



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 27: 15-26

“Barabbas, or Christ Dies for Me”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for this morning is Matthew chapter 27 verses 15 through 26, Matthew chapter 27 verses 15 through 26. Subject for today concerns a man who appeared in our last study but only briefly, Barabbas. Verse 15, and again we are in the civil trial of Jesus,

“Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ?”

Now if I may stop at this point and if you have a pencil and you do not mind putting a note in your Bible, I’m going to suggest to you that verse 16 should read this way, “And they had then a notable prisoner called Jesus Barabbas, in the Greek manuscript at this point, many of the ancient manuscripts have the word Jesus, in other words, it is most likely that this man’s name was Jesus Barabbas. Now the reason for this is not only the fact that the ancient manuscripts have it, but it would have been a natural thing for a scribe to omit as he copied his manuscripts, he wouldn’t like to think of this

man having the same name as Jesus Christ. And then also the question that Pilate asks in verse 22, “What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?” makes much plainer sense. In other words, there was a Jesus called Barabbas and there was a Jesus called Christ. And so verse 16 should read Jesus Barabbas and then verse 17 “therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, whom will ye that I release unto you, Jesus Barabbas, again, the word Jesus is found here in the texts, or Jesus which is called Christ.

“For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, what shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, let him be crucified. And the governor said, why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”

So if you do not mind marking in your versions, but in the word Jesus before Barabbas in both verse 16 and verse 17. May God bless this reading of his word, let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of meeting in the name of Jesus who is called the Christ. And we thank Thee Lord that

the ages have reversed the verdict of the nation, and that the approval of God has rested upon the choice of those down through the years who have said, “I take Jesus as my personal Savior.” And Lord we thank Thee for the privilege of meeting in his name today, so many hundred years after this climactic event. And we thank Thee for the evidence in the Christian church and in our lives of the fact that Jesus Christ not only survived that death, but now lives in glorious resurrection and is alive. We thank Thee Lord as we think of these who are gathered here, in so many of whom there is the definite evidence of the fact that Jesus Christ is alive. And so we want to thank Thee and praise Thee for all that Thou art.

And enable us oh God as we face the decisions of life to face them in the light of the truth of Thy word. And oh God, by the help of the Holy Spirit, enable us to make right choices. We thank Thee for those that are here with problems and perplexities, with decisions to make which seem so difficult, and we pray oh God that the Holy Spirit whom Thou has given to guide us may guide them.

We thank Thee for the life that we have in this land, and pray again for our country and for our President and for his cabinet and for other important men, not only in Washington, but in Austin and in Dallas and in other places where there is authority. We pray oh God that Thou wilt in this land enable us to have the freedom to proclaim the word that will lead to the building up of the body of Christ. And as we meet today in this auditorium here, we pray oh God that as we open the word and look and consider some of the characters that appear before us in it we pray that the lessons drawn from their lives may sink down deep in our hearts. We commit this meeting to Thee, and we pray that Thy blessing may be upon each one of us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is, “Barabbas or Christ Died for Me.” Have you often wished to know more of persons who are fleetingly mentioned in God's word? If you are as I am, I would have loved to have had the opportunity at some time to have a

few words with Melchizedek. I would like to have a few words with a man like Joseph of Arimathea; he really interests me, or Simon the leper. I would like to know if the things that happened in his house had anything to do with his ultimate spiritual destiny. Or Barabbas, others have been interested in Barabbas too. As a matter of fact, novels have been written about this man, they are usually cheap and tawdry novels, but at least they bear witness to the fact that men are interested in this man who the force of circumstances put in such a prominent position as over against Jesus who was called the Christ.

A few years ago one of the worst remakes of any film that was ever made was made. It was the remake of the film “King of Kings” starring Jeff Hunter. And in the trade, I think that he came to be referred to as “I was a teenage Jesus.” He was so obviously ill suited for the part. But in that movie which mercifully I didn’t have to see, I understand that Barabbas was really the outstanding character of it, at least some of my friends who saw it told me that. Barabbas is not only an interesting character and a man with whom I think we all would of liked to have had a word, but Barabbas apparently is an important character as far as the New Testament is concerned, because approximately thirty-eight verses of the New Testament have to do directly with this man Barabbas. Now when you think about the fact that for Judas there are less verses devoted to him then to Barabbas, I think you can appreciate the fact that this man has an important place in God’s word.

