**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*The Good News According to Mark,*

*An Apostle of Jesus Christ*

 *365 Day Disciple ~ Mark 15: 6 - 15*

*Satisfying the Crowd*

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

September 9nd In the Year of Our Lord 2018

(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 - Christian Standard Bible 2017 quoted)

**Mark 15 continued**

**Satisfying the Crowd with Barabbas**

 6 At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested.

 7 There was one named Barabbas, who was in prison with rebels who had committed murder during the rebellion.

 8 The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them as was **his** custom.

 9 Pilate answered them,

 "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?"

10 For he knew it was **because of envy** that the chief priests had handed him over.

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead.

12 Pilate asked them again,

"Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews?"

13 Again they shouted, "Crucify him!"

14 Pilate said to them, "Why? What has he done wrong?"

But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"

15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

**The Bible and the Human Condition**

 The Bible, the Biblical accounts of life, must be compared to our own experiences. The human events in the Bible belong to all of us. These accounts chronicle our behavior regardless of the century in which we live ~~in~~. What happened in the life of the first century woman, man, child happens today. The same emotions, responses, observations have taken place. Yes, the technology has changed, but the human condition has stayed the same.

At Jesus’ trial, leaders and judges bent their decisions and their vote wanting to satisfy the crowd. Similarly, today, in America, many politicians read the national polls on a daily basis and make their vote. Whatever happened to pursuing righteousness regardless of popular demand? In satisfying the crowd, righteousness, at times, can be pursued.

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12) addresses righteousness. Righteousness is something that is pursued. Jesus describes the human condition as one that needs to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

3 "Blessed are the poor (surrendered to God) in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

 4 Blessed are those who mourn, (for your condition and your neighbors) for they will be comforted.

 5 Blessed are the humble, (to God and neighbor) for they will inherit the earth.

 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

 11 "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me.

 12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Other Verses concerning Righteousness**

33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33 NAU)

 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; (John 16:8 NAU)

17 For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (Romans 1:17 NAU)

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10 NAU)

**John 7:37** spells-out a truth concerning a person’s thirsting. This is a spiritual thirst for righteousness.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

“If a man is thirsty” is the question. Pursuing God, going after God, is the question. All people are hungry and thirsty. But what is a person thirsty and hungry for? Matthew 6:33 states we are to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. So, where is the thirst quenched and the hunger filled? Where does a person choose to go to be filled? God as Jesus says, “Come to Me and be filled.” This path leads to a person being filled with righteous acts. A person pursuing righteous achievements in life can accomplish that goal through God. Actually, Believers achieve goals God has set for them. A person may accomplish great things for man, but the righteousness God seeks can only come from Him.

**Pilate Sought to Satisfy Man and Not God’s Righteousness**

 Pilate made the final call to hand-over Jesus to the Jews for crucifixion. He believed he was following a right course of action under the rules he understood. However, he bent his decision to satisfy the crowd, therefore, pursuing righteousness was abandoned. Obviously, we can see this application to our own lives.

We have the crowd which is popular culture, and, at times, people around us calling for us to go along with the current social fad. People want to be accepted, so, they go along with the crowd.

**Our Children are the Most Vulnerable**

I had a friend in Junior High (1970) who wanted me to smoke some marijuana with him. I was being raised in a Christian home and knew that was not only against the law but morally wrong. I had the voice of God turned-up, and I could hear. At that point in my life, the voice of God was imbedded enough that my response was automatic. I did not have to think about it. I said no. I also said that I could not be his friend anymore.

For our younger audience, the late 1960’s and early 1970’s were the hot-bed of America’s Cultural Revolution that centered on ‘drugs, sex and rock & roll’, and one more thing, long hair for young men. The pressure was immense to go along with the crowd. My parents allowed my hair to get a little longer, no ponytail mind you, but over the ears and the collar. The rules at the public high school that I attended allowed male students to stack their long hair under a short-haired wig. So, what you saw was a turban-looking stack on top of a young man’s head, but the hair was above the collar line. Not very attractive but technically met the dress code. One day, the students decided to protest and created a sit-in. By this I mean, they went outside to the large grass areas in front of the school and simply sat on the grass. I went to what is equivalent today as a 5-A high school. Obviously, for the sit-in, they did not go to class. They were protesting whatever they felt were injustices. They were oblivious that the generation before them had won WWII with great sacrifice and that they were able to attend a fine public school and didn’t have to learn Japanese or German as a primary language. They also did not have to pay allegiance to the Japanese Emporia as a god or bow to the Swastika and Nazism.

