Wicked Men and a Sovereign God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 July 2024

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Let me ask you to open your Bible with me to Mark chapter 14.

! I want to say one more thing that comes to mind is just being around our church this morning and in the first part of this service here.
It's kind of a heavy day. It's kind of a heavy day for our nation. And I just want you to know and to remind you that what we do in this sanctuary every Lord's Day, is come as genuine people with real emotions, living in a real world.
And we come into the presence of the Lord and offer up our hearts and say to the Lord that we are a needy people. And it's okay to come to worship and be happy and be excited.
And many times that's true. And it's okay to come to worship when you're grieving and sad on any given Sunday. That's true. And when you feel anxious and nervous and frustrated, just things that it means to be human, you come into this sanctuary and you worship.
[1:51] Those are good things. This isn't a place where we've got to come every single Sunday and pretend that everything's perfect. This isn't a place where every Sunday is just about masking those emotions and feelings.

This is a place where real people come with real needs and praise the Lord. We come into His presence and we're able to see what He has for us. I'm reminded of Psalm 73, the Psalm of Asaph, when Asaph speaks of his frustration and of his disappointment, his disillusionment.
And he says that he was like a wild beast before the Lord. He was so filled with so many emotions and he was so just consumed with the world around him.
And in Psalm 73, there's that pivotal verse right in the middle that says, Until I came into the sanctuary of God and there I perceived their end.
When he came into the sanctuary, he realized that the wickedness and sin is devastating and has very real consequences coming into worship helped give him a sense of clarity and a sense of awareness of how much we need the Lord.
[3:09] And then, of course, he ends there in Psalm 73, But as for me, the nearness of God is my good. That's true for us. It's true for us every day.

The nearness of our God is our good. It's good for us to draw near to the Lord. And so not just for this day, but for any day, when you wake up on the Lord's Day, and you're just grieving, this is the place to come.
When you wake up on Sunday and you feel lonely, this is the place to come. When you wake up and you've had a terrible day, and you've lost your job, and your car is broken down, and your marriage is struggling, and your kids are struggling, and everything just feels like it's not how it should be, and there's that part of you that thinks, I just want to kind of hide, I just want to stay away from people, because going to church, everything's supposed to be perfect and good.
It's not the way it is. We're real people. We gather in this place to come into the presence of the Lord, and here in the sanctuary of God, we gain perspective, and we gain clarity.
So not just for this day, but for any day. Whatever your emotion is on the Lord's Day, this is the place to be. It's here that we remind ourselves of what matters most, where we surround ourselves with hundreds of people who are brothers and sisters in Christ, and where we ask the Lord to speak to us through His Word, to encourage us through His Holy Spirit, and to help us.
[4:55] Psalm 2 says, Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers gather together against the Lord, and against His anointed one. Let us break their chains, and cast away their cords.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

The one enthroned in heaven laughs. It doesn't mean the Lord laughs at the pain of people. It's saying clearly here, the Lord laughs at those who think that their wickedness will triumph.
Now, we have to understand that sin is nothing new, and the greatest act of evil ever committed on this planet was done against our Savior, and yet, even that was used by God for our greatest and highest good.
But as Psalm 2 reminds us, real people have plans, and they have plans for evil, and their real plans and real decisions have real consequences, and yet, somehow, even over those things, God's sovereignty rules over all things.
[6:37] There is some mystery in that truth. There is some mystery in how is it that we see in the Scripture real people making real decisions with real consequences, and yet, when you take a step back, you also see the Scripture affirming that God is sovereign over all things, and even in the cross, where you have the height of wickedness and rebellion, yet, even there, according to the book of Acts, all you see is what Luke refers to as the predetermined foreknowledge of God.

So, there's some mystery in this. It's a reality that there, in our world, is the presence of wicked men and a sovereign God.
We've come to chapter 14 in our study through the Gospel of Mark. Jesus has concluded His teaching on the end times, and when you come to chapter 14, we are now right at the end.
It's in chapter 14 we find the final Passover, the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, the events of Gethsemane, Jesus being betrayed and arrested, Jesus being tried, and Peter denying that he even knew the Lord.
All of this in chapter 14. But a little bit of background will help us to understand what we are about to study. Verse 1 says, it was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.
[8:40] For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. The background, of course, is this, that by our way of reckoning, it would have been that these events take place in the spring, so we're likely in April.

In February, about six weeks before Mark 14, Jesus goes to Bethany. In Bethany, he raises Lazarus from the dead.
And this is the turning point where the leaders who are against him and opposed to him go from saying, we really wish we could do something with him, to saying, we must do something.
If you would keep Mark 14 marked, but turn with me to John chapter 11. There's an important connection here to see.
In John 11, verse 43, when he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.
[10:06] And the man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.