As a matter of fact, few men tell the story of the cross more plainly then the experience of Barabbas. Peter does not tell the story of the cross more plainly, nor James not John nor even Mary of Bethany. In the experience that Barabbas had, we have a living testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ died for him. Let’s look this morning in the time that we have at first the story of the New Testament so far as Barabbas personally is concerned. Now in the Matthian account which we have read this morning to kind of set the stage for the things that I want to say to you about Barabbas, we have the account of

the civil trial of the Lord Jesus. He had been sent to Herod, and now Herod has sent Jesus back to Pilate, and Pilate is going to have to deal with this man who he really desperately wished to avoid dealing with.

The custom of releasing someone at the time of the feast is a custom for which we have no historical record. I'm just going to suggest a suggestion made by others that perhaps this custom of releasing at the time of the Passover some criminal in order to assuage the feelings of the nation Israel and calm them down at this time of nationalistic fervor, perhaps this custom arose out of the experience of the Passover itself. In other words, the freeing of the man was intended symbolically to be an acknowledgment that the nation itself had been freed from the land of Egypt at Passover time. At any rate the custom existed. And at this time, Pilate in an attempt expediently to deal with Jesus suggests that perhaps the people would like to have one of the criminals released to them thinking surely that they would request Jesus be released rather than that Jesus Barabbas be released.

Well you know the story of course and what happened. Well let's now single out some of the things that are said about this man Barabbas. You'll notice in the 16th verse of the account which we have read, the statement is made that Barabbas was the name of the man. Now I want to stop for just a moment and remind you of something that I said last time. Barabbas means, son of the father. We're not exactly sure whether this is any relationship to God or not. I'm inclined to think that Barabbas' father had been a rabbi and because the rabbis were called father that Barabbas' name, son of the father due to the Hebrew custom of naming sons after fathers, Barabbas therefore must have been the son of a rabbi. In other words, he was as we would say, the son of a manse. He was a man who grew up in the home of a minister or a preacher. He was therefore a member of a religious aristocracy with the traditions that went with the religion of Israel. He was a man who had been trained from the time of his youth in the traditions of the law. He no doubt had become a love of the glory of Israel. And because of the stories which had so

thrilled him as a young boy upon his father’s knee, he had become imbued with nationalistic fervor. And when he grew up and realized that the nation, the theocratic nation, the nation through which God had done so much was under the heel of a Roman conquering nation, there came down into the spirit of this young Jew, the spirit of nationalism in such fervor, that he not only became a fervent nationalist, but he must have become a member of the party of the zealots. He was a man who was then fervently anxious to deliver Israel from the Roman heel.

If his name was also Jesus Barabbas and I think that the texts substantiate that, we’ll see in a moment how this so even more effectively sets him off in contrast to the Lord Jesus. He is a notable prisoner, apparently then a young man who had so advanced in nationalism that he had become well known by the Jews of Jerusalem and the surrounding area. In the Book of Romans in the 16th chapter, this same adjective is used of some who were apostles of the churches, messengers of the churches. And the statement is made that they were “of note” among the Lord’s apostles. Apparently then the word in some contexts had the good force. And I’m not so sure that that is not the force in which we are to take it here. In other words, Barabbas was a notable in the minds of the people of that time. He was the kind of man who was regarded as a real strong patriot, a man who had a deep regard for Israel’s past and a deep love for the future according to the Old Testament. He was I think a kind of man that we thought General Degoutte was during the war, or that General Degoutte was in the minds of so many. A man who was interested in the future and also the past of the true France, a man who attracted to himself a great number of friends throughout that land because he was the kind of man who signified to him the lost glory of that nation. So Barabbas may well have been a man like that.

The statement is made also in Mark chapter 15 and verse 7 that he had been engaged in insurrection. That means that he had been involved in some disorders in the city, some rioting. Now Jerusalem was seething with discontent at the time, people were

interested in being free from the Roman yoke. I think it must have been something like Hungry was before the revolt a few years back. And so Jesus Barabbas, perhaps a member of the party of the Zealots was very much a leader in the attempt to regain the glory of Israel.

John states a third thing about him. John states that he was a robber. Now I don't know exactly how to explain that except on this basis. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and Rome was ruthless with insurrectionists and so those who were involved in the party of the Zealots, one of whom by the way became the disciple of the Lord Jesus, Simon by name. Those who were involved in the party of the Zealots were like hunted criminals and of course it is very common for those who are hunted to become hardened and this man apparently had been involved in robbery, no doubt to maintain himself physically and to escape from the Roman legions who were after him. Peter in Acts chapter 3 and verse 14 when he accuses the nation said that they had preferred a murderer to the prince of life. And so apparently, this man Barabbas had also been guilty of murder. And so death was his only future, he was a hunted criminal in the eyes of Rome, and yet no doubt had a great deal of followers in Israel.