 I was an athlete, and our coaches and parents had instilled in us a different attitude than the protest students. I chose not to socialize with that movement and did not want to be with them. I had no interest in going along to get along. I saw their rebellion as not good for me. I had a higher opinion of myself than to participate in something that was going to destroy my future. I knew many of these fellow students. They were angry young people. They had fatherless homes and did not go to church. I have preached before that fatherless homes mean that there is no man in the house, or the father is so busy with his career that his children are ignored to grow-up on their own.

When I was a junior, we had a coach who sponsored a chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I joined and chose to be around Christian influences. I see that if we present young people a world view that is good for them they will compare it to what the ‘drug, sex and rock & roll world’ offers and choose to have peace in their life.

Some may find it challenging comparing the trial of Jesus with the life-trials of developing teens. However, both are about life and death. Most likely all of us can look back and remember those high school class mates that chose to indulge in a rebellious life. I can remember some that ran away from home and were murdered. Others were given the choice to enter the military, but only to come home on leave and murder another teen who was a friend of my brother’s. Bad parenting, bad individual choices made at a young age all ended in death.

Going along with the crowd of destruction leads to death. Who is leading this pack of death? Satan is the leader of alternative choices that lead to death. Genesis 3 tells the story. Satan, depicted as the serpent, who was craftier than others, presented a rebellious lie to Eve and Adam. They chose the lie, so sin and death entered the world.

**Jesus’ Trial – Our Daily Trial**

We have said that the trial of Jesus was really the trial of man. We strive in America not to have trials like Jesus. By stating this, we are examining the components of Jesus’ trial. The most obvious human components are envy and fear. Other factors influence trials. Trials can be in the courts and in the day-to-day trials of life. Every day every person, every organization, be it private or public, goes through trials.

America is one big experiment, one big trial in human history. In the course of human governments, America is on trial. The idea that people can rule themselves was novel in the late 1700’s. The same idea today is being tested and on trial every day. When the people finally realize that they can vote themselves a welfare state then they go broke. By popular vote, that is going along with the crowd, a free people vote to take someone else’s money, so they do not have to work or be responsible for themselves. And, when that money stream is depleted, they vote to print more money until they are carrying around wheelbarrows of money to buy a loaf of bread. All by popular demand. Going along with the crowd.

**Following the Crowd in America**

In satisfying the crowd, righteousness, at times, can be pursued. However, we often see the opposite take place. Satisfying the crowd is bending to the mob-mentality. That is an emotional decision by the masses who have been whipped-up by riot-makers into a frenzy not knowing all the facts. Or, for political purposes, like the High Priest who purposely ignored the facts for their own political gain.

An example of this can be seen in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. Several community leaders did not pursue righteousness. In a police shooting, they incited the crowd to riot and burn property regardless of the facts. The riot-makers only present enough of the story to accomplish their goals, just like the religious leaders did at Jesus’ trial. This action is also referred to as a “public lynching.”

 American history is often portrayed in film. Many stories are told that are produced as fiction but highlight a problem is society. One of my favorite movies, “The Ox-Bow Incident”, starring Henry Fonda among other notables, 1943, highlights the mob-mentality that cost three men their lives. This was a western movie set in late 1800’s. They were lynched without a trial and judge. Another American film, “Twelve Angry Men”, 1957, presents how the ‘go-along with the crowed’ mentality can be turned by one man on a jury who stands his ground in a capital murder case. The defendant is freed in another Fonda classic. Americans are basically fair-minded and believe and want a fair system of justice. However, these films exhibit the mixed historical record in America, as does the movie “To Kill A Mockingbird,” 1962, with Gregory Peck. This movie was based on a novel but represented a nation in turmoil over race issues that had plagued America since its founding.

Therefore, justice and righteousness for the individual have not always been achieved even though these two virtues are the stated goals in American society with the adoption of the Bill of Rights in 1791. After the Civil War ended in 1865, the 14th Amendment was added to the Constitution.

No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.1868

These laws were enacted due to the majority taking advantage of the minority. In other words, the crowd was overpowering the few. There were no laws protecting free speech in Jesus’ day in the country where He lived. Jesus and His followers were in the smallest minority. There were at least two rights American’s have now that Jesus did not have: Freedom of speech and freedom to exercise religion. So, with the passing of these laws after the Civil War, America was growing to live-up to the principles of freedom the founding documents convey.

