

Mark 14:53-15:39
The Rejected King
Jonathan Romig
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Have you ever been rejected? Has anyone ever treated you as an outcast? Do you ever feel that everyone is on the inside except for you? Have you ever been bullied or made to feel less than? In the news today it seems like we hear weekly stories of bullying. A few months ago it was the story of a woman bullied in her teens. On her school's class reunion page she wrote a poem about her pain. Her former classmates felt so bad they raised funds for her to come to the reunion. A few weeks ago a football player for the Miami Dolphins walked away from the NFL. This guy is six and a half feet tall and weighs several hundred pounds. But he felt like his teammates were bullying him so he quit. According to bullyingstatistics.org half of all teens are bullied online. And most of the other half are the ones bullying them. Have you ever been rejected? Has anyone ever treated you as an outcast?

Our Savior Christ Jesus was also rejected. He was rejected by his enemies, his followers, and even by someone very close to him. He came to earth to save us from our sins. He came to pay the cost we couldn't afford. He came to set us free from bondage to sin. He came to redeem us, to pay our ransom. But we rejected him. We treated him as an outcast. Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected.

But we know we would never reject Jesus. We're here at church, we sang the songs, and we gave to the offering. But our story tells us that the religious are actually the first to reject Jesus.

The religious reject him (14:53-65) The religious reject Jesus. (14:53, 58) The religious leaders reject Jesus over and over again throughout Mark. (14:53) No matter how many miracles he performs or demons he casts out they won't believe. By chapter fourteen they have figured out how to put Jesus to death. The high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes all unite in their plan. They capture Jesus and bring false witnesses against him. They claim Jesus said, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands." (14:58). The temple is the economic, social, political, and religious center of Israel. Essentially they're saying, "Jesus wants to destroy our religion." They're saying that it's either Jesus or their religion and Jesus has to go.

Perhaps you can see yourself in the religious leaders in this story. They are highly educated, obey the law, and know their Old Testament Bibles. They are super religious and want to obey God in every way. I bet they don't even speed. Religion is not a bad thing; Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17). But somewhere they lost sight of why they are religious. They're so caught up in "being holy" they can't see the "holy one." And here he is standing right in front of them but they are blind. They only care about their religion and not their redeemer. May this never be us. The religious reject Jesus.

Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected by the religious. (14:61-64) The high priest himself rejects Jesus. In verse 61 he questions, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (14:61) Jesus replies, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (14:62) Notice how they couldn't prove Jesus did anything wrong. Only on his own terms does Jesus give them the evidence they want. He says, "I am," which is the same name Yahweh gave Moses in Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am." Jesus Christ is claiming to be the same Yahweh of the Old Testament they claim to believe in. But once again the religious reject Jesus. Those who claim they believe don't really believe. The high priest

tears his garments and calls Jesus blasphemous. (14:63-64) Blasphemy is the charge that Jesus is hostile to God. But they were the ones blaspheming God by denying Jesus. Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected by the religious.

It's not hard for religious people to reject Jesus. Unitarianism is the belief that Jesus is not the eternal Son of God and the Holy Spirit is not a person. Today when we think of unitarians, we don't think of people who study their Bibles. But believe it or not good religious people came up with this belief by studying their bibles. They thought they were being true to the Scriptures and Jesus. But in so doing they denied him. Unitarian theology became very popular in the 1800s in New England. In the early 1800s there was only one congregational church in Boston that didn't have a unitarian pastor. Between 1825 and 1828 three hundred New England churches joined the new Unitarian denomination. This is why we need to know Jesus and worship him for who he really is, God in the flesh. It's not so hard for the religious to reject Jesus.

But maybe we consider ourselves true disciples of Jesus. We know that we would never abandon him. But how do Peter and the disciples respond when the going gets tough?