And the climactic thing about this man is that he was preferred to Jesus. It's not hard to understand why, even from the positive standpoint I think I can understand why Israel preferred Barabbas, after all he was a daring, dashing captivating fierce soul patriot, and no doubt also from that part of the land. And over against him there was the silent, meek Galilean carpenter. And when you add to the fact that not only was this the silent, meek, Galilean carpenter, but also one who had stepped on their toes with the truth, then I think it's very easy to see why the Israelites of that day chose Barabbas rather than the Lord Jesus.

Well you know the story; we've talked about it in our study on Pilate. Even with the Roman's regard for justice and the wife's warnings, Pilate still proceeds, even admits that it's murder, because in the 24th and 25th verses, he engages in a little symbolic rite in

token of the fact that he is washing his own hands of the guilt of the death of Jesus, he comes out and publicly before the crowd takes water, washes his hands before the multitude and says, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it.” Mr. Krumacher, one of the great preachers of the nineteenth century said about this, “To think that Pilate thought that there was any kind of water that could have possibly cleansed his hands from the guilt of the murder of the Lord Jesus.” And then he went on to say, “There is indeed a stream that cleanses from guilt, but Pilate was ignorant of it.” We sing of that, “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood loose all their guilty stain. Pilate was ignorant of the one thing that could possibly cleanse him from the guilt of the death of Jesus Christ.

May I interrupt the story at this point to ask you a personal question? Are you acquainted with the fountain that cleanses from sin? Do you know the fountain of the blood of Jesus Christ, and do you have the salvation that comes when you put your trust in him?

Now let’s move on from the story of Barabbas, it’s kind of simple, to the theological illustration that is found in the life of this man. Sometimes I’ve thought, as you know in these studies, sometimes I’ve thought a great deal about these things, and wondered what is the significance of the fact that so many of these events that are found in the New Testament have double meanings? That is there is the outward historical meaning which is so obvious, and then there is the meaning from the standpoint of God. Last night as I was thinking about this, I thought the only expression that I could come up with to kind of get over the point of the fact that this experience was something that was not only something that was historically true of Barabbas but was designed by God to illustrate to us spiritual truth. The little phrase, the accidents of providence came to me and I think that is exactly what we have here, the accidents of providence. For here we have in Barabbas’ experience a plain and eloquent testimony to the fact, Christ died for our sin. Now of course in Barabbas’ case, it was quite different then the way in which

Jesus died for our sins. But nevertheless, I can not help but believe that these events are so under the hand of God and so arranged that as we look at the experience that Barabbas had in the physical we are led inevitably to reflect upon the fact that it illustrates the spiritual.

Let's think of Barabbas' condition first of all. Barabbas was a rebel, Barabbas was guilty, Barabbas was condemned. No better statement could be made of the experience of every one of us before God, the wages of sin is death, and all of us are guilty, all of us are rebels and all of us are condemned. And Barabbas, just as Barabbas, Barabbas was not awaiting trial, he was awaiting execution, and so every one of us is not awaiting a trial, we are awaiting a trial that leads inevitably to our death forever. In other words, the die has been cast as long as we have not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometime ago I read of the thoughts of prisoners before they die. I understand that men that are about to be hanged can hardly ever keep their hands away from their throats and that those who are to die in the gas chamber practice breathing for long periods of time. They know that when they sit in that chamber and the dreadful deadly hissing sound comes they're going to be breathing death. And as I understand it, some prisoners will sit in their cells and actually hold their breath until their eyes almost pop out of their head in anticipation of the fact that it's not long before they must breathe the deadly gas. And so you can imagine Barabbas in his cell, you can imagine him thinking about his hands and you can imagine him thinking about his feet, and you can imagine him thinking about what is going to happen to him when he's on that Roman gibbet. And I think you can imagine him as he imagines himself on that Roman cross and then the men taking that cross and plunging it down into the ground, and I think that Barabbas must have had many a nightmare in his cell.