The passing of additional constitutional amendments made America’s pursuance of justice and righteousness for more people legitimate, as far as its state documents were concerned. However, the application of these new laws was another matter. People’s hearts were not automatically opened to their neighbor. After the 14th Amendment, there still came, over the course of the next one-hundred years, the right for women to vote (1920) and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

[See on-line article about voting in early America at the end of sermon.]

The good news is that we do not have to live in the past but the future with the pursuance and vigilance for justice and righteousness. The majority rules protecting the rights of the minority. We can also thank America’s Founding Fathers for creating a government system that can grow to encompass freedom for all citizens who are treated the same by their government. Freedom has been a growing, maturing process in America. The main consideration is back to the question, can a people rule themselves? At first, only property owners could vote. These property-owners were by-in-large white males. The idea was that if you did not own property you were not a stake-holder in the affairs of the country. In addition, if you did not own property then you had to work for someone else who could sway your vote because you were dependent on them for employment. So, a person’s vote was not free but purchased. To see this principal at work in more recent times, labor unions are known to have dictated to their members in whom to vote. They pooled labor and collected union dues to fund Democrat candidates and the Democrat platform. This made the pursuance of righteousness impossible, because the leaders of the labor union bought into the Democrat Party which is an anti-God party who pursues abortion on demand, partial birth abortion and the complete welfare state which creates single-parent families with no father at home. Children grow-up angry and commit crimes and thus, America has the highest prison population in the world. All because leaders did not pursue God’s righteousness. They pursued lining their pockets just like the religious leaders did at the Temple in Jerusalem. This is why Jesus drove the money changers from the Temple. They were not there for righteousness. They pursued their own greed at the expense of the people.

**Pilate**

Pilate hit the nail on the head, “For he knew it was because of envy that the chief priest had handed him over” (Mark 15:10). Envy was at the forefront at the trial of Jesus. Remember, the trial of Jesus was also the trial of humanity. Envy led the way. However, behind envy was fear. The Jewish leaders feared losing their public prestigious positions as the overseers of the people and rulers of the Temple and sacrificial system. They had also positioned themselves to be gatekeepers to God.

So many religious leaders today have placed themselves in the same position. Religious leaders who are driven by money and prestige often find themselves envious of others. Envy leads to fear, which leads to insecurity and the feeling of vulnerability. This is when a person lashes-out and seeks to protect their position. This is what the Jewish leaders did. We noted last week that Jesus had four hearings: two by high priests (Annas/Caiaphas) and two by Romans (Pilate/Herod). The Romans did not feel threatened by Jesus and found Him not guilty. The high priest felt threatened and exposed. In their hearts and minds, they needed to have Jesus crucified to protect themselves. No doubt, Satan was at work in them. These human traits of envy, fear, vulnerability is always present. These are instruments working to destroy people and their relationships. These are part of the foundation of the law of sin and death in which humanity loses ~~to~~. In Romans 7:23; 8:2, Paul states he loses to the law of sin and death, and he has no power over it. People do not often think of sin and death as a law, that these have power over you unless you turn to God.

 21 So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me. 22 For in my inner self I delight in God's law, 23 but I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin (Romans 7:21-25).

God has Paul write in **Romans 8:1.** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, 2 because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the **law of sin and death.**

The High Priest should have had the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (God) living inside of them. If so, they would have never perceived themselves to have been threatened by Jesus. They wouldn’t have had fear and envy.

**Why the Cross?**

 However, since the Fall, the Cross had to come.

Once the Fall occurred as detailed in Genesis 3, there had to be The Cross.

The fact that love exists in the creation, there has to be The Cross.

The fact that God created the creation with “Free Will Choice,” for man to choose to love Him, there had to be the Fall and The Cross.

In God’s providence, man is worth saving from himself. Therefore, there had to be the Cross that saves, that pays a price for man’s salvation.

God’s love is a choice as described in John 3:16, just as the Fall was a choice for Adam (Genesis 2:17 and Genesis 3).

The whole creation screams for man to choose God.

God built free-will choice into the creation. This is demonstrated when God asked Adam not to eat from the forbidden tree. Adam had a choice to follow God’s instruction or not.

