



# Christ Reformed Community Church

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## “Judge of All on Trial” Mark 14:53–65

This morning, we come to study God’s Word together, and if you haven’t already, I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Mark chapter 14, Mark chapter 14. I want you to stand in the honor of reading of God’s Word. I’ve entitled this message “Judge of All on Trial,” “Judge of All on Trial.” Beginning in verse 53, going through verse 65:

*And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. 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. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, “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.’” Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. 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?” But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 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.” 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. 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.*

Thus ends the reading of God’s precious, holy, authoritative Word. Please be seated. Let’s ask for His grace and understanding in applying this passage this morning.

Father, we come before You, in a sense speechless, Lord, as we read the gravity of this text. We pray, therefore, that Your Word would saturate us; that it would saturate us with truth-filled declaration. We pray that it would sanctify us with life-filled transformation so that You might supply us with soul-filled determination to live for Your glory and for Your honor, and to the praise of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His holy name. Amen.

The passage before us really presents an utterly unthinkable scene when you reflect upon it. We ended last week speaking about the ironies surrounding Jesus being led from the garden, being arrested, betrayed by Judas, but here in this passage, we perhaps see the greatest of all ironies. Jesus, the judge of all, the judge of the universe is put on trial. The Creator of the universe is judged by His creation. The perfect spotless Lamb, who is simultaneously the Shepherd of Israel, is led to

a slaughter, silent as He goes before His shearers. We saw last week He is going willingly, having been betrayed by Judas. He had accepted in the garden the sovereign plan from before the foundation of the world that He would suffer in the place of sinners, and now He is led there. The rest of Mark chapter 14 and really the first part of Mark chapter 15 reveal that Jesus is tried by two courts. He’s tried on the one hand by the court of Israel and on the other hand, by the court of Rome. Both of these trials are really examples of kangaroo courts. Both depict for us the ultimate miscarriage of justice that the world has ever seen. Mark, as usual, is more abbreviated than the other gospel writers, but supplemental gospel material reveals that each one of these two trials each contained three parts. The first trial is what we might call His ecclesiastical trial, the church of the Old Testament. That is the religious leaders over Israel try Jesus before the Sanhedrin. He has a preliminary trial before Annas, who was the former high priest. Mark doesn’t mention that. Then secondly, before the reigning high priest, Caiaphas, and the ruling Sanhedrin; and then third, again before the Sanhedrin the next day. His second trial is a civil trial. If the first trial was an ecclesiastical trial by the religious leaders, the second trial was a civil trial by Rome, and there we see there are three parts of that trial as well.

Jesus is brought before Pilate, then He’s brought before Herod, and then He’s brought before Pilate again. Only John records Annas’ trial, and only Luke records Jesus’ trial before Herod, but they are all in the gospel record. Here in Mark 14:53–65, it’s Jesus in the second part of that first trial in the court of Israel before the Sanhedrin, before Caiaphas. You need to understand that the court was designed by God. He laid out the rules of legislation, the rules of jurisprudence. They were appointed by God—strict regulations found in the Old Testament to ensure that justice was upheld, and yet, here we see that a court which was designed to uphold justice actually overturns justice. One that was made according to strict regulations violates essentially every standard of God’s law, and one revered as conducting itself historically in jurisprudence proves itself to be a joke. The Bible says Jesus was *“delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”* Yes, that is true, but the Bible also says He was *“crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men,”* and that would include the religious leaders of Israel who claimed they upheld the law of God.

It might interest you to know as well that the US court system is based and formulated according to Mosaic legislation because our founding fathers said that the laws of the land are not arbitrary but flow from the basic assumption that God exists and that He is just; and therefore, everyone created in the image of God deserves to be treated justly. In our day, you hear about freedom, but the reality is that the laws God made did not restrict one’s freedom. They actually allowed for more freedom, giving birth to the most just society that has ever existed, even more just than the society of Israel, particularly in Jesus’ day. But Israel with that long, rich history of justice, sort of like our nation, a nation that was set up to have a just society, constantly fumbled the ball of justice. And if you read the Old Testament prophets, God repeatedly gave the possession of the ball to other nations because Israel forfeited the ball of justice. They were an unjust nation, proving that during the days of Christ, judging the only just one, putting Him on trial. This is not merely a miscarriage of justice. That is an understatement. This is a willful abortion of justice by Israel, the mother nation of justice. Nevermore than in a trial of Jesus did a court system pervert/prevent true justice and practice the epitome of injustice. All the way back in the book of Deuteronomy, the Bible was clear according to God. His words to Moses: *“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice.”* That’s exactly what they did.

*“You shall not show partiality.”* That’s exactly what they did. *“You shall not accept a bribe.”* They did that. They gave Judas a bribe of thirty pieces of silver. *“For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.”* That can be applied directly to Christ. *“Justice, and only justice,”* Moses, says, *“you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”* So much for that.

Israel sought to follow this system of justice. Israel’s highest court was ruled by the Sanhedrin. Don’t let that word trip you up. It simply means “sitting together.” It was a group of men that sat together. There was a lower court or a lower Sanhedrin that was over each Jewish town, and that was made up of twenty-three members who governed that local community, always an odd number in order to avoid a deadlock on decisions, but the higher court, the supreme court of Israel, was known as the Sanhedrin. They met in Jerusalem in the capitol. They were made up of seventy-one members, the high priest essentially serving as the president, and this Sanhedrin was corrupt. They were corrupted by money, nepotism. It was a senate that bargained for personal favors instead of legislating for justice. A bureaucracy really of prideful, evil, powerful men, and we see that in our text this morning.

