...that the fault was actually in the religious leaders?

When he first began his public ministry, in a conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said something that in addition to explaining humanity’s desperate need of a Savior, also clarifies why there is within all of us a reaction against Jesus.

John 3:19: *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world....*

The light referred to here... is...Jesus himself.

John 1:5-6 says... that in Jesus, there is life, and that the life of Jesus is the light of all mankind, and that this light, shines in the darkness.

What is the darkness being referred to?

It is our lives and the world in which we live.

Both are morally and spiritually dark places.

Why is that?

2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,*

*so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

When I read this verse, did this question come to your mind?

How can God hold humanity responsible, if we’ve been blinded by the god of this age, and are unable to perceive the true beauty and worth of Jesus?

Why would God hold us accountable for what the god of this age has done to us?

Jesus said there is a second reality that describes the human condition.

John 3:19: *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

Why didn’t the religious leaders fall before Jesus and worship him?

They loved the darkness.

Why did Pilate turn Jesus over to be crucified, even though, his wife had warned him: *Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man.*, (Matthew 27:19)

and even though, he himself at one point, had asked the crowd: *What crime has he committed? (*Matthew 27:23)

Pilate too, loved the darkness.

This reality defines every human being.

This is why every person experiences resistance within them that rises up when they think of coming to Jesus.

Do you remember how you fought? or are presently fighting?

My experience of steeling myself not to respond to Jesus.

I was drawn.

But I resisted.

I not only resisted; I ran.

Why?

There are lots of reasons I could give.

Bottom line - I ran because I loved the darkness.

It isn’t that God hasn’t made himself known – in creation.

Psalm 19:1 says, *The heavens declare the glory of God.*

Isaiah 6:3 says, *The whole earth is full of his glory.*

Everywhere we look there is design and order and beauty.

God’s fingerprints are found on everything we see.

It isn’t that God hasn’t made himself known – in the person of Jesus.

As we read in our call to worship, Colossians 1:15 says, *Jesus is the image of the invisible God.*

The fact that we human beings can’t see the glory of God in the creation, or see the uniqueness and beauty of Jesus, is actually testimony to the truth that we have been blinded, because we love the darkness.

If a person doesn’t want Jesus in their life, if they prefer the darkness, over the light of his person, like the religious leaders did, and like Pilate, they will have to deliberately block his voice; stubbornly resist his tug on their heart; and somehow, someway, turn themselves against Jesus, in order to rid themselves of him.

This is what the religious leaders did.

*Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists and said, Prophesy! And the guards took him and beat him.*

They did this to try and drown out the conviction that came upon them.

The crowd, outside of Pilate’s palace, angrily rejected Jesus, and demanded he be crucified.

They used anger to try and silence the guilt they were experiencing.

Pilate, in spite of knowing Jesus was innocent, finally gave him up.

Was his claim, “I’m innocent of his blood,” an attempt to quiet his inner discomfort?

The Roman soldiers: *put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, ‘Hail, king of the Jews.’ Again, and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him.*

*Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.*

Why such mocking? Why such violence?

Did they do this, hoping that if Jesus could somehow be diminished, dehumanized, their conscience wouldn’t condemn them, for what they were doing?

Jesus was rejected; he was abused and he was killed because... people love the darkness.

Our culture may view itself as more sophisticated.

But to dismiss Jesus as being a person of no consequence, as being irrelevant, a has-been, a relic from the past, is still a response that testifies that those who do so, love the darkness.

Our misplaced love for darkness, is why we are held responsible by God for our moral preferences.

Jesus tells it to us straight - John 3:19-20.

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.*

Here is where we encounter a great dilemma.

We need rescue, but we don’t want Jesus.

We need rescue, but we are unable to rescue ourselves.

We need to perceive things as they really are.

But we’re spiritually blind.

We need to love God.

But our hearts are twisted... and love the wrong things.

Have you ever been in a circumstance that seemed beyond hope; beyond solving; that was a catastrophic mess.

This is where humanity is, right now...because... we love the darkness.

There was and is no human, able to fix what we as a race broke.

But Jesus has done for us, what we couldn’t.

And his rescue of us is glorious.

In the passage we’ve studied, we see Jesus standing alone.

Only he could become sin for all of us.

Only he could carry our collective guilt.

Only he can put right, our upside down, inside out and muddled up lives.

Only he can open the eyes of our heart to perceive God.

Only Jesus can make spiritually dead people alive to God.

Only he can give us a new heart, able to love God supremely.

John Piper writes: *Left to ourselves, we will not perceive Jesus Christ for who he truly is - the most beautiful, valuable reality in the world. Unless God opens our minds, we always wind up preferring other things over him.*

This is what God has done.

2 Corinthians 4:6: *For God, who said, “Let shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*

Praise God that God shines his truth into our darkened minds, showing us who Jesus is - the supreme treasure, worthy of our undivided love.

The same God who created us; who acted to provide salvation for us in Jesus; opens our minds to understand, so that we might believe and receive Jesus into our lives.

Without Jesus, we have no hope. Without him life is futile.

Without him, death is an unknown horror.

But come to him, and we encounter the sweetest love.

**The Lord's Table** is a time for ***reflective worship***.

1. The Table portrays the person and work of Jesus Christ and His presence in our midst to minister His life to us. **a.** **In the Bread**we see Christ as the Bread come down from heaven, the perfect God-man, God’s gift to solve our sin problem.  **b.** **In the Cup**we see Christ as the Lamb of God who came as the God-man to die for our sins.

2. Receiving and eating the elements portrays our faith in Jesus Christ and our commitment to to live by fellowship with Him— to be nourished by His life.

3. The Bread, which starts out as one loaf, portrays our unity and oneness of mind and heart as fellow believers in Christ.

4. Receiving the Bread and Cup together reminds us that we share together in his life.

**Examination:**Pause for a time of silent meditation for personal examination and confession of known sins in the life in preparation

Play musically: How Deep the Father’s Love for Us

**Read** **1 Corinthians 11:28-31** **and** **1 John 1:9**

Sing: How Deep the Father’s Love for Us

Read **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

Pass the Bread and the Cup

Sing: Man of Sorrows

**Prayer of Thanks:**

Today we gather as brothers and sisters in Christ

to remember the extraordinary sacrifice, You made in sending Jesus,

Your beloved Son to be with us.

We thank You for His legacy

in words, actions and obedience

to suffering on the cross.

Lord, we come to You now

to ask for forgiveness for any thoughts, words or deeds

that have not honored Your name.

We are also sorry for the times

we have chosen to live selfishly rather than heed Your calling.

We invite you to inhabit our hearts now

as we take the bread and the cup.

Bind us together as one family, filled with Your love.

Thank You Lord for Your grace that is at work in our lives.
Amen.

**Benevolent Offering**

**Sing: In Christ Alone**