

Pastor Luke C. Werre
February 24, 2021
Sermon Text: Mark 14:1-2
Lenten Wednesday 2

GOD'S SAVING PURPOSE PREVAILS

Tonight we contemplate one of the little gems from the story of Christ's Passion that almost gets passed over unnoticed. Nevertheless, it is a snapshot emblematic of the whole story of Christ's Passion. It is a powerful reminder of this important truth: God's saving purpose prevails. I read to you from Mark 14: *Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."*

Imagine how the topic of Jesus likely dominated all their thoughts and conversation. It would have been like the way Covid seems to dominate all our conversations today. Jesus was perceived as a threat to the Jewish leaders. These little known verses of Mark 14 reveal several things to us.

First they show that when earthly rulers hold power they are seldom secure. Sometimes they are even afraid of the people they rule. *Not during the Feast, they said, or the people may riot.* Only a short time before the people of Jerusalem had been cheering for Jesus, welcoming Him into the city, laying coats and palm branches before Him as He rode on a donkey. Word had spread that Jesus had raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. These Jewish leaders didn't want to insult their hero and anger the crowds! They liked having power but they instinctively knew that their hold on power was tenuous. That's the nature of earthly power. It is fragile and can easily come apart. Therefore it takes never-ceasing maneuvering to try to hang on to it whereas God's saving purposes always prevail.

Secondly and more importantly, we know from these verses of Scripture that God knows what earthly rulers are thinking and what they're up to. Consider this for a minute. Mark the young evangelist wrote these words. How could Mark have known what was in the heads of the Jewish leaders or what was discussed within their official chambers? This is an example of the miracle of divine inspiration – that it was God the Holy Spirit who knew what was in the minds of the Jewish leaders and gave Mark the words to write down. It is reminiscent of the prophet Elisha when the King of Aram became exasperated on his military campaign that the armies of Israel seemed to anticipate his every move. One of his officers told him, *Elisha the prophet who is in Israel tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.*

It is truly comforting to know that God is not fooled by any human ploy. From the most sparsely populated rural precinct to the grandest capitol rotunda God knows all the thoughts, intentions, plans and machinations of every earthly authority. None of it goes on without God being fully aware of it.

Thirdly, and even more importantly, these verses demonstrate to us that God's purposes prevail over all the best laid plans of men. Their intent was NOT to arrest and kill Jesus DURING the celebration of the Passover. And yet that is exactly what happened! The Bible says the One enthroned in heaven laughs!

It was the Passover celebration and Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. He was to be slaughtered and it was His blood that would save lives eternally, not painted on the wooden doorframes of houses, but spilled on the wooden cross. In spite of the scheming and conniving of the Jewish leaders, God's saving purpose prevailed.

At first the Jewish leaders did not intend a riot. But then on Good Friday they changed their minds. They saw an opportunity. Maybe a riot would be politically useful. So the Bible says they actively stirred up the people. As Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate the crowd was nearly out of control. How self-satisfied those Jewish leaders

must have felt when they succeeded in getting Jesus condemned to death by means of crucifixion! To them, it was the ultimate best outcome. To Jesus' followers, it had to seem like the ultimate disaster!

Try to imagine the dismay, the distress for those who followed and loved Jesus. Why is God permitting this sham? How can God let this go on? Is there a God?

They didn't know then, but their horror would turn into inexpressible joy. God had everything under control even though it looked like the total opposite. The apparent success of the world's wickedness and cruelty would only result in the empty tomb and everlasting glory for all who believe in Jesus. For God's saving purpose prevailed.

Dear Christian friends, God's saving purpose still prevails even today. We live in frightening times. But God knows. Be comforted, God used the darkest events on earth to bring about the greatest salvation in Jesus. He will not give up on His saving purposes now. His purpose was that one day you too would learn about Jesus your Savior, that you also would come to believe in Him and that one day you also will be taken with Him into glory. His purpose for you will also prevail.

The One enthroned in heaven laughs. One day, you too will laugh with joy.