The passage before us, I suppose, could take us in a number of different directions, describing to us the reality of the corruption of the ecclesiastical authority in our world, the corruption of civil powers in our world, the response of Christ to these authorities which was courage in contrast to the response of Peter in the face of the threat of these authorities, which was cowardice. We could speak about the importance of Christians fighting and voting for true justice—not social justice, or so called, but true justice. We could speak about the purity and the innocency of Christ and the necessity of that innocence to serve as our substitute. But in all of that, these verses depict before us one simple point. They reveal to us the injustice behind the trial of Jesus before the court of Israel and Caiaphas, and they show forth the injustice that they displayed as they put on trial the judge of all the earth. And in light of that, several facts expose on the one hand, the guilt of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and on the other hand, the innocence of Jesus.

There’s two coins to this text; the guilt of the religious leaders and the innocence of the righteous one. Several facts. First is the fact regarding—notice with me in verses 53 and 54—the fact regarding the convening of the council, the convening of the council. What was it that brought them together? Why did they convene? Verse 53 says, *“And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.”* That is, they convened together. All of them came together, which indicates this is an official assembly, a convening together of the Sanhedrin for official business, the chief priests and the elders and the scribes, those three offices that compose the Sanhedrin, as we saw last week. When it says in verse 53, *“They led Jesus to the high priest,”* that is a reference to the current high priest of the day, which was a man by the name of Caiaphas. Any time there is an assembly gathering of the chamber of the Sanhedrin, there had to be at least twenty-three of the seventy-one members present in order to judge, in particular, capital cases. And in capital cases, if a guilty verdict was determined, they had to bring it before the Romans for their approval; and the Romans actually brought forth the execution because during the days of Jesus, Israel was under Roman occupation. But what you need to see in verses 53 and 54 is the corruption of this particular convening of the council of the Sanhedrin. A guilty verdict has already been determined beforehand by Caiaphas. Now, Mark, doesn’t tell us that, but John does.

Turn with me to John chapter 11 where we read about the plot to kill Jesus. This is after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, and verse 45 says, *“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.”* Verse 47: *“So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council,”* they convened, *“and [they] said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.’”* Verse 48: *“And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’ But one of them,”* notice this, verse 49, *“Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all.’”* In other words, *“I’m going to tell you what we’re going to do.”* Verse 50: *“Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”* And verse 51 says, *“He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”* The decision was made, and this sort of accidental prophecy was made by Caiaphas that they would kill Jesus. And when you skip to John chapter 18, you see that Jesus was first taken before Annas, who was the former high priest. In John 18:12: *“So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.”* That’s in the garden. Verse 13: *“First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.”*

So, here’s the timeline. Jesus is arrested from the garden, and first He is taken to the former high priest, Annas, where He has a trial. And so, this particular convening of the Sanhedrin in the house or the villa of Caiaphas in Mark 14:53 is the second part of the trial. He’s already been to Annas. Annas is Caiaphas’ father-in-law, and he sends Jesus to Caiaphas—Annas does—because he can’t find anything guilty with Jesus. You need to understand that in the structure of Israel, the former high priest was sort of like an ex-president, but really more like a mob boss. He was in charge of all the religious leaders. No less than five of Annas’ sons served as high priest at one time or another, and now Caiaphas is high priest. They’re convening because Annas has sent Jesus now to Caiaphas, and they’ve already made the decision that they’re going to kill Jesus. This is not Jesus’ guilt that leads to Him being executed and tried. This is the power of Annas and his family. They even called the monopoly of temple merchandise, the buying and selling of animal sacrifices, as *“The bazaar of Annas.”* That was his moneymaking scheme. They’re pulling strings here. The convening of this council, which was supposed to be held in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, which was located north of the temple sanctuary adjacent to the court of Israel, instead is being held, as verse 53 reveals, at the villa of Caiaphas. They led Jesus to the high priest; that is, to his villa, to his place of residence. This was located about a half a mile to the southwest of Gethsemane on the slopes of Mount Zion. Today, there is a church there called Saint Peter in Cock’s-Crow because the cock crowed there before Peter denied our Lord. Prison blocks have been unearthed there at the residence of Caiaphas.

Also, you need to understand all public trials were to be held in daylight, not under the cover of darkness. This is anywhere from the hours of 1:00 to 3:00 on Friday morning. Furthermore, trials were not to be held during feast days. What feast is going on now? The Passover. And additionally, and rather obviously and perhaps most importantly for us, Annas had not found Jesus guilty of anything. That’s why he brushes Him off and sends Him to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, to deal with Him. So, here is Jesus in the middle of the night being carried around from one high priest to the

other, and here He stands in a torchlit room surrounded by darkness outside and darkness inside of the Sanhedrin. As the president of the council, Caiaphas, leads the most infamous inquisition in the history of the world, convened to destroy Jesus. That’s what you need to see. It’s all a plot to destroy Him, not really a true trial.