The disciples deny him (14:66-72) The disciples deny Jesus. (14:66-72) If we had read the passage right before ours, we would see the disciples desert Jesus. They were with him in the garden but when the temple guard shows up they all flee. But the disciple Peter has the courage to follow Jesus to his trial. Just a few verses earlier Peter claimed he would never desert Jesus. But Jesus prophesies Peter will deny him three times. It's not hard to imagine that this prophecy was probably on Peter's mind. So it's admirable Peter follows Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest. Verse 54 says he sat with the very guards warming himself. (14:54) These are the same guards in verse 65 that begin to strike Jesus. (14:65)

The text doesn't say exactly how this took place. But you can imagine that Peter is feeling okay sitting by the fire. He's sitting with the temple guard and hasn't denied Jesus yet. And then the next moment the guards get up and begin to beat Jesus. I would find that a bit unnerving. It's no wonder he denies it when a servant girl claims she saw him with Jesus. (14:66-67) But this servant girl is persistent and Peter again denies he knows him. (14:69-70) Then a bystander says, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." (14:70) Peter begins to curse and swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." (14:71) That's when Peter remembers Jesus saying, "'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept." (14:72) The disciples deny him.

Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected by his own disciples. (14:68) Peter answers the servant girl in verse 68, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." (14:68) Peter isn't just denying Jesus in the moment. He's denying his whole history with Jesus. He's denying the three years they spent together. He's denying the one he once confessed to be the Christ. And if that isn't bad enough he should have been at Jesus' side. He and the twelve should have defended Jesus with their testimonies. They should have confessed that Jesus really is the Son of God. But even though Peter comes to the courtyard he doesn't defend Jesus. Instead he denies him and breaks down weeping when he realizes what he's done. He weeps and wails because he has betrayed his Lord.

Peter and the disciples are believers just like us. But that doesn't make what they did any less wrong. They deserted and denied Jesus. Maybe you can think of times you have denied Jesus. The Holy Spirit called you to be his witness. But you ran away and acted like you weren't a Christian. You denied him with your words

and your actions. Perhaps you can think of a big example or only little ones. Praise God the story doesn't end here for Peter or for you. At the end of the gospel of John Jesus forgives and restores Peter. And if you have denied Jesus in any way, he can forgive and restore you too. Peter had a heart of repentance and we should too. May we never deny him again. Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected by his own disciples.

The religious reject him and the disciples deny him but Jesus' rejection doesn't end there...

The Jews and Gentiles judge him (15:1-15) First, the Gentiles judge him. (15:2, 5) The religious leaders take Jesus to be tried by the Roman governor of Judea. They don't have the authority to put Jesus to death so they take him to the governor Pilate. Pilate is a non-Jew called a Gentile but he's also a ruler and so if Jesus is a king he needs to know. He asks Jesus "Are you the King of the Jews?" and Jesus answers, "You have said so." (15:2) But when Pilate brings the Jews' charges against Jesus, Jesus doesn't defend himself for two reasons. 1st: to answer them would be to recognize their false authority and false charges. 2nd: he fulfills Isa 56:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." Verse 5 says Pilate was "amazed" at Jesus' silence. (15:5) But this amazement in Jesus never quite brings him to a point of belief. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent but he condemns him because it's convenient. Maybe you too are amazed by Jesus and his miracles and teachings. But like Pilate it's just not enough. Life is far more convenient without Jesus. You can come to church if you want to or stay home and watch sports. Others just don't like religion and feel it's easier to not talk about Jesus. Pilate decided who Jesus is and you must too. Will you also reject him? First, the Gentiles judge him.

Second, the Jews judge him. (15:6-15) As was his custom Pilate offers the Jerusalem crowd a choice. (15:6-9) He will set the murderer Barabbas free or Jesus their king. But instead of setting Jesus free the crowds want him crucified. These are the same crowds who welcomed Jesus in with palm branches a week prior. These are the same crowds who praised him, "Hosanna!... Hosanna in the highest!" (11:11) Now their demonic cry is "Crucify him!... Crucify him!" (15:13-14) The Jews were supposed to believe. But instead his own people reject and condemn him. And yet at this tragic moment we see something beautiful. We see innocent Jesus take the place of a guilty sinner. Pilate sets Barabbas free and sends Jesus to the cross. (15:15) This is the same great exchange Jesus offers all of us. Jesus offers to go to the gallows on our behalf. He simply asks us to confess our sins and follow him. The choice is ours, but there are only two options. We can either shout "Hosanna!" or scream "Crucify him!" Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected by the Jews and Gentiles.

