**Easter Sunday**

**THE GREATEST EXCHANGE :**

**GOD’S JUDGMENT FOR GOD’S GRACE**

SCRIPTURE READINGS…

Mark 15:1-15

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto them, Thou sayest it.3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

John 18:39-40

39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas.

**INTRODUCTION**

We don’t know a whole lot about Barabbas. But the scriptures do let us know that he was a prisoner, and was sitting in death row awaiting execution as a murderer, thief and a leader of a rebellion, but Governor Pilate used this and turn the stage into a political arena.

So here we quote him as saying…..Here on my right side, I have Jesus, The King of the Jews, who is known for healing, delivering, and ministering to the multitudes and here on my left side, I have Barabbas, the prisoner, who is known for murdering people, stealing from others, and leading a rebel insurrection.

**“Which do you want that I should release?”**

Beloved if you analyze this the two don’t even compare the one with the other!!

Think about this…..What has Jesus done wrong? Except heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, and set the captives free…

So when we look at this carefully, Pilate had the audacity to measure him up against Barabbas who deserves judgment; he was a murderer, a thug, a thieve, and a bad person in general.

But the people shouted …give us BARRABAS!! GIVE US BARRABAS!!!!

IN THE MIND OF Barabbas, he must have thought, after the people began to chant for him, that he was tremendously well-liked by the people.

He must have thought he was loved by them since they were chanting for him over Jesus, but there was something else going on in the background that he didn’t see.

Beloved, I believe this holds true for many of us……

Through all of my years of living for God, I always overlooked this part regarding the story of the trial of Jesus.

I always looked at the fact that the people wanted a thug over a savior. I always felt that the people didn’t see that their Messiah was the one they had truly judged.

The Innocence of Jesus and how he never said a word was what stood out the most; the worst thing is that we never read one time in the scriptures of Barabbas turning to Jesus and thanking him for setting him free!

The bible gives us no record of him ever taking any acknowledgement of what happened that day regarding Jesus!

But that was not all there was to see in this brief moment of Barabbas being chosen over Jesus.

**Watch this…..**

Jesus knew that Barabbas would not turn to him and thank him, Jesus knew that the people would choose the thug over the healer, but did that make Jesus stop this rebellion against him? No!

Instead, He did what no one expected him to do except God and that was stay silent.

There’s an old adage that says….”SILENCE IS GOLDEN”

But the part I always missed, until it recently dawned on me, was that Barabbas didn’t know that he was the recipient of the great exchange of ….

**“GOD’S JUDGMENT FOR GOD’S GRACE”**

GLORY BE TO GOD…AMEN!!!

And here is the truth of the matter and what is so powerful about this, is that Jesus knew that **The Father had to treat Jesus like Barabbas, so God could treat Barabbas like Jesus.**

See, Barabbas thought the people loved him, but it wasn’t the people who really loved him, it was JESUS WHO THEY CRUCIFIED that really loved Him.

He loved him so much that He chose to be in complete silence as the accusers requested Jesus to be crucified.

Barabbas is an amazing illustration of a man who did absolutely nothing on his own account to set himself free.

He demonstrated no faith, no acknowledgment, and yet he received his freedom.

NOW FOR THE TRUE STORY…OF THIS CONFRONTATION…..

YOU SEE, When I look at the story of Barabbas several things enter the mind…

1. I get to realize who Barabbas really was, but not as a real person……
2. He was actually a picture of me.
3. He was an image of you,you,you,you and you!!
4. He was actually representing all of us.

Beloved , listen, Jesus truly loved Barabbas!

1. Even though he was a thug and a bully in the neighborhood.
2. Even though he was very rude, rough, and tough.
3. Even though he was a robber!!
4. Even though he was a murderer.
5. Even though he was a rebel.
6. Even though he was decrepit and ugly, unclean and unshaven!!
7. Even though he was the worst person on the planet!

The fact of the matter is ……” Jesus loved Barabbas.”

The story of Barabbas shows us that we cannot get good to get to God.

It shows us that we don’t have to have it all together before we come to God.

Jesus loved Barabbas as he was. And so Jesus loves me and you as we are.

The Bible says even though we were sinners at the time Jesus still died for us.

Beloved here’s the key….

As the crowd was choosing Barabbas, Jesus stayed silent and took the sentence which was crucifixion, so that Barabbas, the murderer could go free.

You see, It doesn’t matter how little you know about Jesus; He loves you as you are.

It doesn’t matter how far you ran away from Jesus; He still loves you as you were when you first came to Him and still loves you just as much now.

God sent His only begotten son for Barabbas, even though He knew that Barabbas was going to likely take the free gift of God’s grace and not turn back to acknowledge the giver.

So , I wonder how many times in my life have I represented Barabbas?

I also wonder, how many times in your life you represented Barabbas?

Before I bring this message in for a close, I would like to bring another person into the story.