Meanwhile Mark tells us, notice verse 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.”* Really interesting. This is another example of Mark providing for us a sandwiching technique. He’s inserted something that really doesn’t belong in the narrative to make a point. He did that at the end of the last narrative by inserting himself as the young man that was caught naked and ran from the garden. Now you have Peter who was following Jesus, really at a distance. After he had initially fled, he then begins to follow Jesus. He follows Him right into the courtyard of the high priest. You say, “How did he get there?” Well, you have to remember they’re scrambling for as many witnesses from the streets as they can get, so there’s a mob of people going into the courtyard, and Peter slides in and he’s playing with fire, literally, because he’s sitting, verse 54 says, with the temple guards. Obviously not the ones in the garden because he had severed one of their ears off, but nevertheless, he’s warming himself by the fire. As I said, he’s really playing with fire. Here we see the spiritual schizophrenia of Peter, getting close to danger but not too close. Why did he do this? Well, perhaps he’s bolstered by personal pride at not wanting Jesus’ prophecy that he would deny the Lord to come true, perhaps also mixed with a little bit of boldness, maybe even thinking about a rescue operation of Jesus. Peter was crazy enough to do that, and he enters the courtyard. Mark inserts him here as a flash to another scene before he flashes back to the main part of the narrative, which is the trial of Jesus to remind us that Peter is still trying to be faithful to his Lord, but he proves to be a coward as we’re going to see in verses 66 through 72.

The question is will we have the boldness of Jesus in times of temptation and trial, perhaps even intimidating authorities, or will we demonstrate the weakness of Peter? That’s a hard question for you to answer. Even as Chris gave the training this morning regarding an attacker that might walk into the church and try to hurt people, you don’t know how you will respond in a situation like that, and we don’t know how we would respond if we were put in Peter’s shoes. But we know this: Jesus said, *“For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”* That’s why Paul said, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”* Do you only follow after Christ from a distance, like Peter, fearing shame and reproach of others in a hostile culture? I mean, here we see Peter not only wanting to be safe but also comfortable. He’s warming himself by the fire. Curious, yes. Full of courage? No. And we’ll see that a little bit later on, but if we’re honest we’re all guilty from time to time of status quo, non-offensive Christianity. We have begun to believe, the visible church has, to believe the lie that Jesus is on trial in the West and the jury is still out, so we don’t want to identify with Him too closely. We don’t want to say anything that might be politically incorrect. We don’t want to offend our neighbors, our coworkers. But Jesus is not on trial; He’s on his throne. In fact, He may have taken Peter’s sword from him in the garden, but He gave him a sharper one to fight with, and that is the sword of the gospel.

Paul would speak about the fact that though we walk in the flesh, we’re not waging war against the flesh. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 10: *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh*

*but have [divine] power to destroy strongholds.”* Paul says that through our words, through the preaching of the gospel, “*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised [up] against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*” In other words, our battle is not against the flesh and blood; it’s against ideologies, philosophies, theologies that rear their head against the Lion of the tribe of Judah. We aren’t to fear in the hostile culture that we find ourselves in. Jesus was in the middle of that hostility. He experienced that. He can sympathize with that. But Jesus through the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit.*

Peter gives us a glimpse of where we should be—right in the middle of the battle, but he gets close but not too close. Boldness comes with faith that God is on His throne, not on trial. Peter was focused on the fact that Jesus was on trial. That’s why he failed in cowardice. But there’s another fact that reveals the guilt of the council in condemning Jesus and the innocence of Jesus. We’ve seen number one, the convening of the council in verses 53 and 54. That’s the first fact. The convening of this council was corrupt from the beginning. They knew exactly why they were convening. They had already made the decision beforehand, but there’s a second fact, and that is the conspiracy of the council. Verses 55 through 59 really reveals this to us. Verse 55 really summarizes what I’ve been piecing together for you as to the convening of the council, and that is the fact this was a conspiracy of great magnitude. Verse 55: “*Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.*” Behind closed doors, they did the opposite of what a trial is intended to do—seek justice. In fact, verse 55 says “*the whole council.*” This is a unanimous conspiracy who were seeking testimony against Jesus to put Him to death. The Greek word *seeking* is *ezētoun*. Every time Mark uses it, he uses it in a negative context to imply an evil attempt, an evil seeking, an evil plotting; and though they sought incriminating testimony, verse 55 says, “*but they found none.*” They are having a hard time here, and Mark tells us in verse 56, he even adds, “*For many bore false witness against him.*” This would have been the witnesses from the streets the council had vetted that apparently Peter snuck into the courtyard with, “*but,*” Mark says, “*their testimony did not agree.*”

Mark my words, this is not only a trial of conspiracy, this is also a trial of incompetency. They can’t find anything wrong with Jesus, and the reality is this isn’t a fact-finding commission, unless you want to talk about the fact that Jesus was innocent of which they knew was true. The purpose of this council was not to adjudicate cases, which is what God had established it for, but to prosecute the defendant. These were not just councilmen. These were evil prosecutors, handpicking witnesses they were confident could provide testimony to make Jesus look guilty. And we know as reading our Bibles that He didn’t look guilty at all. They’re the guilty ones. The

verdict had been decided beforehand. They had put the cart before the horse, and so this bringing of Jesus before the council, the seeking of testimony as verses 55 and 56 tell us, was really just an attempt to formulate a justifiable legal charge before the just weighing of evidence, and they’re doing it in a conspiratorial fashion. Stop and think about that for a moment. You haven’t forgotten about the fact that we’re talking about Jesus, the God-man. The judge of all the universe is being put on trial by fallible man. That’s one thing, but to be judged by evil men with conspiratorial motives? That’s double unthinkable, pure wickedness, but they keep hitting a wall. So finally, they seized upon an opportunity from a couple of witnesses. Notice verse 57: *“And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying,”* something specifically. Verse 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.’”* Over in Matthew 26, in Matthew’s account, it says, *“The chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.”*

