

+Sermon Good Friday 2021

April 2, 2021

In the Name T of Jesus. Amen.

In any superficial examination of history, you can see that when a mob mentality sets in it almost always results in a loss of logic and with that destructive consequences. Now, I touched on this topic a couple of months ago after the storming of the Capitol building. In that I referenced not only that incident, but also the riots we've seen across the country over the last year, as well as circumstances in Luther's time that were similar. That was with what was called the Radical Reformation. But you can see this reflected elsewhere too. You can see it in things like the bank runs during the days before the Great Depression in the 1920's. You can see it the Bolshevik Revolution and in the French Revolution with its Reign of Terror with the Guillotine. You see it time and time again. When the mob gets riled up and they take over, bad things happen.

We see that with our Lord's crucifixion as well. Think about how there was in a sense a mob mentality to start the week with Palm Sunday. Of course, that on the surface appeared good because it was exalting Jesus as King. However, as I made the point on Sunday, you can see that they were getting wrong as theologians of glory seeking that earthly kingdom and earthly messiah in the here and now. But look at the backlash that happened with that. The High Priests and the Pharisee have been pricked to action as well. You hear it in John's Gospel. They see the people rising up in this way and what do they say? They say, **"You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."** And that sets off the events where Judas approaches them about handing the Lord over to them for the reward of the thirty pieces of silver. And then you have the events that you heard tonight. You have what appears to be a small group, maybe even a small mob coming to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. You have the trial in the High Priest's court with the mob striking and mocking Jesus. Then in what might be the most mob like behavior, you have the shouting for Barabbas' release and Jesus' death by crucifixion, **"Away with Him, away with Him, Crucify Him!"**

As we see this, there are some interesting things that we can see about this behavior. First of all, we can understand that the pattern it follows is one that is finally very irrational. After all, just think about how it reflects that. At its base it accepts the release of a murderer and known insurrectionist in exchange for this One who had done nothing wrong, and who we see in the Gospel of John here was in trouble because people latched on to His raising of Lazarus from the dead. That doesn't make sense, does it?! It doesn't. So, we can see that this is certainly irrational in its logic.

That said, I found a few other things in looking at this that reflect this mob mentality that were also very interesting. For example, you can see that there is this aspect of it operating in secret. Look at how this whole thing goes down. It's done in the cover of darkness. It's done so much in secret. Jesus Himself even draws attention to that as He says, **"I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."** Jesus operated with transparency. He didn't hide His teachings, but openly spoke them, even in the hearing of these members of this council when He was teaching in the courts of the Temple there in Jerusalem. He was open about what He was doing, He didn't hide His message. And you can think about just what that meant. Think about John Chapter 8. In that passage, Jesus even makes the declaration that He is God in the flesh. They wanted to stone Him after He said it. It made them mad, but Jesus didn't care. He spoke openly.

But how does that compare to the Sanhedrin and their mob mentality? They bring all of this about in secret, as we joke about in our day, this is happening in cigar smoke filled backrooms, with shady dealings and money being exchanged. Of course, that's not the mob itself, but it's the instigation of the mob. That's interesting. And for the crowd to follow this is illogical.

Next, we see that the mob seeks to maintain the appearance of their righteousness. Look at the way they bring Jesus to Pilate's custody: **"Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover."** You see, they wanted to be ritually pure for the feast, so lest they be defiled, made unclean, by going into the house of a gentile, they don't go in. They look like they're keeping up with God's Law, and on the surface they are, but the reality is that they're not. That's illogical.

Then another interesting aspect of this illogical activity is the presumed correctness. Look at how they respond when Pilate asks them about charges against Jesus. They say, **"If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."** You can see the logic there, right? Or properly the lack of it? "We're right, if we weren't we wouldn't be here." But of course, I think you see that with mobs. The presumption is that the fervor of the mob outweighs any rationality that might indicate that they're actually not right. And when you take a look at it, it's not logical, is it?

