

**Title: Pilate's Palace****[Slide 1]****Text: Mark 15:1-15****"Bombogenesis"****Nor'easter!****[Slide 2]**

Anyone living in New England knows what it means to experience a "weather bomb" or "bombogenesis." A "weather bomb" happens when a powerful low pressure system intensifies rapidly, producing powerful winds that spin around its center, and massive amounts of precipitation. Think: Nor'easter!

A weather bomb is what happened to us on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Frigid arctic air had blown in from the north over the weekend. A seemingly run of the mill disturbance came in from the west. Meanwhile, a second low pressure area began working its way up the Atlantic Seaboard.

Then the fun began: The storm from the west got sucked into the swirling circulation of the coastal storm, making it even more powerful. This bigger storm continued to move up the coast, eventually colliding with that entrenched mass of arctic air. From Monday evening to Tuesday afternoon the barometric readings fell off a cliff. Mother Nature had created a powerful weather bomb that would bring us in excess of 30" with blizzard conditions.

**Friday morning, April 3, A.D. 33:**

At first light on April 3, A.D. 33 the spiritual realm was aligning its forces for a spiritual bombogenesis. God's great plan to defeat the forces of evil that had enslaved His Creation was coming to its climax. The dark powers had been stirred from their positions of comfort and control. Now they moved inexorably toward each other, like weather fronts careening across the landscape.

The icy grip of Rome lay heavy on the city of Jerusalem that early morning. The emperor ruled the city through a governor named Pontius Pilate. His army patrolled the streets; his agents collected the taxes; his courtroom had

sole power over life and death. He could call down Rome's legions at the slightest hint of rebellion.

The spiritual atmosphere was roiled, however, by not one, but two storm systems. First light brought a delegation of the chief priests bringing a prisoner to Pilate's early morning court. There was no love lost between the Jewish leaders and their Roman overlord. The chief priests were ready to go toe to toe with Pilate to extract the death penalty for Jesus. That would be Storm #1.

Meanwhile, a crowd was gathering outside Pilate's palace for a very different reason. They were seeking the release of a prisoner who had committed murder during a terrorist attack against the Romans. Since it was customary for the Roman governor to release a prisoner of the people's choosing at Passover, they were out in force to insist that the prisoner he released was Barabbas, the rebel. That would be Storm #2.

And somewhere in the middle of all that chaos would be the Son of God.

## **Pilate's Palace**

### **Storm #1:**

Mark writes:

### **[Slide 3]**

*Mark 15:1 NIV*

*Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.*

Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea. He had been in power for some 7 years. He despised the Jews and ruled them with a cruel hand. Roman law, however, placed upon him and him alone the power to sentence a person to death – which was why the Sanhedrin had to bring Jesus to him for judgment.

In the Roman Empire court proceedings took place first thing in the morning. This is why the Sanhedrin had convened their own trial in the middle of the night. They had to catch Pilate at first light if they wanted their case heard that day.

But to have Jesus tried by Pilate presented a problem: the Sanhedrin convicted Jesus on the religious charge of blasphemy. This carried absolutely no weight with Pilate or Rome. In order to have Jesus sentenced to death, they would need to accuse Him of something that the Roman governor would consider worthy of death – like high treason.

They accused Him before Pilate of claiming to be “the king of the Jews,” and thus a direct rival to the Emperor. Mark picks up the story with Pilate’s cross-examination:

**[Slide 4]**

*Mark 15:2 NIV*

*“Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.*

*“You have said so,” Jesus replied.*

Jesus’ answer was by no means a denial; yet it suggested to Pilate that Jesus was not claiming to be the kind of king who would be a threat to Caesar.

**The trial goes south:**

With the chances of a quick conviction slipping away, the chief priests tried another tack:

**[Slide 5]**

*Mark 15:3-5 NIV*

*The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”*

*But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

Pilate was stunned that Jesus made no effort to answer His accusers!

It was becoming more and more clear that the Sanhedrin was in risk of not getting what it demanded. Pilate was baffled, perhaps even a bit intrigued, by their prisoner. They must have wondered if Jesus might even walk out of Pilate’s palace a free man.

Then, like a rapidly intensifying nor'easter, things took an unexpected and catastrophic turn.

### **Storm #2:**

While Jesus was being tried on the charge of treason in Pilate's palace, a crowd was gathering outside. Each year at Passover the Roman governor granted a pardon to one prisoner as part of the celebration. The crowd had come to lobby, ironically, for a man who had committed treason:

#### **[Slide 6]**

*Mark 15:6-8 NIV*

*Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.*

Confused by the case he had just heard, and not sure of what verdict to render, Pilate thought he might be able to have this mob make the decision to release Jesus. If they did so, then the Sanhedrin would not be able to blame him! So he threw the case to them:

#### **[Slide 7]**

*Mark 15:9-10 NIV*

*"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priest had handed Jesus over to him.*

And that was when Storm #1 and Storm #2 merged together into a spiritual weather bomb:

#### **[Slide 8]**

*Mark 15:11*

*But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.*

Given a choice between siding with Pilate, or siding with the Sanhedrin, the mob joined forces with the Sanhedrin.

## **A Ransom for Many**

### **Chaos:**

When storm systems merge and collide with frigid arctic air, anything can happen. Winds reach hurricane force, thunder and lightning split the snow-filled sky, and a month's worth of snow can fall in a matter of a few hours. Chaos reigns.