There were many, many giving testimony falsely, from the streets probably the people they had paid off. And Matthew says, *“At last two came forward.”* In other words, these are the last two witnesses. They can’t even formulate a conviction when they want to because of the purity of Jesus. That’s what you need to see. They brought Him there to make Him look guilty and they can’t do it. That’s how holy, spotless, pure and undefiled our Lord was. So, these are the last two, the last two witnesses that come forth. They’re trying to follow Mosaic law. *“Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established,”* Deuteronomy chapter 19. A previous testimony didn’t agree, so they find these two witnesses to make some trumped up allegation of twisting Jesus’ words about a statement He made about the temple. That’s what you need to understand. By the way, we don’t know, but perhaps the court exhausted testimony in verses 55 and 56 concerning Jesus’ supposed breaking of the Sabbath. That was a favorite one of the religious leaders to accuse Jesus of because that’s an easy thing to accuse people of if you’re a legalist. How can you prove someone broke the Sabbath? It’s a very difficult thing to do. Even in Old Testament times, you very rarely saw a violation of the Sabbath being spoken about in Scripture because of the subjectivity of it and the issue that particularly in the new covenant, it’s an issue of conscience. And even the accusers couldn’t agree, as verse 56 says. If they’re bringing charges of Sabbath violation, they couldn’t even agree as verse 56 says. Their testimony didn’t agree. Why? Because for this person breaking the Sabbath meant this, and for that person it meant that, and they couldn’t even agree.

A good warning for our own day regarding legalistic Sabbatarian policies in the church, issues to which the Bible doesn’t speak to other than one day in seven, the Lord’s Day, is the Sabbath, we’re to keep it holy. That’s on your conscience how you do that. We know that we’re to come to church each Lord’s Day faithfully to worship Him. We’re to set that day aside to honor Him. And I don’t know if that’s part of the testimony. I assume that it was, and if it was, no wonder they couldn’t agree because how in the world are you going to find a charge especially against Jesus on that? But Jesus had made a point about the temple. So, verse 58 says, *“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.’”* You need to turn with me to John chapter 2 to look at the context in which Jesus made this statement. Context is always important, and we read in verse 18: *“So the Jews said to him,”* and Jews in the gospel of John is a technical term to refer to the religious leaders. So, the religious said to Jesus, John 2:18, *“‘What sign do you show us for doing these things?’ Jesus answered them,*

*‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’*” There’s the statement. *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* He doesn’t say here that He’s going to destroy it. Did you notice your Bibles? He says, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* Furthermore, verse 20: *“The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’”* And in verse 21, John tells us the ignorance of the religious leaders: *“But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”*

In other words, the religious leaders were so dense they couldn’t understand a metaphor. They were interpreting Jesus’ statements literally, and that statement is what the two witnesses at His trial before Caiaphas brought up. Jesus makes clear here, verse 21, that the temple He was referring to was the temple of His own body. Notice that, verse 21: *“But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”* Verse 22: *“When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”* Jesus may have indirectly been saying some other things in that statement, but the primary thing He was saying is the temple of His body was going to be crucified and He would raise it back up. They took Jesus out of context, framing Him to make it look like that He was a terrorist that was personally going to defame the temple. Of course, privately—you know this if you’ve been with us as we’ve gone through the gospel of Mark—in Mark chapter 13, Jesus privately tells the disciples that in an act of judgment, the temple will be destroyed. But that was privately to the disciples. No one knew about that. Furthermore, publicly, Jesus had only spoken rightly about the temple and reverently. For example, even when He was a twelve-year-old boy, *“Why were you looking for me [mom and dad]? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”* “That’s where I need to be. This is where God’s people come and it’s where I need to be.” Or in Mark 11: *“Is it not written,”* Jesus says. Does not the Scriptures tell us? *“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of robbers.”*

When He cleansed the temple, He wasn’t defaming it. He was purifying it, but because He had cleansed it, because He had chased the moneychangers out and because He had made the statement in John 2 about the temple being destroyed and Him raising it in three days, they framed Jesus, besides the fact the testimony of these two witnesses was conflicting. Please notice that, verse 59: *“Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.”* In other words, no one agreed on anything that Jesus was guilty of, and particularly about the temple. They couldn’t even agree on what He said or what He meant by what He said. And we know that Jesus’ statement in John 2 about the temple fulfilled 2 Samuel 7, that David would have a son, and: *“He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”* His physical body not made with hands would be raised, and He would build another temple; that is, the church. I mean, Jesus is the foundation, the cornerstone. The Bible uses both of those expressions to describe Jesus as the foundation or cornerstone of the church. Paul tells us that we come into God’s presence only through the temple doors of Christ, and because of our union with Him, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, right? Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 3, you are God’s building: *“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ...Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”* All of this, of course, was later revelation, but the fact is Jesus’ words in John 2 were taken completely out of context, and they’re used to frame Jesus later to incite the Romans to make it look like Jesus was a political insurrectionist, which is far from what He was.