The religious reject him, the disciples deny him, and the Jews and Gentiles judge him. But the rejection doesn't end there because....

The kingdom crucifies him (15:16-32) The kingdom crucifies Jesus. (15:16-23) The kingdom of man attacks the kingdom of God. A battalion of about 600 Roman soldiers mocks and brutalizes Jesus. (15:16-20) They wrap a royal purple cloak around Jesus and put a crown of thorns on him. They salute him and call him king, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (15:18) Then the kingdom of man leads away heaven's king to be crucified. When he needs them most, the disciples don't show up to carry the cross for Jesus. Instead a stranger is pressed into service, Simon of Cyrene. (15:21) The soldiers lead him to "Golgotha... [the] Place of the Skull." (15:22) But before they crucify him the soldiers offer Jesus wine mixed with myrrh. (15:23) The wise men once gave the child Jesus myrrh as a royal gift. But now the soldiers offer it to him as strong drink to ease his painful death.

In Matthew and Mark we see Jesus does not accept the myrrh mixed with wine. John tells us he did accept some wine vinegar, but that is when he is on the cross. And that wine has turned to vinegar so it's no longer wine. (John 19:29-30) Jesus made a promise to not drink the fruit of the vine again until his kingdom comes. Even now in the midst of his crucifixion he has his eyes set on the kingdom of God. Even now his eyes are set on redeeming the lost and rejected instead of reducing his pain. Even now Jesus wants to be fully present to experience the full wrath of God. The kingdom crucifies him.

The movie Braveheart is about the Scottish rebel William Wallace. (15:24-32) William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, leads a rebellion against English occupation. He wages a successful guerrilla campaign against the English forces. It's not until he is betrayed by one of his allies that his fight is cut short. He is in prison awaiting his execution when he has a chance to drink pain killer. But he spits the drink out because he wants a clear mind so he doesn't deny his Scotland. His captors take him from from prison, torture him, and give him one final chance for a quick death. All he has to do is say the word "mercy," but to do so would be to admit defeat. Instead of begging for mercy, he shouts "Freedom!" Christ was also focused on freedom at his death. He wouldn't take the pain killing wine because he wanted our freedom. He bore the painful consequences of our sin on the cross so we wouldn't have to. The soldiers take Jesus to the cross and there they crucify him. (15:24) They nail his hands and feet to a tree and mount him between two prisoners. (15:27) They place an inscription above him which says, "The King of the Jews" (15:26) His followers have deserted him and his enemies gloat over him. (15:31-32) But the king of kings is determined to win our freedom. Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected.

The religious reject him, the disciples deny him, the Jews and Gentiles judge him, and the kingdom crucifies him. The whole world has turned its back on Jesus and it seems like it can't get any more worse. But now someone who has known and loved Jesus for all eternity turns his back on him.

The Father forsakes him (15:33-37) The Father forsakes Jesus. (15:33-34) Verse 33 says darkness covered the land from noon till 3pm. (15:33) In the New Testament "darkness" is used to symbolize both "sin" and "judgment." Jesus is bearing the full weight of sin and the complete judgment of God. He is bearing our darkness so we can shine with his light before God. But because Jesus is bearing our guilt, his perfect father must turn away from him. Verse 34 says, "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani,' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (15:34) The father has turned his back on his own child because of our sin. It's not that Jesus loses his divinity, but that there is a definite break in relationship. Maybe that doesn't sound so bad to you but imagine how deep their relationship is. The Son has known the perfect, eternal, and intimate love of his Father forever. And when he is on the cross dying he needs his Father's love more than any other time. But the father forsakes him.