In much the same way, chaos took over in Pilate's palace. In vain Pilate tried to reason with the mob:

### **[Slide 9]**

*Mark 15:12-14 NIV*

*"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.*

*"Crucify him!" they shouted.*

*"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"*

If Rome prided itself on anything, it was on its legal system. Now that entire system was overwhelmed by mob rule. Pilate, perhaps naively thinking that he could join forces with the mob, found himself sitting under a spiritual weather bomb that was rapidly intensifying. In a few moments, it would turn into a full-scale riot, enveloping the entire city, with its 150,000 pilgrims, in unimaginable violence.

That is why, in defiance of Jesus' manifest innocence, Pilate gave in to the mob:

### **[Slide 10]**

*Mark 15:15 NIV*

*Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

### **The Passover Lamb:**

And so it was that Jesus became the world's Passover Lamb. The evil, the hatred, the injustice, the violence, the pride of the whole wide world converged upon Him when Pilate said the dreaded words: "You shall mount the cross."

And just who was it that put Him there? Think back to the spiritual weather bomb and its various parts:

- Rome with its icy inflexible grip upon the world.
- The Sanhedrin with its misguided religious instincts that twisted God's moral law into an instrument of hatred and death.
- The mob: fickle and blood-thirsty, not content to have their man freed, but anxious to see an innocent man flayed alive and nailed to that Roman cross.

All of the evil of a broken world came together in one place and upon one person: the Son of God, the Passover Lamb. Rome represented institutional power, enshrined in law and military might. The Sanhedrin represented religious and moral power, now perverted into a tool of death. The mob? There they stood, screaming for blood, amazed, no doubt, that Rome and Sanhedrin had both acquiesced to their demands! All conspired together to destroy the Creator's Son.

### **The ransom for many:**

Jesus stood still and strong in the middle of the hurricane of evil, the hail of curses, the flood of injustice. He had come to earth and lived His life for this moment. As He had told His disciples:

#### **[Slide 11]**

*Mark 10:45 NIV*

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

This is Exodus language: ransom. Jesus, the Passover Lamb, pays the ransom for the freedom of the slaves. That meant standing still – and offering no defense – as the priests hurled their false charges, as Pilate

peppered Him with questions, and as a mob of His own people screeched for His blood.

A ransom for many. A ransom for you. Jesus died not just for the sins of those people or that day; He died for the sins of the whole wide world, including yours and mine. Every dark force converged upon Him in a last-ditch effort to break Him down and make Him their own. But He stood firm in His love for us. He became the ransom for many.

He is the ransom for you.

## LIFE Group Lesson for "Pilate's Palace"

### Ice Breaker

- What is your favorite place to be when there is a big snowstorm?  
What's the biggest storm you can remember?

### The Suffering Servant:

- Mark and other New Testament writers found a powerful connection between the sacrificial death of Jesus and Old Testament prophecies.
- The most important prophecy came from the prophet Isaiah and his promise of the coming of the Lord's Servant – a person who would suffer in our place.
- He introduces the Servant with these words:
  - *Isaiah 52:13-15 NIV*
  - *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*
  - *Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness –*
  - *so will many nations be amazed at him [Greek OT], and kings will shut their mouths because of him.*
  - *For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*
- Already, we can see how they would connect this Scripture with Jesus:
  - Jesus described Himself as coming not to be served, *but to serve.*
  - The flogging and other torture that Jesus endured disfigured Him and marred him beyond human likeness.
  - And the Greek version of verse 15 says that "many nations will be amazed at him. Mark tells us that Pilate was amazed at Jesus during His trial.
- But it is in Isaiah 53 that the comparison between the Suffering Servant and Jesus becomes even clearer. Like the Servant, Jesus takes upon Himself our sins:
  - *Isaiah 53:4-6 NIV*
  - *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.*



- *But he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*
- *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- Isaiah continues by describing the Servant's refusal to defend himself:
  - *Isaiah 53:7 NIV*
  - *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*
- Even the Servant's grave points to the tomb in which Jesus was laid:
  - *Isaiah 53:9 NIV*
  - *He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*
- And finally, there is the promise of victory over death and God restoring many to full covenant relationship with Himself:
  - *Isaiah 53:11 NIV*
  - *After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*

### **The Servant's Work:**

- It was always God's purpose to work through Israel to rescue His corrupted and broken world.
  - Israel was to be the light to the nations.
  - From Israel would come the Messiah King.
- But Israel was itself broken and corrupted. Therefore, the rescue mission could never go forward.
- This is where this Suffering Servant comes in:
  - He stands in the place of Israel.
  - He allows all of Israel's – and the world's – sin to come to rest, as it were, on Him and on Him alone.
  - That is why He is so despised. He comes to stand for everything that we *can't stand* about ourselves!
  - This is what we see happening at Pilate's Palace – where the forces of evil converge like low pressure areas colliding with arctic air and turning into a weather bomb.

- He took that evil and rejection upon Himself as an act of supreme love and forgiveness. And in His death, a death plotted by Israel and sentenced by Rome, He put Sin itself to death.

### **A place in the storm:**

- Storms like the one that engulfed Jesus on Good Friday still happen.
  - They happen in our lives.
  - They happen because of us and because of others.
- The big question is whether we will find ourselves facing the full wrath of the storm, or whether we will be able to go through it in a warm, safe place.
- Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself so that you and I could shelter in Him.
  - *Psalm 32:7 NIV*
  - *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*
  - *Psalm 18:2 NIV*
  - *The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*
- This is what Jesus is for you and me: our stronghold.

### **Prayer time:**

- Pray for each other to be able to shelter in Jesus in the storms of life.