John Oxenham has written a very vivid account of Barabbas experience, it's purely imaginary, and there are some things about it that are not apparently according to the texts of Scripture, but in general it's true. He pictures Barabbas as in his cell and one

morning looking out and seeing far off in the distance on a little hill, three crosses being erected. He watches in a kind of terrible interest, and he sees the one and the second and the other and knowing that he has some friends who were also taken with him and it's been even suggested that there were three of them who were imprisoned. He reflects upon the fact that these surely are the crosses upon which he and his friends must die. And then Oxenham pictures one morning early in the morning, Barabbas hears the sounds of men coming toward the cells, he hears the tramp of the feet, he hears the doors open and they come closer and closer and then finally he hears a key. And he hears a key grate in a lock and he hears a cell open and he hears the men say “Come on with us and the steps move off into the distance, and he goes over to the window and there is one of the crosses occupied. And then he hears the same thing again, he hears the key and he looks out again afterward and he sees the second occupied, and then he hears the steps for the third time and they come closer and closer and finally he hears the key in the lock of his own cell. And the door is flung open and he hears the words, “Barabbas you're free! You're free!” It's easy to see. See how Scofield said many years ago that Barabbas need not have been a theologian to form a good idea of the theory of the atonement. Barabbas was a man who went free because Jesus Christ had died. He heard the message of an evangelist which for him was his jailer.

Well not only is there a likeness in Barabbas' condition and the message of freedom that came to him, but Barabbas is released, and so you know we. We are rebels and we are condemned and we are guilty, and there comes a message to us, it is the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it's just as simple as you are free! You do not have to bear your judgment, you do not have to bear your condemnation, though you are a rebel, though you are guilty, Christ has died for you. And the message has come, go free! The prison doors have been flung open, this very metaphor is used in the New Testament, and every person who hears that message and believes that message may go free. Barabbas had a wonderful message of release which illustrates our redemption also.

Now we don't know Barabbas' later history, it has even been supposed that Barabbas as he came out made his way out towards the cross of the Lord Jesus and stood by side of that cross. As a matter of fact, Mr. Oxenham has him at the last kneel down before the cross and thank Jesus for dying for his sins. That is not even tradition, that is pure imagination and we have no way of knowing of course that it ever happened. That it's just possible that Barabbas may have followed the crowd out that day, and I think if his two friends were, if the other two men were friends of his, I think that's exactly what he did, and I think you could have found Barabbas right around that little hill, and thinking about the wonderful turn of circumstances which had led to his freedom. And as he reflected upon it he looked and he saw the criminals and he thought of the bonds he thought of the curse, he thought of the disgrace of dying in this way, and of course, not having spiritual discernment no doubt, he didn't understand what you and I might understand.

But you know if we had stood at that cross by the side of Barabbas and looked up and seen the Lord Jesus dying like that, and if we had known what we know now, we could have looked at the bonds and at the curse and at the disgrace and said, that's what he bore for me, those were my curses, that was my disgrace, and Barabbas even too in the physical sense could have said that. And so he illustrates us in that way too. Barabbas' cross you see has been taken by Christ, and Christ's cross was Barabbas' cross. And when Jesus uttered those words, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,” or “Father let them go, for they know not what they do.” Barabbas could have said, “This man died for me.” In fact, Barabbas is the only man of whom it can be said that Jesus died for him physically. Oh if he'd only known the real truth of this. In fact I think if Barabbas ever came to a faith in Jesus Christ, I don't believe there's anybody who could have sung that hymn with more gusto, “He breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoner free,” and Barabbas the son of the father.

Barabbas' righteousness of course is and illustration of the righteousness that we have in Jesus Christ. For you see, Barabbas was righteous because someone else was bearing his punishment. Barabbas had been freed because Jesus was not free. And Barabbas now in the eyes of Rome had been released, and now stood before them righteous, all because someone else had taken his place. And so we, because the Lord Jesus Christ has born our judgment, we stand righteous before God. And oh the wonderful exchange that took place at the cross of Calvary, when the Lord Jesus took our judgment, took our unrighteousness and because of what he has done has now by faith conferred upon us who believe in him a righteousness that avails before God. “He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Barabbas was righteous because Christ died for him.

And one last thing before we move on to the practical implications of this, Barabbas' lone responsibility you know was to believe the message. When the men came to say to Barabbas, “Barabbas you're free!” I don't think Barabbas replied like this do you? “Why that's absurd, I've been condemned by Rome, I'm going to have to die, it's ridiculous to tell me that I'm free.” And yet you know that's the way a lot of people respond to the message of the gospel, the message of the gospel comes and tells us that we are criminals and we are rebels before God and we are undone, and then it says that Christ has died for our sins, and somehow or another in our modern twentieth century, man replies, “This is absurd, why it's ridiculous to think that a man dying upon a cross nineteen hundred years ago can have anything to do whatsoever with my sins.” And so we debate and stay in the prison.

