

REIGNING BLOOD

Mark 14-15

Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion (Series B)

March 25, 2018

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

The gospel lesson for The Sunday of the Passion comes from *The Gospel According to Mark*. It is the complete text of chapters 14 and 15. It is quite long, so I won't ask you to stand. You can follow along in your Bibles if you want, but if you are able to pay attention without reading along, I would encourage you to just listen, and try to visualize these events in your head.

This is what we've been waiting for. What we are about to read is the high point of Jesus' ministry. He has been teaching his disciples that this is why he came. So this is also the high point of the entire Bible. And this is also the high point of the Church year. Not Christmas. Not even Easter. This moment, right here, as we read this Scripture, is the highest point in the Church Year, because this is the highest point in Jesus' ministry and the highest point in the history of the world.

From *The Gospel of Mark*, chapters 14 and 15, we read in Jesus' name.

14 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, ²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

³And 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. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that?" ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And 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."

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

¹²And 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?" ¹³And 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, ¹⁴and 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?' ¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶And 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. 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, “Prophesy!” 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.

15 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

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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!"

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.

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⁴² And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.
Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Peter, this is what you were baptized into. Just shy of two thousand years ago, your king died. And today you joined him in that death. And so you have also been raised with him, and you will be raised with him again.

Dear Saints, this is what we've been waiting for. As we've journeyed through Lent together, we've been waiting for Jesus to finally lay aside his teaching and do his kingly work. For the past several weeks we've considered some of the texts where Jesus talks about this kingly work. And it's all been leading up to this moment.

We've noted that the disciples were also longing for Jesus to assume his kingly work. They didn't care much for all of Jesus' talk about his suffering. They preferred to talk about his kingdom and how glorious it would be and how they would have prominent roles in his government. And on Palm Sunday, it looked like they might get their way.

The service began with Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. This occurred on Sunday of Holy Week. It's the event that, at least chronologically, fits best with today, one week before Jesus' resurrection from the dead. It was a remarkably humble, yet glorious event. Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a king, but a very humble king, riding on a small donkey (John 12:14). It must have looked very strange. Nevertheless, it was glorious and exciting as people lined the road and praised him. And, as Jesus received these praises, it must have caused his followers to think that perhaps he was finally going to assume his kingly crown as the Messiah of Israel. And they were right—sort of. In just a few days he would, in fact, be crowned the King of the Jews.

But as we heard from the Scriptures this morning, there is no tension between Jesus' suffering and his glory, for his suffering is his glory. A savior's most glorious moment is always the act of salvation. Whether it's a fireman, a policeman, a soldier, a doctor, or whoever, the moment they save whoever needs saving is their most glorious moment. And so it is with Christ. His act of salvation is his most glorious moment.

In each of the four gospels, there is one verse that stands out as the highest. It's that one verse that, when you read it, you can't help but stop and just think about it and ask yourself a few questions before going on to the next verse. Now they each record a slightly different perspective of the high point in Jesus' ministry and the history of the world. In Mark the verse is 15:37. "And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last."

And you stop and think, *My God, did that really happen? Was this innocent man really condemned and murdered in this most brutal way? And you even ask yourself, Can this happen? How is this even possible? Did God really die?* Of the things impossible for God to do, sinning is at the top of the list. But after that, I suppose dying would seem like the next most impossible thing. But here we see God breathing his last. And we see his corpse taken down off the cross and laid in a tomb (15:46). God died.

Imagine the horror of that Roman centurion. At the end, he finally comes to realize who this dead man in front of him is. “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:39). He watched him breathe his last. And he looks down at the ground in front of him and realizes this is divine blood. And he realizes that he has God’s blood on his hands—perhaps even literally. Imagine the horror when you realize who you just killed.

And what is all this for? Why such agony? Why this death? This death is Jesus’ kingly service. Remember, we’ve been waiting for Jesus to assume the role of king. And this is it.

Irony of ironies. How many different ways is Jesus identified as the King of Israel? Nowhere else in *The Gospel of Mark* is Jesus so clearly identified as a king as in chapter 15—the chapter of his death.

Pilate asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews, and Jesus finally says, “Yes” (15:2).

And, irony of ironies, both the Romans and the Jews think they are mocking him, but everything they say and do in mockery is actually true. Twice more, Pilate identifies Jesus as “the King of the Jews” (15:9, 12).

Then the soldiers dress him in a purple robe and coronate him with a crown of thorns (15:17). They anoint the Christ with spit and kneel down in homage (15:19). Then they take a break from the mockery, because there is killing to be done.

When they nail him up on the cross, the sign above his head says, “The King of the Jews” (15:26). It’s not even, “He claimed to be the King of the Jews” (John 19:21-22), but the bare truth, “The King of the Jews.”

The criminals mocked.

Even the chief priests and the scribes mocked him, taking the Lord’s Name in vain, “Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe” (15:32).

And if that’s not enough, one of the two persons who had perfectly loved Jesus for all eternity forsook him. And these might be the most chilling words in all the Bible, “**Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?**” That’s Aramaic. It means, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (15:34).

These words are difficult to comprehend, but Jesus always tells the truth. And it is true. In that moment, God the Father looked down at his Son and forsook him. He crushed him (Is. 53:10). All that mockery was nothing compared to the forsaking of the Father. And why did the Father forsake him? Because, in that moment, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24) When God the Father saw his Son on the cross, he saw all the sin of the world—yours, mine, and everyone’s. He saw everything that had gone wrong with his beautiful creation. Jesus Christ had willingly and lovingly assumed it into himself for this very purpose. In

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this most horrifying event, God the Father and God the Son were of one will—to forsake and to be forsaken for your salvation.

This is Jesus in his Kingdom. This is your Savior in his glory. This is your God, forgiving your sins. And this is our hope in life and in death: that our King has died to save us. We have been baptized into his death, and we have been raised with him. So we live in him, and when we die—that is, when our bodies fall asleep—we will die in him. And dying in him is the safest kind of death, because he is the one whom death cannot hold. This is why we call it “sleep.” And we will speak much more of that next Sunday. And it will be glorious. I promise.

But today we consider Jesus at the pinnacle of all his glory—the cross. Here we behold our Savior and King, lifted up to die. This is how he reigns. This is how he saves. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.