In chapter 15, before Pilate, *“And those who passed by derided [Jesus], wagging their heads and saying, ‘Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days.’”* Earlier they had told Pilate that He was making blasphemous statements about Caesar and wanted to assassinate Him, essentially. You want to know a way to offend religious people? Say something offensive to their legalistic spirit. I love to do that because it’s a biblical way to get under their skin to prove a point; you’re not as spiritual as you think you are. You’re legalistic. You judge everyone else. And usually, those sorts of people are the ones who have the most inconsistencies in their lives. That’s why we need to be free from legalism. Above every threat in the church, legalism is the biggest threat. And the religious leaders were sensitive to anything that threatened their authority, their turf, their rules, their standards, their precious temple. Remember, Jeremiah was arrested in Jeremiah 26 and brought before the royal court because he prophesied the destruction of the temple. They essentially said, *“I don’t care that God says that. We’re going to punish you because of it.”* Stephen was martyred on this basis, Acts 6:14. They set up false witnesses who said *“This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and against the law [that’s the temple], for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”* What they really meant were the customs Moses delivered to them that they added a whole bunch of extrabiblical rules to, to make themselves look more spiritual than other people. Jesus hated that sort of legalism. Here’s the point, the picture in verses 55 through 59 is one of perjury, a violation of oath, a violation of the ninth commandment, bearing false witness. One commentator says, *“In the annals of jurisprudence, no travesty of justice ever took place more shocking than this one.”*

As a matter of fact, you can just mount up the number of ways they purposely violated Jewish laws of jurisprudence. This conspiracy took place at night. You weren’t allowed to have a trial at night. It had to be during the day. Number two, it was a trial during a feast, and they executed Jesus during a feast—a violation of Scripture. Number three, the arrest was the result of bribery. They bribed Judas with thirty pieces of silver. This is a violation of Deuteronomy 16:19, which I read earlier which says your court system shall have nothing to do with bribes. Number four, as we’ll see, the sentence of death wasn’t allowed to be pronounced the same day of the accusation, but that’s exactly what happens. Fifth, the decision of Jesus’ guilt was made beforehand. We already saw that. Sixth, we saw in verse 55, they were bloodthirsty. They were seeking testimony against Him to kill Him. This is murder, not justice. Seventh, we’ll see later in John 19 that the religious leaders intimidated Pilate to put Jesus to death. That’s also a form of bribery. They also, number eight, stirred up the crowds. Matthew 27:20 says incited the crowds in a mob-like riot to call for the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Ninth, the testimonies of the accusers didn’t agree anyway. And tenth, this was perjury, twisting Jesus’ words about the temple. I mean, instead of being innocent until proven guilty, Jesus was guilty until He was proven innocent. They weren’t even trying to prove Him innocent. Their motive was not a true investigation of Jesus. It was a total annihilation of Jesus. Not the pursuit of justice; the pursuit of injustice. And the reason that Scripture bears this clear record of a conspiracy and highlights Jesus’ innocence is critical to a proper understanding of the gospel.

Imagine a conspiracy beforehand with the purpose of providing a ton of witnesses to incriminate Jesus and not being able to do it by the most powerful men in the nation with bribes and money and all sorts of things flying around. Why is that? One simple fact. Hebrews 7:26 says that Jesus was *“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”* Paul says in Philippians 2, He was

*“obedient to the point of death...death on a cross.”* Matthew 3:15: *“It is fitting for [Christ] to fulfill all righteousness.”* Wholly righteous. This reminds us of those precious doctrines that we must affirm when speaking about the gospel: the doctrine of Christ’s active obedience, the doctrine of his passive obedience, two twin doctrines. Passive doesn’t mean apathy. It just refers to the full embracing of His suffering, His passion, the wrath of God, drinking it down to the full, wrath due to us but done by Christ for us. Jesus endured the full weight of our sins, the punishment of those sins transferred to His shoulders so that He died for us to make us innocent before God. That’s His passive obedience, but His active obedience means that He obeyed prior to His obedience on the cross and suffering. Jesus obeyed every jot and every tittle of God’s law, being completely innocent, proving to be fully righteous and to fulfill all righteousness. It’s important to affirm His active and His passive obedience because God’s standard is not merely our innocence but righteousness. Remember what Jesus said, *“You are [therefore] must be perfect. as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Christ died not merely to give us an innocent standing before God but a righteous standing. We don’t just believe in single imputation as if our sins were laid on Christ; that’s it. No, we believe in double imputation. Our sins were laid on Him, and His righteousness was laid on us. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God. And our sin goes to Him, making us innocent, but the transaction of the gospel also goes the other way. His righteousness comes to us so that we’re not just innocent or in a place of neutrality, we are fully righteous and fully acceptable before God, sins completely forgiven. This is such an important and critical doctrine. There are many today who are denying the active obedience of Christ. And if you hear anyone denying that doctrine, you need to run. Nothing could stand in the face of what Scripture so clearly teaches.

