

How Earth Received Her King - Mark

14:53-65

Introduction

- You know, I am not a fan of reality TV. I'm sorry if you love it, it's just not something that I enjoy.
- There is a reality TV show, however, that I at least think has an interesting premise, and it's one that came to mind a few times this week. The show "*Undercover Boss*".
- If anyone's unfamiliar with that show, essentially the premise is that the CEO of a big company goes "undercover" as a worker on a lower level in the company to see how their company runs, and if there's any issues.
- And from what I've seen of the show, there's two potential ways that it can go. The first option is that the boss is really impressed with a certain employee for treating them well, or working hard, so they get some kind of reward at the end of the show.
- The other option, and I think the more frequent one, is that the whole experience doesn't go so well, and the boss gets incredibly mistreated, or sees people slacking off, failing to live up to a company standard, or some other kind of misconduct.
- And as you're watching that play out, you, the viewer look at the employees thinking "man, you're going to regret treating the boss that way, or behaving like that."
- Because we know that at the end of that type of episode, when the employees find out who the undercover boss is, they know that there will be trouble.
- That's the reason we watch a show like that. We love the mic drop type of moment at the end, where the boss reveals themselves and, for better or worse, the employees get what they deserve for how they acted.
- We love endings like that because we love the idea of justice. We find it so satisfying to see bad people get "what they deserve", and good win out in the end.
- It's how all good stories eventually end. If you read some story where the whole thing just felt unjust, and the good guys lost, with evil winning in the end, we wouldn't find that very satisfying.
- Even if you know of certain stories that end with the good guys losing, I can think of a few, they're usually part of a series, where the good guys come back to win the day in a later story.
- We love felling like we've seen justice done. It's the way things are supposed to be.

- But in reality, that's not always how things seem to go, is it? Real life doesn't always seem as satisfying, or "just" as our stories.
- So what do we do when that's not actually how things seem to be going in our lives, or our world? What do we do when we're faced with injustice? How do we process and understand that?
- What do we do when one country invades another, resulting in massive casualties for seemingly no reason?
- We see injustice everywhere in our world. You can hardly turn on your TV and look at any kind of news without seeing some sobering reminder that injustice exists everywhere around us.
- And to bring it to a more personal level, how do we handle injustice in our own lives? What do we do when it feels like we've done everything right, but everything still seems like it's going wrong? How do we respond when the world around us feels so unjust?
- Well the story that we're looking at today is an incredibly heavy one, as we're continuing to move through the ending of Mark, each new passage that we look at just seems to get heavier and heavier as we're getting closer to the cross. And today we're looking at the story of Jesus on trial before the religious leaders of the Jewish people, which even itself feels like such an incredible injustice. That Jesus would be put on trial.
- But what we're going to see as we work through this story is the difference between the justice that we expect to see, and the justice that God has planned.

Jesus' trial gives us a picture of deep injustice in a broken world

- So the story begins in V. 53-54 with the stage being set. When we left Jesus last week, he had been arrested, and all of his followers had abandoned him.
- V. 53 then shows us Jesus being brought for a trial before the priests, elders, and scribes of the Jewish people. It was a group known as the Sanhedrin. They were the religious, and really the legal authority of the Jewish people, though they were still subject to the authority of the Roman government.
- Then we get into the actual trial in V. 55:

"Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death" - Mark 14:55a (ESV)

- And you can see right away, that this is not a fair trial. They went into this trying to find some way to justify putting Jesus to death. It's been mentioned a number of times throughout the book of Mark that the religious leaders were constantly scheming about how they could get rid

of Jesus. Up to this point, they'd been unsuccessful, but now they have Jesus on trial, and they are determined to make the most of this opportunity to condemn him and get him out of their way forever. But despite their best efforts to find legitimate evidence against Jesus, the end of V. 55 tells us:

“they found none.” - Mark 14:55b (ESV)

- They could not find one legitimate reason to justify condemning Jesus. And the reason for that, is that there was no legitimate reason to find! Jesus had done absolutely nothing wrong, certainly nothing that would have justified this kind of treatment.
- But it gets even worse.