Let’s look at what is built into the creation, what God intentionally designed for us to live with and through. The creation is created with opposites. The fact that there are opposites creates a choice. If all things were the same then there would no choice to make. Thus, the saying, “love is a choice.”

The opposite of love is hate.

The opposite of grace is merit.

The opposite of forgiveness is unforgiveness.

The opposite of the Fall is life in the Garden of Eden forever.

The opposite of free-will choice is a loveless void where no heart beats with life, where no heart can choose to love. Without love, there is no life. 1 John 4 states that God is love.

God created life to live experientially.

God’s life has victory.

To have victory mandates that something has to be overcome.

We are called to have victory in God. That means freely choose Him.

Not everyone will get a trophy. Only those who have surrendered to the life-giving power of God. These have the power to overcome and not be destroyed by envy and fear.

The high priest and the Roman leaders who went along with them were sucked into a dark hole in time where there isn’t any reversal of their decisions. God had ‘turned them over to their own desires’. Yes, God knew in advance because of the free-will choice of man operating without Him in them, but they still had their own decision to make. People are predictable without God in them. They consistently make bad choices.

This is a great lesson to learn. God says, go. Exercise your free- will choice. However, there are pitfalls. You can go at it on your own as Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, Annas, Adam and Cain did. These are the poster children of free-will choice losers. The poster children of free-will choice winners are Elijah and Enoch with Jesus Christ as number one because Jesus was also fully man as God in the flesh. People need to realize that they will be defeated and be used as an instrument of Satan unless they surrender to God.

Like the Law, free-will choice is a tutor/schoolmaster that can lead us back to God.

ESV **Galatians 3:24** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

KJV **Galatians 3:24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NAU **Galatians 3:24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

 NKJ **Galatians 3:24** Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

RSV **Galatians 3:24** So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.

TNT **Galatians 3:24** Wherfore the lawe was oure scolemaster vnto the tyme of Christ that we might be made rightewes by fayth.

YLT **Galatians 3:24** so that the law became our child-conductor -- to Christ, that by faith we may be declared righteous,

BGT **Galatians 3:24** ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν·

CSB17 **Galatians 3:24** The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

So, through free-will choice trial and error, we are schooled/tutored like the law to the Hebrews, and we see that without God life is hell on earth. Through bad choices, failures come, and we see and learn. We see that we need God. We see that we need God’s forgiveness. We see that we need God’s love and the love and forgiveness of others. Free-will choice gives us the alternative of not going along with the crowd, not wanting to satisfy the crowd. We were held in custody of free-will choice until we make a decision for God. When we willingly surrender by faith then we become justified to God.

AMEN

Voting in Early America

by Ed Crews

<http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/spring07/elections.cfm>

staring in the 11th paragraph

Colonial Voting restrictions reflected eighteenth-century English notions about gender, race, prudence, and financial success, as well as vested interest. Arguments for a white, male-only electorate focused on what the men of the era conceived of as the delicate nature of women and their inability to deal with the coarse realities of politics, as well as convictions about race and religion. African Americans and Native Americans were excluded, and, at different times and places, the Protestant majority denied the vote to Catholics and Jews. In some places, propertied women, free blacks, and Native Americans could vote, but those exceptions were just that. They were not signs of a popular belief in universal suffrage.

Property requirements were widespread. Some colonies required a voter to own a certain amount of land or land of a specified value. Others required personal property of a certain value, or payment of a certain amount of taxes. Examples from 1763 show the variety of these requirements. Delaware expected voters to own fifty acres of land or property worth £40. Rhode Island set the limit at land valued at £40 or worth an annual rent of £2. Connecticut required land worth an annual rent of £2 or livestock worth £40.

Such requirements tended to delay a male colonist's entry into the voter ranks until he was settled down and established. They reflected the belief that freeholders, as property owners were called, had a legitimate interest in a community's success and well-being, paid taxes and deserved a voice in public affairs, had demonstrated they were energetic and intelligent enough to be trusted with a role in governance, and had enough resources to be independent thinkers not beholden to the wealthiest class. English jurist William Blackstone wrote in the 1700s:

The true reason of requiring any qualification, with regard to property, in voters, is to exclude such persons as are in so mean a situation that they are esteemed to have no will of their own. If these persons had votes, they would be tempted to dispose of them under some undue influence or other. This would give a great, an artful, or a wealthy man, a larger share in elections than is consistent with general liberty.