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us only if Jesus was perfectly obedient before He even got to the cross. You’re saved not just by His death; you’re saved by His life, His obedience, His perfection because as the second Adam, He couldn’t just drop out of heaven and go immediately to the cross. He had to prove that He was truly God and truly man and truly righteous. And though His life was cut short, thirty-three years old, His righteousness wasn’t short of perfection. Total and perfect righteous living before God. As the second Adam, He presents His people not merely as innocent but as righteous so that when God looks down from heaven on this congregation this morning, if you are in Christ, He sees Christ. He doesn’t see you; He sees Christ. That’s the gospel, and if you deny that, you believe in works salvation or you believe in some form of legalism that thinks you can make yourself better and more acceptable by God. That’s Pharisaical, and that’s what Jesus roundly condemned. Paul put it this way:

*For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men [that is, Adam’s*

*trespass], so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”*

The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. His condemnation by the religious leaders brought Him death, but it brings us life. Let me ask you a question this morning. How can we not uphold and fight for true justice in an unjust society? How can we not fight for the ethics of Judeo-Christian values? How can we not defend the fact that this country was formed largely by Christians? Here’s why it’s dangerous to not do that. You dilute the gospel because you dilute and confuse the law of God. In a climate, in a land where justice isn’t upheld, if God’s people don’t hold up the law of God, if God’s people don’t speak forth truth about what is right and what is wrong with no wiggle room, then who’s going to speak up on the truth? Defending the law of God is a matter of defending the gospel itself. And all of that can be seen in the purity of Jesus, His love for the law of God so that no testimony could be brought against Him.

But this moves us to another fact, proving, remember, the religious leaders’ guilt and Jesus’ innocence. We’ve seen the convening of the council in verses 53 and 54; the conspiracy of the council, verses 55 through 59. Now, note with me the condemnation of the council, verses 60 through 64. Verse 60 says: *“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?’”* I mean, probably both content and confident that he could prove Jesus’ guilt beyond reasonable doubt due to the huge conspiracy that was going on, all the witnesses that were coming in, all that was planned. He finally gets to the point where he realizes in frustration this is not working, and so, the high priest, Caiaphas, the president of the council, this convening together, stands up and asks Jesus to speak up. Obviously, he’s trying to trap Jesus into saying something that could lead to a conviction of condemnation, and ironically, he’s demanding Jesus to be truthful while he’s operating in a climate of deception. But Jesus responds with silence. I love this. Notice verse 61: *“But he remained silent and made no answer.”* He made no answer. This obviously fulfills prophecy, namely, Isaiah 53:7: *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.”* It doesn’t mean that He didn’t open His mouth at all, but He didn’t open His mouth to defend Himself to avoid death. He was *“a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”*

So, it fulfills prophecy, but Jesus also wisely knew that any statement He made could be exploited by the prosecution to make Him look guilty of something He wasn’t. But one thing He would not remain silent on and that was His identity, and the high priest knew that, and so we read in the second part of verse 61: *“Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’”* Matthew 26:63 tells us that before he made that statement he reminded Jesus, *“Before you answer this question, you are under oath.”* Again, an irony. He was under oath. His job was to uphold the law of God, and he’s trying to set Jesus up. *“Are you the Christ?”* That is but simply, *“Are you the Messiah,” “Are you...the Son of the Blessed?”* The word *blessed* was a word that they used to refrain from using God’s personal name. It means *“Are you the Son of God?”* Circumlocution is the technical title for that. Of course, He’s the Son of God. Wasn’t that Mark’s point from the beginning? Go back to chapter 1. How does he open up? *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,”* verse 1. Verse 11: *“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’”* Verse 24: *“What have you to do with us, Jesus*

*of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” Chapter 3:11: “And whenever the unclean spirits saw [Jesus], they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God.’” Chapter 5, verse 7: “And crying out with a loud voice, he said, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’” Everyone knew. The demons knew. Jesus knew. The Father knew. Chapter 9, verse 7: “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud,” this time. “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” Chapter 12:6: “He had still one other, a beloved son,” Jesus giving the parable of the tenants, clearly referring to Himself as the “beloved son” in that parable. Chapter 13 verse 32: “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” From the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He had claimed to be the Son of God. That was a very well-known fact that Caiaphas is seeking to capitalize on. You remember the first time Jesus preached in the synagogue of Nazareth, He said:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” And Jesus said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

What was that Scripture? That was a Scripture prophesying the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was essentially saying, “I am the Messiah.” At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus said that. There were times in which Jesus made veiled statements for certain reasons. He didn’t want the crowds to get too out of control and misunderstand Him as some sort of miracle worker instead of a Savior. He didn’t want the crowds to overrun His schedule so He wouldn’t have time to preach the Word of God. There were times for that, but Jesus never backed down from identifying Himself. In fact, He said in John 5, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him because not only was he breaking the Sabbath in their eyes, but He was even calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God. That was the consequence of saying that you have God as your Father. It’s saying that you’re equal with God, and Jesus even said more than that. He said “Before Abraham was, I am.” He did use the personal name of God to refer to Himself, but back to Mark chapter 14.

Jesus is not going to remain silent any more, and in verse 62, He shows His knowledge not only of Scripture and of His Father’s will for people to know He’s the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, but to make that known because He knows when He makes that known, it will inevitably lead to His death, and He had already accepted the fact He would go to the cross in the garden. So, verse 62: “And Jesus said, ‘I am.’” He’s answering the question, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus says, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Let me just put this to you in simple terms. It’s as if Jesus is saying, “Fine, I’ve remained silent up to this point, but if I’m guilty of anything, I’m guilty of this. I am the Christ. I am the Son of God. Do with me what you will. I’m not going to deny that. I’m not going to be silent about that.” He knew His appointed hour of death had come, and yet even He was careful in what He says in verse 62 because He also refers to God not by name; He refers to Him as power “seated at the right hand of Power,” He says, “you will see [me].” Wow. Notice also, He says “I am,” probably another indication that “I am God.” “And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Everyone there understood that, in actual fact, Jesus was essentially telling them in the most direct way possible that He is the one who actually sits in judgment over the Sanhedrin, including the high priest. Jesus is saying, “You think I’m on trial. There’s coming a trial for you because you’re going to kill Me, but I am going to be raised to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and when I do, I’m coming back on the clouds of heaven.” This is an amazing statement, one of the most amazing statements Jesus ever made for this reason; He is fusing together several Old Testament texts to present to us a theology of power, a theology of sovereignty. I mean, He’s putting together Isaiah 52:8, which says every eye will see Him return to Zion. Psalm 110: *“The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”* You’re going to come and *“rule in the midst of your enemies!”* Daniel 7:13–14.