“For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.” - Mark 14:56 (ESV)

- There's something almost tragically comical about this story, seeing the religious leaders trying desperately to condemn Jesus, but not only can they not find any legitimate evidence against him, even the false witnesses that they themselves brought in against him couldn't seem to get their stories straight.
- The religious leaders would have paid people to come in and lie so that they could have even a made up reason to condemn Jesus, but even that wasn't working.
- In a way it feels so childish, and it's so frustrating to see this incredible mockery, and the terrible injustice that is taking place here. We read it and think “how long are we actually going to pretend to go along with all of this? When will Jesus put an end to all of this?”
- There's such a harsh disconnect in this passage between what we want to see happen, what we know should happen, and what we actually see play out.
- We want to see Jesus stand up, tell everyone who he is, get rid of all these corrupt leaders, condemn them instead, and sit in his rightful spot as the ruler of his people. By rights, that's what should be happening here. But it doesn't happen.
- So as the trial is dragging on, the high priest is getting frustrated, because clearly this scheme that they came up with didn't seem to be going very well. So in V. 60 we read:

“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?’” - Mark 14:60 (ESV)

- At this point they kind of gave up on anyone being able to be an effective witness against Jesus, who wasn't saying anything during all of this, so they start to question Jesus directly,

hoping that he'll slip up at some point, that he'll make a mistake and give them the evidence they're trying to find.

- Then in V. 61:

“But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’” - Mark 14:61 (ESV)

- This is it. The high priest is out of tricks, he just asks Jesus point blank if he claims to be the Son of God.
- And Jesus responds in V. 62:

“I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” - Mark 14:62 (ESV)

- Boom! There it is! There's the mic drop moment, the one that we've been waiting for when justice will be done, and those who tried to kill Jesus will get what's coming to them, right?
- Not exactly. Look at the next verse.

“And the high priest tore his garments and said, ‘What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?’ And they all condemned him as deserving death.” - Mark 14:63-64 (ESV)

- This is not the response that we want to see. Jesus finally answers the high priest's questions, and we think we're going to see justice done, but instead the injustice continues as Jesus is condemned to death.
- And from there the passage ends with Jesus being, taken away and beaten.

“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.” - Mark 14:65 (ESV)

- Jesus has just declared himself to be the Son of God, the Messiah that God's people had been waiting so long for, and in response they condemn him, mock him, and beat him. *“They received him with blows”*.
- I know that Christmas was months ago, but when I read this, I think of the Christmas Carol, Joy to the World. Most of us know that song, right?
- I'll spare you the pain of hearing me sing, but listen to these words.
 - *“Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room, let heaven and nature sing.”*

- That's what should be happening in this moment, as Jesus confirms who he truly is. There should be such incredible shouts of joy that God's promised saviour had come! But that's not the picture we get here. In this passage we get a picture of how earth truly did receive her king. They "*received him with blows*".
- They "received" him with such an incredible injustice that makes our stomachs turn. If ever there was a clear picture of injustice in the world, this is it.
- That the creator of the world would be subject to such an unjust trial, that he would be beaten, mocked, and killed rather than worshipped and praised.
- Everything that we see taking place in this passage is just so wrong.
- We hate reading stories like this, because we always want to see it play out a different way. We hate seeing injustice like this.
- And I think this story really hits home for us, because it gives a picture of such incredible injustice, and it's a kind of injustice that we see play out all the time. That's really the first thing for us to notice today, that Jesus' trial gives us a picture of deep injustice in a broken world.
- We see the devastating effects of sin on full display here. This is not the way our world is supposed to be.
- God created a perfect world, where we could live in a perfect relationship with him, but rather than trust him, we decided we'd rather do things our own way. We sin, and our sin has corrupted the perfect world that God created for us to enjoy. And that sin is the reason that we see so much injustice in our world.
- When we look around and we see people suffering, when we see countries at war with one another, and all other kinds of injustice, it's a result of sin.
- That's what sin does. It has distorted our world to the point that we have this picture of Jesus, an innocent and perfect man, the Son of God, being put on trial, falsely accused, and sentenced to death. It's a heartbreaking picture of how deeply sin has broken our world.
- Jesus' trial gives us a picture of such deep injustice in a broken world.
- But that's not the end.
- Because we do see justice in this passage, but the justice that we see, the justice that God had in mind, is not necessarily the kind of justice that you and I look for when we read this story.

Jesus' response gives us a picture of perfect trust in a sovereign and just God

- We don't see justice in the way that we want or expect it in this passage, and it leaves us with that sick feeling that it looks like evil wins, but it's not quite that simple. I want to take a

moment to dwell a little more on Jesus' words in V. 62. When asked if he was the Christ, this was his response:

"I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." - Mark 14:62 (ESV)

