

# THE WAY



## **BIG IDEA**

Jesus made His way to the cross so that we could have a way to the Father.

## **BIBLE**

Matthew 27:15-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:4-5

## **ABOUT THIS WEEK**

Because of sin, we were deserving of a punishment. But, God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die in our place. This week, we'll take a look at a man named Barabbas to illustrate how Jesus took on the punishment we deserved in order to give us a way back to God.

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

### Opening Illustration

- Have you ever been in a situation where something wasn't fair? Maybe you got blamed for something you didn't do, or you saw someone else get off easy while you had to deal with the consequences.
- *Feel free to share a personal story if you have an example.*
- Life isn't always fair, right? But tonight, we're going to talk about the most unfair trade in history—one that changed everything for you and me.

### The Story of Barabbas

#### Context: The Passover Festival

- This story takes place during **Passover week**, one of the biggest Jewish holidays.
- Passover was a time when the Jewish people remembered how God saved them from slavery in Egypt.
- Thousands of people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate.
- **At the same time that the people were preparing to sacrifice their Passover lambs, Jesus was preparing to present Himself as the ultimate Passover Lamb—the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).**

#### Who is Pontius Pilate?

- **Pilate** was the **Roman governor of Judea**.
- His job was to keep order in Israel and prevent any uprisings.

- The Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus to him, accusing Him of claiming to be a king—a potential threat to Rome.
- Pilate didn't actually think Jesus was guilty, but he was afraid of angering the Jewish leaders and causing a riot.

#### Who is Barabbas?

- **Barabbas** was a **notorious criminal**.
- The Bible says he was a **rebel, murderer, and insurrectionist** (Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19).
- He had tried to **overthrow Roman rule**—which normally would make him an enemy of Pilate.
- He was guilty beyond question, and everyone knew it.

#### The Passover Custom: A Prisoner Set Free

- It was a tradition during Passover for the Roman governor to **release one prisoner** chosen by the people.
- Pilate saw this as a way out—he thought the people would **obviously** choose Jesus over Barabbas.
- But the religious leaders stirred up the crowd, and **they chose Barabbas** instead.

#### The Greatest Exchange

- Imagine standing in the crowd. On one side is **Jesus**—innocent, loving, and full of grace. On the other side is **Barabbas**—guilty, violent, and deserving of punishment.
- And the crowd shouts: **"Release Barabbas! Crucify Jesus!"**
- Jesus **didn't argue, didn't fight back, and didn't try to defend Himself**.
- He took the punishment that Barabbas **deserved**.
- In that moment, **we see a picture of what Jesus has done for us**—taking our place, even though we were guilty.

### SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

#### SO WHAT? – What Does This Mean for Us?

##### We Are Like Barabbas

- The truth is, we are all guilty of sin. (Romans 3:23)
- Just like Barabbas, we deserved punishment. The Bible makes it clear that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Our sin separates us from God, and there is nothing we can do to fix that on our own.
- Barabbas was a criminal who should have faced the consequences of his actions, yet he was set free while Jesus took his place. In the same way, we have broken God's law and deserve judgment, but Jesus stepped in and took the punishment that was meant for us.
- Barabbas likely didn't understand the depth of what had just happened—he was physically freed but may not have realized the greater spiritual reality at play. Many of us live the same way, unaware or ungrateful for the sacrifice Jesus made.
- The story of Barabbas is personal. We are not just distant observers of this event—we are Barabbas. We were guilty, but Jesus took our place. The cross was meant for us, yet He carried it instead.
- Jesus didn't just take Barabbas's punishment—He took yours. The question is, how will you respond?

#### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

- *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*
- Jesus took on our sin so that we could take on His righteousness.
- This means that when God looks at us, He no longer sees our sin—He sees Jesus' righteousness covering us.
- Think of it like a trade: Jesus, who had never sinned, took on all of our sin, so that we could be made right before God.
- This is not something we can achieve on our own. No amount of good works, effort, or religious actions can make us right with God—only Jesus' sacrifice can.
- The weight of this exchange is incredible. Jesus endured separation from God, pain, and death so that we could experience forgiveness, relationship, and eternal life.
- Because of what Jesus has done, we are invited to step into a new identity—not as guilty sinners, but as beloved children of God who have been made righteous.

#### What This Means for Us

- Barabbas didn't earn his freedom—he simply received it.
  - We don't earn salvation—it's a free gift from Jesus.
  - We now have access to God, not because of what we've done, but because of what Jesus has done for us.
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- We are called to live in the freedom that Jesus has given us—no longer defined by our past mistakes, but by His grace

*NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?*

#### Jesus' sacrifice requires a response.

- He has given us a way back to God, but we have to **accept it**.
- It's not enough just to **know** what Jesus did—we have to **respond** to it.

#### The ABCs of Responding to Jesus

- **Admit** – Admit that you've sinned and that you can't fix it on your own.
- **Believe** – Believe that Jesus is Lord and that His sacrifice on the cross was for you.
- **Confess** – Confess your faith in Jesus and give Him control of your life.

#### Call to Action

- Some of you **have never made the decision** to follow Jesus. Tonight, you can take that step.
- Others of you **have already accepted Jesus**, but maybe you've been living like Barabbas—going your own way, forgetting what Jesus has done for you.
- Tonight is a moment to **remember, refocus, and thank Jesus** for His grace.

#### Closing Prayer

- Pray for those who are accepting Jesus for the first time.
  - Pray for those who need to recommit their hearts to Him.
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