He conflates all of these passages of Scripture, summing up His powerful identity as the Christ, as the Son of God, and what all that is going to mean. And really, He is identifying in one simple statement, not only a plethora of Old Testament texts and the depth of Old Testament theology, but even all of the main events which reveal who He is: His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His coronation, the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, His coming in the clouds of glory in AD 70 to judge Israel, His coming in the clouds of glory at His second return. All of the powerful and monumental events that explain the gospel and explain His identity, Jesus, the great preacher, sums it up in one statement, one of the greatest statements in all of Scripture. Speaking about His incarnation and His deity, notice verse 62. He says, *“I am.”* “I am God. I am God come in human flesh,” His incarnation. And secondly, He uses that title—notice it—Son of Man. In biblical prophecy that was a name of the Messiah, so He’s identifying Himself as man. He’s identifying Himself as God. He’s identifying Himself as the Messiah, the Son of Man. He’s pointing to His session at the right hand, which means He knows He’s going to be crucified, He knows He’s going to be resurrected. He says, you’re going to see me *“seated at the right hand of Power.”* It’s the right hand of God, *“coming with the clouds of heaven.”*

I mean, this is just amazing. Hebrews 2:9: You have *“crowned him with glory and honor.”* Revelation 12:5: *“She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.”* Throughout Scripture, it speaks about the session of Christ, His glorious ascension, one of the most underrated doctrines when you talk about the gospel. He ascended to rule, *“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit.”* He poured it out, the Spirit of God on Pentecost, as a means to demonstrate His power, that He was at the right hand of God Almighty. Paul couldn’t speak about the gospel without speaking about the ascension of Christ.

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of...the Father.*

And then He says, I’m *“coming with the clouds of heaven.”* That last phrase really is predominant. That’s taken from Daniel 7:13–14, which speaks about the *“son of man,”* which is essentially the Messiah who came *“with clouds of heaven,”* approaching *“the Ancient of Days.”* That’s God the Father. He’s being led into His presence, and the Father gives Him glory and authority and

sovereign power over all peoples, all nations, all rulers, people of every language who bow to Him because of *“his dominion”* and kingdom which is *“everlasting”* and will *“not be destroyed.”* In short—mark this—Jesus was being judged, but in this statement, He was claiming to be the judge of all the earth. He was essentially saying, “Yes, you’re going to crucify Me. I left heaven to come to earth to do that, but I’m going to leave earth and go back to heaven. I’m going to be resurrected. I’m going to go to the right hand of God, and the next trial will be yours because I’m coming in the clouds of glory,” first in AD 70 to judge the religious establishment and destroy the temple through the hands of the Romans, and then at His second coming. “You’re judging me now, but I will judge you then.”

Well, I mean you can imagine that was enough to condemn Him, and so we read in verse 63: *“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.”* I mean, make no mistake about it. This is a feigned display of grief. This is a dramatic display in the courts of the fact that we must render a verdict now. *“[He] tore his garments.”* This refers to his inner garment worn close to his skin, and he says, *“What is your decision?”* Now, mark that in verse 64. He’s calling for a verdict. Remember, the law said charges are made one day, then you waited a full day before you came up with a verdict. He’s calling for the verdict now. He’s violating God’s law, demanding a decision be made, and they acquiesce. Verse 64: *“And they,”* circle the word *all*, *“They all condemned him as deserving death.”* This would have been, if they weren’t under Roman occupation, a stoning because that was the capital punishment for blasphemy, and that’s essentially what they’re accusing Him of. However, it’s very interesting to me that that blasphemy never comes up before Pilate. You know why? Because he didn’t care if they blasphemed the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but what he did care about was any sort of threat of an insurrection. So, when they brought Him to Pilate, they began to accuse Him saying, *“We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar.”* That is, taxes, which was clearly not true. Jesus told us to pay our taxes. *“And saying that He Himself is Christ, a King,”* Luke 23:2. In other words, to Pilate, He’s saying that He’s more important than Caesar, which of course was true, but Jesus didn’t actually say that.