- This is a significant claim for Jesus to make, and if these words aren't true, then they would really have been blasphemy. And this is why the high priest saw this as such a moment of victory. He didn't consider for even a moment that Jesus actually was the Son of God, so this was exactly the proof that he needed that Jesus was deserving of death.
- But what if it is true? What is Jesus saying about himself here?
- When asked if he is the Son of God, Jesus simply replies with "*I am*", claiming in no uncertain terms that he was the Son of God.
- But he doesn't stop there. The rest of what Jesus says refers back to two different Old Testament prophecies that were made about God's promised Messiah, and essentially what Jesus is doing here, is claiming to be the Son of God, who has all authority, including the ultimate authority to judge creation.
- Jesus is telling the religious leaders that, while for the moment he was allowing himself to be judged by them, submitting to their unjust authority, in the end it would be them who would face judgement, and justice would be done when the prophecies about Jesus would be fulfilled, when he would rise from the dead, and eventually sit in judgement over all of creation.
- But that justice would not come by Christ avoiding the cross. It wouldn't come by him getting up and walking out of that trial, exercising the authority and power it rightly had.
- Because if this is true, if Jesus is who he said, then that means that he did have the power to end the whole farce right then and there. The story could have ended in V. 62. But it doesn't. It doesn't end there because Christ had a purpose in all of this.
- The justice in this story would come through Jesus willingly submitting to the will of his Sovereign Father, going to the cross and laying down his life as a sacrifice for our sins.
- He told his disciples again and again that he had come to suffer. He came to fulfil the prophecy of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. That even though he was innocent, he would be pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities.
- You know, if you and I got the justice that we deserved, then we would face judgement, condemnation, and eternal separation from God because of our sins. But Jesus took the full justice, and wrath of God against sin onto himself. He submitted himself to this terrible injustice for us, all the while trusting completely in his Father, that ultimately, in eternity, justice would be done.

- It is through his suffering that justice would be done. It was through his suffering that he would accomplish all that he came to earth to do. It was through Jesus' suffering that he became king.
- You'll remember that I mentioned in the beginning that all good stories end up with good triumphing over evil, and despite the injustice we see in this passage, that's how this story will end too, just maybe not in the way that we expect as we read this.
- We have the benefit of looking a little bit down the road, and seeing the truth of what Jesus says here. That even though he had to suffer so horribly, and undeservedly on the cross, three days later, he rose again, showing his power and authority over sin and death forever.
- Justice has been done because through his death and resurrection, Christ is victorious.
- He has already won that victory over sin, and death, and because of that, we can have confidence in the promise that, while injustice may exist in our world now, and at times in our own lives, we serve a victorious saviour who has promised that one day, we will see him return, and justice will be done against sin, and for those of us who have trusted in him and received salvation through his sacrifice on the cross, we will spend eternity with our saviour.
- Despite all of the injustice that we see in this story, Jesus' response gives us a picture of perfect trust in a sovereign and just God. He gives us confidence that God will make sure that justice is done. And it's a perfect justice that we can trust in, no matter what kind of injustice we see happening in our world around us.

Conclusion

- So as we consider what's going on in this passage, I want to read you a quote by David Garland. He lays out two different possibilities for how to understand this passage, and what Jesus says about himself.
 - *“Either the high priest is correct that Jesus is a deluded Blasphemer, or Jesus is correct and the high priest is the deluded blasphemer.”*
- Either Jesus is who he says he is, or he's lying, and the high priest is right to condemn him. Those are the only two options.
- So when we look at these words of Jesus, it prompts an interesting question for each of us, and a question that I want each of you to wrestle through in your own hearts, because the answer to this question will determine how we understand and respond to the injustice that we see in the world today. And the question is this: Do you believe that what Jesus says about himself in this verse is true?

- Do you believe that he is who he says he is? That he is the Son of God, who is greater than anyone or anything in our world, with the ultimate authority to judge and bring about the perfect justice of God?
- Because if what Jesus says is true, it changes everything about how we understand the world around us. And I truly mean that, it's not an exaggeration. If Jesus is who he says he is in this verse, it changes everything.
- Because if Jesus is who he says that he is, then we have such an incredible hope. No matter what injustice exists in this world, whether it's done directly to us or not, we have a great hope and assurance that justice will be done when Christ returns to redeem creation, because justice has already been done on the cross.
- That does not mean that we won't ever face injustice in this world, and it doesn't mean that there won't ever be challenging and difficult situations that we'll have to struggle through. But it does mean that even in the midst of those difficult moments, and situations, we can have absolute faith in who Christ is, and what he has promised to do.
- As we look around our world, and see the injustice and the suffering that's going on right now, our hearts should break as we see the effects of sin in a broken world. But it should cause us to turn to Christ, and the hope that we have in the Gospel.
- It may not always look like we expect, justice does not exist in this passage in the way that we expect to see it. But that's because God had something so much greater in mind, and something that ultimately, was for our good, and so much better than we could have asked for.
- **Even in a broken world, full of injustice, we can have confidence in Christ to trust that, through his death and resurrection, justice has been, and will be done.**
- Believe what Christ has said about himself, and place your trust in the sovereign and just God that sent his Son to die in your place.