# Sermon – Jesus vs Barabbas, Who Will You Choose?

Preached at Cloverdale 4/2/23

John 12

**Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.**

**9Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.**

**12On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. 14And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.**

**17The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. 19The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.**

The Case for Jesus

Understand the current situation. The Jews were in submission and bondage to the Romans. They desired to be free again and were looking for deliverance.

The people of Jerusalem had welcomed Jesus into the city with the waving of palm branches and shouts of “Hosanna!” At the beginning of the week, there was a crowd in Jerusalem celebrating Jesus as the Messiah.

The people knew of the prophesy of Zech 9:9. Christ is seen as the long expected King.

This is evidenced by their rejoicing; Hosanna means to save. They are looking for salvation.

They use palm branches indicating their expectation that the reign of Christ and the Kingdom being established on earth was near.

There are high expectations this day.

The people starting to believe because of the miracle of Lazuras.

The Case for Barabbas

Mark 15:6-15

**Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.**

**9But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. 11But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.**

**12And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.**

**15And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.**

Barabbas is described in scripture as an insurrectionist, participant in murder, a robber, etc. He has a criminal record. In [Matthew](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-According-to-Matthew) 27:16 Barabbas is called a “notorious prisoner.” In [Mark](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-According-to-Mark) 15:7, echoed in [Luke](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-According-to-Luke) 23:19, he was “in prison with the rebels who had committed [murder](https://www.britannica.com/topic/murder-crime) during the insurrection” against the occupying Roman forces. [John](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-According-to-John) 18:40 describes him as a bandit.

What happens next is sad. The crowd that was praising him just days earlier has rejected him. The crowd that day had a choice in front of them with Barabbas and Jesus.

Why did the crowd choose Barabbas instead of Jesus. Why the switch from celebrating him one day and rejecting him the next?

**Jesus and Barabbas had a few things in common:**

* Both were now prisoners and subjected to the legal system of the day.
  + Both being detained by the area department of corrections.
* They both desired their people to be free – they were both freedom fighters.
* Both were patriots –vigorously supporting their country and defending it against enemies.

Striking change of the city’s heart naturally causes some perplexity. It’s good to remember that not everyone at the [Triumphal Entry](https://www.gotquestions.org/triumphal-entry.html) was celebrating the Lord. The Jewish leaders were indignant. Some of the same crowd who shouted, “Hosanna!” may also have been part of the crowd shouting “Crucify Him!” but we can’t be sure.

According to all four gospels here was a prevailing Passover custom in Jerusalem that allowed Pilate, to commute (reduce) one prisoner's death sentence by popular acclaim.

**Why Did the Crowd Choose Jesus One Day, and Later Choose Barabbas Instead?**

* Led astray (deception) by political and religious leaders – their envy (money and power)
  + Jesus’ ministry was a threat to their position and pride
* Influenced by crowd mentality; following the crowd rather than the truth
* Unbelief, lack of faith after Jesus was arrested
* Faulty expectations
  + Misunderstood what time it was, wrong feast—out of order, skipped some steps to get to the end
  + Jesus didn’t look like or do it like they expected him to; God promised a Savior to Israel.  Unfortunately, Israel misinterpreted what that would look like.
  + They were looking for the physical kingdom and deliverance instead of a spiritual kingdom
* Delay, not happening fast enough – wanted salvation now
* Sadly, like many other instances, Israel chose a path that was against God for their own desires and purposes.

Question: Is it possible, people may be making the same choices today, picking Barabbas instead of Jesus? Yes. What does that mean? What is your Barabbas today?

**Who does Barabbas represent?**

* The quick solution
* The temporary answer to our problem
* The flesh, the physical
* Our worldly desires
* Our plan
* Barabbas was a reflection of what the Jewish people thought of the promised Messiah.

**Who Does Jesus Represent?**

* The spiritual answer
* God’s plan
* The answer

Jesus was condemned because the religious leaders failed to recognize who He was.  Jesus was the Messiah.

They expected a physical king, like David, that would help them defeat their enemies.  They looked at Rome and thought their promise was to overtake the Empire, led by a king, and dominate as a physical nation.

Observations and Application:

* We still choose Barabbas today for the same reasons they did back then.
* We still reject Jesus in our decisions for the same reasons they did back then.
* Just because it doesn’t happen the way we want it to happen; just because it doesn’t look like we expected or planned; doesn’t mean God isn’t in it.
* God works on the inside first. When Jesus died, we were saved, but still may be in physical bondage….for now. The rest is coming.
* Where were the supporters from Sunday? We may still find the church and believers silent when the crowd rejects him.
* Jesus died for Barabbas when he was still in sin. There is no crime that Christ hasn’t paid for except the sin of unbelief.
* I don’t care what the crowd says on Wednesday; if I praised Him on Sunday I’ll praise him today. The King is here!

Who was Barabbas?  We know who he wasn’t.  He wasn’t the Messiah.

If we are not careful, we can even fall into a similar trap today. The Apostle Paul talked about choosing between the temporal and the eternal.

Our Savior is not the things of this world.  He certainly doesn’t sit in Washington D.C.  Jesus sits on the throne in Heaven.