And Jesus said to them, unbind him and let him go. Now, often when we hear the story of Lazarus, that's where the story ends.
We think of Jesus going and performing this miracle of Mary and Martha and the conversation and the grief and their questions and their struggles there.
Jesus weeping. And it culminates in this astounding resurrection where Jesus speaks. And with nothing more than the command of his voice, he calls Lazarus back to life.
But there is a next part of the story that is relevant for where we are in Mark 14. Let's keep reading John 11, 45.
[11:12] Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary had seen what he did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and 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. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.
But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, 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.
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

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

who are scattered abroad.
[12:36] So, from that day on, they made plans to put him to death.

It was the raising of Lazarus in February, six weeks before the events of Mark 14, that was the final tipping point.
We often read or hear the story of Lazarus and it's simply a story of the power of Jesus and the joy of what Christ has done, but there is another side of that.
And the other side of that are the opponents of Jesus when they saw what Jesus did, said, that's it. We can't just wring our hands with this guy anymore.
From that day forward, they said, he must be put to death. That was in February when Jesus was in Bethany.
[13:53] The triumphal entry, what we call Palm Sunday, two days before that, about six weeks after the events of John 11, Jesus again goes to Bethany.

He's preparing to go into Jerusalem for Passover. They don't travel on Saturday, on the Sabbath. So, he's going to go to Bethany, two miles on the side of the Mount of Olives, he'll be there on Friday, they will rest on the Sabbath, and then on Sunday, that Palm Sunday, he will ride into Jerusalem.
As we studied a few months ago at this point, he will ride into Jerusalem, he will go straight to the temple, and he will look around the temple, and he will observe all that is going on.
The money changing where people are stealing from people, the selling of animals for sacrifice, where the leaders are robbing people, he will take it all in, he will look intently at the sin that's happening, the thievery happening at the temple, he will go back to the place where he is staying, and then he will ride back in the next morning, coming with his band of disciples, and he with authority and power will cleanse the temple.
He will teach with an authority that no one there has ever experienced before. He will drive out the money changers, and the very people who have six weeks earlier said, we must put him to death, are just waiting on the right time.
[15:57] If you go back to the Gospel of Mark, back to chapter 12, verse 12, it says, they were seeking to arrest him, but they feared the people.

John 11, in February, they've said, this man must die. Six weeks later, Mark 12, 12, we've got to arrest him so that we can kill him.
Interestingly enough, though, now back to Mark 14, verse 2, verse 1, they're seeking to arrest him by stealth and kill him, but notice verse 2, this is very interesting, for they said, not during the feast. They want to arrest him, they want to kill him, but their desire is not to do it now. Why? Because they're afraid of the people.
Everyone's poured into town for the Passover. Passover. The town is just overridden with people. And these same leaders who six weeks ago, John 11, said, he must be killed, who in Mark 12 said, we must arrest him, now in Mark 14, still want to do away with him, but they don't want to do it this week.
[17:26] too many people, the threat of riot, as verse 2 describes it, an uproar from the people.

Jesus then goes and teaches in the temple, goes through all of the lengthy series of conversations and questions that we spent a number of weeks studying in that one very long day in his life. Mark 13, he tells all of these stories and lessons on the end of the age. And when you come to chapter 14, the crowd is swelling, the leaders want to arrest him and put him to death, but not today. We want to wait until things have calmed down just a little bit. And right in these two verses, you see this strange mixture of sacrifice, sin, and sovereignty.
Jesus will die at the appointed time, not ultimately at the hands of men, though they are completely held responsible for acting on what their hearts desire to do, but he will not die as a victim, he will die as a sacrifice, he will die as the ultimate, true Passover lamb.
[19:16] This is not just about murder, this is about atonement. Yet, right in the midst of sacrifice, there is absolutely sin, because wicked people are scheming wicked things, and they will put to death a man who committed no sin and no crime, and we know they're guilty, because on the cross, Jesus prays, Father, forgive them, and innocent people don't need to be forgiven.

So, what you have at the cross is not simply murder, you have atonement, sacrifice, a purposeful laying down of his life, and you have the sin of those who are committing it, and yet, even then, you have the sovereignty of God at work.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And one of the ways we see God's sovereignty on display is that these people who want to kill Jesus will, but even though they wanted to kill him for weeks now, and even some longer than that, they don't want to do it now during the Passover, and yet, Christ is the Passover Lamb, and he will be put to death while the Passover lambs are being killed for the feast to show he is the perfect, ultimate fulfillment of what God's provision had been, even from the day of Moses 1,500 years ago. There's a picture of divine sovereignty all over this event that you cannot escape. So what seems like these brief two verses that just give us a little bit of detail actually contains a tremendous amount of theology.
So first, make note of the word sacrifice. It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread.
[21:32] Scholars go back and forth a little bit. between Tuesday and Wednesday of that week. I'll walk you through a little bit of those details here in just a moment.