The Father and Son's relationship can be likened to that of a parent and child. (15:34, 37) If you're a parent, you know you love your child and that love grows as your relationship grows. As your child gets older you get to learn more and more about them. They begin to interact with you, talk with you, and tell you about themselves. You love your child and your child loves you more and more. You progress through childhood, the teen years, and into maturity. Now imagine that relationship is eternal and perfect. There's no teenage angst. That was what the Father and Son's relationship was like. Jesus loved his Father and had grown in that love since before time. But now their relationship is broken. And this break causes Jesus extreme mental and emotional pain. This is the type of infinite pain Jesus knew at the cross. The Father, who he had known and loved for all time, turns his back on him. Verse 37 says, "And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his

last.” (15:37) Jesus literally dies of a broken heart. Christ Jesus the Redeemer was rejected, even by his father.

But why did he have to be rejected by the whole world and even by his Father? It all leads to this moment... The religious reject him, the disciples deny him, the Jews and Gentiles judge him, the kingdom crucifies him, the Father forsakes him, and now at last...

The sinner sees him (15:38-39) The sinner sees Jesus. (15:38-39) Verse 38 says, “And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” (15:38) This curtain was about 80 feet high and probably several inches thick. Only God himself could tear it in two from top to bottom. The curtain separated “the holy” and “the most holy” chambers of the temple. The Scriptures tell us for much of Jewish history God’s presence was in “the most holy” chamber. The high priest would only enter “the most holy” chamber only once a year to make an offering. But now Christ Jesus is our new high priest. He has entered the holy of holies as our perfect sacrifice. Jesus enters the inner most chamber of the temple on our behalf. We can now enter into God’s presence through Christ Jesus. God tears down the veil between God and man so we can finally know him. Now with the veil between God and man destroyed the sinner sees Jesus. Verse 39 says, “And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (15:39) The centurion was the captain of the battalion who brutalized and crucified Jesus. He was standing at the foot of the cross to make sure his 600 men got their job done right. But when he sees the way Jesus dies he knows he is the very “Son of God.” Nothing about his status in life or role as executioner said he would ever know God. This man was the least deserving of grace and the most unlikely of converts. But the unlikeliest of believers are often the first to confess Jesus as Lord. The sinner sees him.

Christ Jesus the redeemer was rejected so that the rejected might be redeemed. (15:39) The centurion is a Gentile like Pilate and so a rejected class by the Jews. (15:39) But Jesus came to save and restore those we call outcasts. He was rejected so that he might heal those who are also rejected. He came to forgive and pay the ransom for those everyone else turns away. The centurion becomes the first in the gospel to confess Jesus as the Son of God. In so doing he changes his allegiance from Caesar to Jesus. He changes his allegiance from a false deity to the true “Son of God.” You too may change your allegiance. You too can confess Jesus is the “Son of God.” You too can turn away from yourself to faith in Christ. You too can be a sinner who sees your savior. But it requires humility and a willingness to have faith. It means you have to look at yourself and repent of your sin. And you need to be willing to let Jesus change everything about you. He wants to take you who rejected him and welcome you home. Christ Jesus the redeemer was rejected so that the rejected might be redeemed.

Christ Jesus the redeemer was rejected so that the rejected might be redeemed. Jesus came to pay the ransom for our sins, to redeem us. But he wasn’t welcomed as the saving king he is. Instead the religious rejected him. The disciples denied him. The Jews and Gentiles judged him. The Kingdom crucified him. And the Father forsook him. The whole world turned its back on Jesus. He died alone on a cross. But that’s where the sinner saw him. Do you see him there? Do you see your need for the savior? Jesus came to redeem you from your sins. He came to deliver the deserted. He came to embrace the abandoned. He came to forgive the forsaken. He came to restore the rejected. He came so that you and I can have a new life in him. Christ Jesus the redeemer was rejected so that the rejected might be redeemed.