

## Evotional

**Bible passage: Mark 1:1-15.**

**Speaker: Neil Durling.**

**Sermon title: "Jesus & Pilate."**

**Date: 16.6.13.**

### **Message:**

Jesus waits after the meeting with the chief priests, the whole Sanhedrin and the High Priest. The waiting can often be the worst part... No escape. No power. No knowledge.

Verse 1 reads: *Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans.*

In The Week magazine I read the following article:

*A small town in Spain has devised a novel, and highly effective, way of keeping its streets free from dog mess – scooping up the offending deposits and sending them back to the dog owners in an official box marked "Lost Property". For one week the town council of Brunete sent out a crack squad of 20 undercover volunteers to spot people failing to scoop up after their pets; they approached each owner and struck up a casual conversation to find out the name of the dog. "With the name of the dog and the breed it was possible to identify the owner from the pet database held in the town hall," explained a spokesman. The volunteers then packaged up the poo in a box branded with the town hall insignia and posted it to the owners. In all, 147 malodorous deliveries were made during the course of the experiment in February; since then the town has seen a 70% drop in dog mess.*

### **No-one wants Jesus in this passage; he's Lost Property:**

- The chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin want him killed out of envy, jealousy and malice.
- Pilate is confused (he hands Jesus over to death but, interestingly, he's the only one who is worshipping Jesus when he is amazed at him) and under pressure (he was Procurator – AD26-36 and had made several big mistakes. He was on his last warning with Caesar! Furthermore, he came into Jerusalem each year during Passover to keep the peace).
- The crowd - who are not necessarily the ones who welcomed Jesus in on Palm Sunday. It is early in the morning and the place where this takes place is confined. It was probably rent-a-mob - mindless and open to manipulation. Peter reminds the crowd in no uncertain terms of what they did in Acts 3:13-15.
- Barabbas - a murderous criminal. Please notice that even now, when Jesus is helpless, he is saving people!

**The bound lamb:** Francisco de Zurbaran's painting shows a lamb with horns lying on a stone slab with its feet bound together. Whilst the horns give an impression of strength, the lamb appears vulnerable, gentle and innocent. Although it has been bound, there is no sense of struggle or fighting but rather submission and surrender. It is unblemished and unstained.



Verse 1 continues: *So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.* This is an interesting sentence. Note the words:

- Made their *plans*: They reached a decision about handing him over to a civil authority and pushing for the death sentence.
- They *bound* Jesus: This means “to fasten or tie with a chain or cord” and is the word used about the demon-possessed man in Mark 5. It is also the same word Paul uses when he writes of a woman who is bound to her husband until his death (Romans 7:2). Jesus is bound to this course of action – he is married to it now.
- *Led* him away: Carried him.
- *Handed* him over: They “delivered him/betrayed/put in prison/recommended”. Mark uses this word repeatedly (9:31; 10:33; 14:10, 11, 18, 21, 41, 42, 44; 15:1, 10 and 15). It is clear that he is saying this was God’s plan all along.

Verses 2-5 say: *‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ asked Pilate. ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, ‘Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.’ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

**So who comes closest to worshipping Jesus?** It’s Pilate. He is amazed at Jesus’ silence and extraordinary presence. The word *amazed* means “in wonder, to admire, or to marvel at. This word had deep religious connotations in the Early Church. Making the point about Jesus’ silence reminds us of two Old Testament themes:

- The righteous sufferer of the Psalms: *I am like the deaf, who cannot hear, like the mute, who cannot speak; I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply.* (Psalm 38:13-14)
- The Suffering Servant: *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.* (Isaiah 53:7)

**Bad form from Pilate:** He releases Barabbas knowing that Jesus has done nothing wrong; his lengthy questioning of Jesus tells him this. But he wants to satisfy (give them their desired end) the crowd who call for Jesus’ crucifixion.

**Who are we like?** Is Jesus our amazing king or does he have to fit into our plans?

- The religious leaders used Jesus in their plans and many Christians do today, even believing they are serving an honourable cause. No wonder Ghandi said: “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”
- Albeit it only for a moment, we do see worship in Pilate when he is amazed by the King of the Jews.

**So what?** Let’s be people who ask Jesus to be our king in our church life. It is so easy to use Jesus to our advantage and for our plans. If we do this we will surely not be amazed by him.

### Questions:

1. Please share a time when you’ve been kept nervously waiting. How did you feel?
2. Do you see the religious leaders mirrored in the way you treat Jesus when it comes to your plans? If so, when?
3. What do you think about Pilate worshipping Jesus one minute and then, in the next, handing him over to the crowd (please don’t be tempted to brush over the importance of this word “amazed”. Remember, Mark uses it deliberately, to make a point)?
4. What do you think of Ghandi’s comment: “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”
  - a. What are the challenges of it?
  - b. What are the dangers of paying too much attention to it?
5. Mark labours the point that the religious leaders handed Jesus over, using the word numerous times to show God’s hand in the proceedings. Where do you think the religious leaders free-will actions end and God’s plan begins?
6. How are you amazed by Jesus?

### Prayer:

Father God, please help us to be amazed at king Jesus instead of using him for our plans. In His name, amen.