And then to note the two things that are the most illogical. Look at how this brings about the question of truth. Pilate, in the midst of this, responds to Jesus who speaks of truth by saying, **"What is truth?"** Now, of course, we can discuss the context of Pilate

himself, and we can certainly recognize that this could have been Pilate's epistemological position—that is his perspective on knowing things—before confronted with Jesus' words. But we can also see how mob mentalities draw this out. What is the truth, is it the truth of the mob? Or is it the truth of those suffering at the hands of the mob? Or is it something between? Or is it the counter mob that often forms as well? And there's a destruction of logic and rationality in the midst of this.

Then, lastly, look at the final result. I mentioned this before, but this is the most telling aspect of it all. Look at how they exchange Barabbas for Jesus. They exchange the Creator for a created man. But look how it goes beyond that. They go from Barabbas to denying the true God in all of this! Pilate **“said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ They cried out, ‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”** Think of the logic of this. There He is, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords standing before them. The mob had wanted to crown Him just days before, and yet now the mob—maybe some of the same people, maybe a totally different one—but now the mob is willing to deny this King, deny their God, and take on Caesar in His place.

Now, as I have pointed all of this out, hopefully you've just found it interesting for its own sake, but maybe you've also thought, what's the point? And I think there are a few to draw from it. The first is about this mob mentality. Some of these things I found interesting aren't distinct to mobs, and some of them you could argue aren't a reflection of mob mentality. However, as we look around us now, I do think we have a lot of mob mentalities happening. This serves as a great piece of awareness for us. The second is the main theme I pointed to through out the list. And that's the loss of rationality and logic in a mob mentality. And what we see in Scripture is that this isn't limited to what we consider the mob mentality in terms of when a group of people get provoked to a certain emotional fervor to act out. No, in fact, there is a general lack of proper logic and a mob mentality in the fall into sin altogether in all of humanity. And how do we see it? We see it in that our fallen logic contradicts God. Now, don't get me wrong, we can't assume that rationalism will save us. There are ways where God's logic isn't our own. But it's noteworthy nonetheless.

But of course, we are here in observance of the crucifixion of our Lord, and so we would be remiss if we didn't note the greatest point in all of this. And that is that as we look at how destructive and illogical the mob is in the death of Christ, there's something amazing at work. If I might play on the word logic and it's root origin, we see the amazing thing at work being the logos, the Word of God. By that I mean that as we have the English word “logic” etymologically it comes from the Greek Word “logos.” This word

“logos” means “word, account, reason.” It’s where we get things like “biology,” or “theology.” The “studies” of life or God, respectively. But we see that God’s Word is that logos. We see that Christ is that Word, that Logos, who was with God in the beginning and who was God in the beginning. And we see that He is that Logos made flesh.

And He is working in all of this. Look just at how you see fulfillments in Him of the Word written beforehand. The soldiers cast lots for His garment, not tearing it. Why? **“This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, ‘They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.’”** Then look at the soldiers not breaking Jesus’ legs, but already finding Him dead. **“These things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’”** And most importantly, look at the wine. **After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

Do you see how it connects? Do you see the amazingness of what’s happened? There’s this mob mentality, there is this lack of logic, but the Logos finally utilizes all of it to accomplish His purpose. And what is that purpose? The sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. **“It is finished”** means that it all has worked together to accomplish the redemption of mankind. All of that mob mentality and irrationality fit into the puzzle in such a way to accomplish just what God was trying to do. And when you look around and see mob mentality around you, know that it’s working according to just what God intends it to do. And what’s that? Salvation. God’s goal since the fall into sin hasn’t changed. He desires that we would be saved. He desires that mankind’s fallen estate would be redeemed. He desired the sin of the whole world to be atoned for, paid for by the blood of this Christ. All of that was to accomplish the salvation of the world. But then, His goal hasn’t changed. It’s been since then to bring that salvation to His people. As He baptized you, He was working that for you. Working that even and against your own irrationality in your sin. As He preaches His Word to you, He’s trying to restructure your understanding to line up with that of the eternal Logos. As He feeds you with His body and blood, He is working in you to give you the blood of this Lamb to sanctify you and make you holy in Him.

And so, on this cross you see that the world might fall apart, but Christ has it all in His hand. And He has it in His hand for you. Mob mentality might bring irrationality and destruction. But this Christ was destroyed for you and for your salvation. And that promises that you will survive it eternally. Amen.