It was a person who was next to Jesus before He died. On that same night of the day of the trial, we find another thief who was not freed and he hung on the other side of Jesus.

This man did not acknowledge Jesus in a positive way at first. As a matter of a fact, he was a part of the crowd who laughed at Jesus and poked fun, but something changed while hanging up there, something this thief saw in Jesus changed his heart to go from laughing at him to defending Him.

It was this thief who told the other thief to watch what he says to Jesus as He is of God and does not deserve judgement as we do.

Jesus turned to this man and the man looked at Him, while bleeding to death, and said, “Lord please remember me” and Jesus said, “Son today you will be with me in paradise.”

Both Barabbas and this man had sins, both had an encounter with Jesus, both had a choice to acknowledge Jesus, but both went different ways.

**Two Options For You Today:**

**1.** You can come in here with all of your problems, lay them at the altar, and by the power of God, you can leave without all those things.

There would be little to no effort on your part, but you would leave still bound.

Why? Because you never took Jesus with you.

You can come to church a few times and receive some nice things and hear some good preaching, but leave over and over again with little change that only lasts a few days.

See Barabbas shows us how you can receive freedom, but since you didn’t turn to Jesus and follow Him; your freedom didn’t last long.

Throughout Jesus’s ministry, He healed many, but those same people who were healed, many of them probably yelled crucify, crucify, Him .

You can have an encounter with Jesus and be set free, but if that encounter is just a onetime thing, then the freedom doesn’t last.

**2.** The second option I present is a balance of God’s mercy, grace, and power mixed with our faith.

See, the thief on the cross had an encounter with Jesus like Barabbas did and both received change, however the thief chose to acknowledge Jesus and humbled himself in front of Jesus. Because of the encounter with Jesus, the man received change, but his change had an eternal lasting, because he chose to follow Jesus!

He is calling us to turn to the man of all men and that man’s name is Jesus.

Jesus was one who stood toe to toe against the Roman Empire and defied it. He was one who protected the weak and went and died for those He loved.

Jesus went to calvary to be crucified, they pierced him and blood and water mingled together from being pierced in the side, later on He called on the Father and said His final words…It is finished, and gave up the ghost, and was buried in a borrowed tomb….

But Sunday morning came around and he had resurrected back to life!!!

Praise be to God!...so we can all say….He’s Alive, He’s Alive, He’s Alive!!

That same power that resurrected Him is available to all of us. He is calling on us to partner with Him and use that same power to help the weak, fight for the poor, and restore our families.

I also ask myself another series of questions….

How many times in my life have I stood on the platform with Pilate and Jesus?

How many times in my life have I hung on the cross as the thief next to Jesus?

How many times have I tried to free myself and failed?

How many times have I tried to fix my marriage or family by myself and failed?

How many times in my life did I try to break addictions on my own and still found myself bound by them?

We all have to come to a place where we accept that we need something more than ourselves to live above sin and to have strong spiritual lives.

We have to come to the revelation that we have all been in the place of Barabbas and the thief on the cross.

We have to come to a place of choice.

The choice is not going to be made by Jesus, nor the preacher, but instead the choice has to be made by you.

Are we going to take the route of Barabbas and walk away after an encounter with Jesus and live like we always did?

Or are we going to take the route of the thief on the cross and surrender to the powerful encounter with Jesus and choose to follow Him?

Friend of mine, please hear me this morning, let this not just be another service for you. Let it not just be another time that you go away temporarily changed and think you can do all of this on your own; just to find yourself worse than when you came here.

Instead, friend of mine, let this Sunday be what it is supposed to be about; the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The account in the Bible concerning the empty tomb shows us a very important fact….

**The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.2Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.3Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.4So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.5And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.6Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,7And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.8Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.9For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.**

**The importance of this section of scripture deals with faith and believing….you see John outran peter for he was younger and when he got to the tomb he saw the stone rolled away and did not go inside the tomb, Peter when he got there immediately ran inside without hesitation and did not find the body, meaning…John did not need to see in order to believe, on the other hand Peter had to see in order to believe.**

The Resurrection of Jesus with all the controversies that have been dug up since he did resurrect, were all put to rest, when he showed up to unbelieving Thomas who refused to accept that he was alive again, made the following statement…( “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” only to hear Jesus say, Then saith he to Thomas, (“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”) Thomas knelt at the master’s side and said…”forgive me for I am a sinful man”.

You may ask what does that have to do with me? **Everything!**

Let this Sunday be the one that you ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins and tell Him that you are now ready to give your everything to Him. That you’re done doing it on your own. That you now can see that you and I are standing on the same platform as Jesus and Pilate; you can now hear Jesus saying, “let them have Barabbas,” or in a more personal context, place your name there.

I will take his sins, his pain, and his shortcomings and give him my deserved judgment which is mercy and I will take his judgment of crucifixion. – Jesus