This is, again, why we must read the Scriptures so carefully and slowly. This sentence of condemnation, beyond the fact that it was a conspiracy, actually results in three blessed ironies. Number one, what we might call an ironic prophecy. Remember that prophecy by Caiaphas in John chapter 11. He wants to murder Jesus and Caiaphas makes a prophecy: *“It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”* He literally prophesied the death of Christ and then executed it. Verse 51 tells us in John 11: *“He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”*

In other words, that’s John’s way of saying that the Holy Spirit prompted him to make that statement so that it would come true, and as a result, Caiaphas actually prophesied the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. What an irony. This wicked man prophesying the greatest news ever? Because the Bible is abundantly clear, and I hope that you’re able to affirm this this morning with me: *“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin*

*but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”* Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and that was prophesied by a wicked man? Yeah, because God is sovereign. Secondly, there is an ironic picture here. Verse 63 says *“the high priest tore his garments.”* He tore those garments to show his rejection of the Son of God, but what is going to happen later this day on Friday? The veil in the temple is going to be torn as a means to show the Father’s acceptance of the Son, to show full access into the temple granted. Hebrews 6 tells us, *“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,”* that is behind the veil, *“where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever.”* Jesus blazed the trail, as it were, for us on the heels of the blazing fire of God’s furious wrath. Jesus, through the blood of the cross, entered the holy place, and God’s way of demonstrating that was by tearing the veil in the temple. The priest tears his garments; God tears the veil of the temple to show His acceptance of the Son. And of course, we read about the first high priest, Aaron, in Exodus 28. We read about his garments. We read about his breastplate, which had gems of stone that represented the twelve tribes of Israel, and of course there is the correlation there that as Jesus died upon the cross, He was burying our sins, He was counting all of His elect people, inscribing them, as it were, on His heart. He’s our true high priest. He is the temple incarnate, and He is the high priest all wrapped up in one, bringing us acceptable before God, holding us in His hands so that no one can snatch us, never leaving us nor forsaking us, so that through the love of Christ we can’t be separated from God.

There’s irony throughout all of Scripture. There’s this ironic prophecy, this ironic picture of the tearing of fabric; the priest’s garments, the veil. There’s also ironic participation. We tend to focus on the fact that as verse 64 says, *“They all condemned him as deserving death.”* All that were present that day condemned Him, but there was at least one man who wasn’t there who was part of the council who would have never voted in favor of crucifying Jesus from a human standpoint, and that is Joseph. *“There was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.”* This was a believer. He didn’t consent to the decision because he wasn’t there. Everyone that was there consented. This was a man of integrity and righteousness. He wasn’t going to participate in some kangaroo court, some convening of the great chamber of the Sanhedrin at the villa of Caiaphas’ house, this underhanded dark conspiracy. He wouldn’t be involved, and he wasn’t. But remember, he knew Jesus was innocent.

The members of the council knew Jesus was innocent, and through this trial, they revealed their guilt and proved Jesus’ innocence; number one, by the convening of the council; two, the conspiracy of the council; three, the condemnation of the council; and finally, fourth and quickly, the cruelty of the council. Verse 65, the cruelty of the council: *“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.”* When it says there in verse 65 that *“Some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him,”* it later says, *“the guards received him with blows.”* Some think that maybe even those on the council actually took part in the physical violence towards Jesus. At a minimum, the guards were involved, perhaps others. To spit on someone was the worst of all insults, but not only did they spit on Him, they blindfolded Him, and they struck Him in the face and told Him to prophesy who it was. *“Who’s going to punch you this time, Jesus? Do you know who we are? Who’s this? Whose punch is this?”* as they strike our Lord in His face. *“Claim you know everything. Prophecy. Who are we?”* Well, Jesus knew who they were, and He knew this would

happen. Back in chapter 10, verse 33, *“See, we are going up to Jerusalem,”* Jesus said to the disciples, *“and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”* Jesus said this just a few days before. He had prophesied the spitting and the mocking and the beating. Isaiah expresses Christ’s knowledge of this exact cruel treatment in Isaiah 50:6: *“I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.”* And let’s not forget verse 54 reminded us Peter was outside, right? Peter was outside and it was this scene going on inside of Caiaphas’ house that Peter was reminded of in 1 Peter 2:23: *“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.”* He was silent. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued in trusting Himself to the one who judges justly. And of course, His blood would be shed later on the cross. So, we sing in part:

In my place, condemned he stood;  
Sealed my pardon with his blood:  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

I mean, how do you conclude a sermon on this? By affirming, first of all, that Jesus’ suffering was not the result of His guilt. He was actually proven innocent, and they were so evil they still killed Him, and yet the irony that if you can’t rejoice in that this morning, you can’t enter the kingdom of God. If you can’t glory in the suffering of Christ, you can have no part of Christ. There’s nothing else to be said except, “Hallelujah, what a Savior!” Let us pray.

Our Lord God, we are filled with the weight of anxiety in a sense that You, our Lord, must have faced. Really just overwhelmed that the powerful testimony of Jesus before His accusers, His dignity, His silence, His trust in You, His Father. His unwillingness to say anything that might appear blasphemous on the one hand, but on the other hand, always willing to tell the truth and willing to suffer. He knew this was the plan, and this is the beauty of the covenants, that in eternity past this covenant of redemption between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You our great triune God, was determined. And through all the grief, through all the agony, through all the sin, through all the injustice, through all the violence, we recognize that if it weren’t for that, all of that, we would never know You as a gracious and loving God. If it weren’t for sin, we wouldn’t know forgiveness. If it weren’t for sin, we wouldn’t know mercy and grace. You planned all of this so that You might fully give Yourself to Your people, the people that You redeemed with the blood of Your only Son. We thank You for this. Lord, we pray that as we sing this final hymn that we would sing it from our hearts, filling the sanctuary with praise as we sing at the top of our lungs the glory of Your suffering for our sakes. Father, if there’s anyone here that doesn’t know Christ, Lord, may they come to know Him today. May they see through the gospel the necessity of His death, the necessity of His innocence, the necessity of His substitution. For their sins in their place, condemned He stood. Lord, please help them to see that as we sing. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.