Remember, there are three main feasts that the Jewish people observe. You've got the feast of Pentecost, you've got the feast of booths or of tabernacles, and you've got the feast of unleavened bread and Passover.
Passover is the annual feast that began at the time of Moses. It was a picture of God's protection over his people while they were in Egypt.
They were to kill the Passover lamb, apply the blood to the doorpost, and their firstborn was spared. They would kill the Passover lamb, they would eat it the next day.
And so you had Passover on the 14th of the month, and then you had the feast of unleavened bread from the 15th to the 21st. These are two separate events, but by this time in their history, the eight days were essentially combined into one feast.
[22:47] Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. One was one day, the feast was seven days, by this point it was really combined into one central event that would last from the 14th to the 21st.

This gets a little confusing, but this will help us to understand some of the details of what's going on in Mark 14 as we walk through it. The Galileans and the Judeans reckoned time a bit differently. The Galileans would reckon a day from sunrise to sunrise. The Judeans would reckon time from sunset to sunset.
That becomes quite significant in understanding the details of Mark 14 as we go. We know that they are wanting to kill him, verse 1 says, they were seeking to arrest him by stealth and kill him, but we also recognize this is not the first time they've tried to do this.
There have been a number of failed attempts before. Herod tried to kill Jesus when he was a baby. In Luke 4, Jesus returns to Nazareth and they try to throw him off a cliff.
[24:14] In John 5, after healing the man at the pool of Bethesda, the people wanted to kill Jesus. In fact, in John 7, 25, people refer to Jesus as the man the leaders were seeking to kill.

That's how people referenced him. Oh, he's the man that they're wanting to put to death. And so, when you come to Mark 14 and it says they were wanting to kill him, this isn't the first time. They've tried and failed. Now, why could they not put him to death before? Well, there's just one ultimate reason.
It wasn't the Lord's will. Jesus is going to die precisely when the Lord has willed it.
And yet, real people will make real decisions with real consequences that are guilty before the Lord for what they have done, but they will not capture Jesus one second before its time.
[25:38] he will not die because he was overpowered or because he was tricked or because some army or some man outsmarted him.

He will lay down his life. You must remember this, that the death of Jesus is not about defeat, it is about sacrifice.
sacrifice. He's not overpowered. He willingly will lay down his life.
John 10 has made that clear, for this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.
I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. As I read to you in John 11 when Caiaphas says, don't you guys understand it's better to put one man to death than we lose the whole nation.
[26:53] It says he was prophesying of the death of Jesus. This is, these men are doing what their wicked hearts wanted to do and yet even their own sinful desires cannot conquer the sovereignty of

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

God.

Because Jesus' death is not about someone ultimately who is a victim. It is about a lamb who laid down his life as a sacrifice for us.
And to understand why it's so important back to Mark 14 verse 1 that it was two days before the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread.
Here's why that matters. 1 Corinthians 5 7 says cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump as you really are unleavened for Christ our Passover!
Lamb has been sacrificed. Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover Lamb and these men who have tried many times to put him to death six weeks ago said we've got to follow through with this on this day said we want to arrest him and kill him but not during Passover so why does Christ die during Passover one reason this is a sacrifice a payment for sin the cross is not somebody taking from Christ this is Jesus laying his life down that's what's happening on the cross this is the sacrifice of
[29:01] Jesus nobody takes it from me he says I willingly lay this down but what's unique about Jesus is that he not only he says has the authority to lay down his life of his own accord he says I also have the authority to take it up again now how can he say that who among us has the authority to take our life up once we've been killed and the answer is on our own none of us but this is the very one who will stand in front of the tomb and say Lazarus come forth he has ultimate authority over all things so much so that he can lay down his life and on the third day take it back up again sometimes when people preach the cross they tend to focus so much on the brutality of the cross which is true it was a graphic horrible brutal thing that's true but often times

I hear the cross preached in such a way that the brutality is magnified so that the congregation feels this sympathy for Jesus because of how much he suffered he did suffer and we should be grateful but don't make the mistake of feeling sorry for Jesus as though he were a conquered victim he triumphs on the cross when they put him to death this is not about a group who finally got him this is about a sovereign eternal plan that even in the midst of sin and rebellion the father's work of redemption is unfolding exactly as he purposed it we're going to stop there for today but
I do want to say one last thing as we close when you think about this truth in your life obviously the most important takeaway!
is to think about your sin and the cross and his payment for your sin and to make sure that you have been saved by grace through faith that's by far the most important thing but I do want you to also take this away that wicked men can plan and scheme for evil and their decisions have real consequences and yet no wicked scheme conquers the plan and sovereignty of God there's some mystery with that but there's rest in that that we live and serve a God so powerful so great and so sovereign that though people will try to put him to death they won't do it one second before it's God's will and even at the time they don't want to do it yet to fulfill the father's purpose of a Passover lamb it will happen exactly how and when God purposed it to be so rest in his sovereignty and rest in his grace even in the midst of evil and wickedness that's the sacrifice that we see we're going to come back and look at the sin and the sovereignty in these two verses and we're going to see just how precise is the purpose and plan of God and the good for his people Lord we thank you today for your word and pray that it would be an encouragement and draw us to an understanding of the cross and to a greater trust in your will we ask it in the name of Christ
[34:43] Amen God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host