I don't think Barabbas said when that man came in and said, “Barabbas you're free” I don't need it, because if any man recognized his need, Barabbas recognized his need. Unfortunately today, we do not recognize our need. You know I think, if I had one thing to do, I almost, rather than preaching the gospel, would like to have the privilege of getting over one message to men, it's the preparation for the gospel. I think

this is so important that I almost would rather let someone else preach the gospel if I could be sure to get over one preparatory point and that is if I could somehow point out to men that they are condemned, that they need a savior, that they are sinners, that they really have a desperate need, and in fact, that they are so needy that I would be fearful to take a step or breathe a breath without accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior. Oh if I could have this ministry I think it would be the most wonderful ministry in the world, because today, the twentieth century man does not know that he stands condemned before God, he has been the object of so much propaganda that now when man is pointed up to the fact that he is a sinner, he has a thousand ways to get away from this plain fact that he has displeased God.

Barabbas didn't say, I don't need it, he knew that was the very thing that he did need. He didn't say either I must prove that I'm reformed, or I must get a little better before I'm worthy of this release from Rome. He knew that immediately he had to get out, he could never be useful to Rome if he had any such ideas which I doubt that he did have, but if he ever had any such ideas as that, he needed to be free first. And you know I've spoken to people about the gospel of Jesus Christ and they have acknowledged that they needed something. But then they have gone on to make this very very sad statement, "I'm going to wait awhile until I get to the place where really I'm worthy to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. Well the Bible says that we're never worthy, God says that we're always under condemnation. What we need is some freedom in order then to please God out of the salvation that he gives us. We can never be useful to God until we've been brought to life and that comes only through the new birth.

Now may I as we close this morning, suggest a few practical implications from this story? Sometimes it's good to be practical, and I know this is one of my faults; I'm not inclined to be as practical as I ought to be, but I would like to be practical this morning and draw just two or three lessons from the Barabbas story.

By the way a week ago I was in Tennessee preaching at Bryan College. And while I was there, someone told me a very humorous story and it illustrates the need of being practical. A college was having a play. The director was the professor of drama on the campus. And the play led up to a climactic scene in which the hero knelt upon his knees before the heroine and proposed. But unfortunately, the hero was kind of a phlegmatic character whose emotion was practically nil. And he was not able really to enter into the spirit of the thing. The climactic statement of this proposal was to be made when the rejected suitor raised a window in the place where he was proposing to his girl, took a rifle out and shot the young man as he was on his knees. And the young man was to say, and these were his lines, “Good heavens, I’m Shot!” But he just couldn’t say it. Right at the tense moment and the gun rang why he say, “Good heavens, I’m shot.” And the director was about to tear his hair out, he knew that this was going to be a complete flop when this man uttered these words. And just I think the day before the play was to be shown, he happened to be walking through his young son’s room and he noticed this air rifle, and he got a wicked idea. [Laughter] And so on the night of the play, as the rejected suitor threw up the window and fired his blank, the director from another place fired the air rifle. The young man jumped six feet in the air and said, “Good heavens, I am shot!” [Laughter]

May I bring you back to earth for just a moment here. You see, these stories of Barabbas and Pilate and Herod are very very practical and it is tremendously important that we get the point of them. And the first thing that I want you to notice about this story is the madness of the multitude’s choice. This is often true of crowds, not this man but my rebellion, my pride, my pleasure, my sin. We do not want Jesus the Son of the Father, but Jesus, son of the father. We’ll take Barabbas, we don’t want Christ. Oh the madness of the multitude’s choice, and unfortunately, this has been the history of mankind. We have chosen wrong.

And always, the crowd seems to choose wrong, they do not choose that which is right. I think one of the master touches of the story of Jesus and Barabbas is George Tinworth's terracotta. He has a terracotta of this story in which Barabbas is released, and you kind of get the picture of Barabbas, he's gone out the door, and there are some of his old cronies there and they're congratulating him and the crowd is saying, "Hail Barabbas" and everybody is happy and then on the other side is Jesus coming out of the door in the arms of grim Roman soldiers. And standing by there is a woman with a child in her arms and she looks off with sympathetic and loving eyes to our Lord Jesus. And that's the master touch you see, it often is the one here and there who realizes who is the real Son of the Father. The crowd didn't understand, the nation didn't understand, but here and there, there is one person who understands that Jesus is really the Son of the Father. My friend, if you are going to follow the multitudes, you almost always will be wrong. They're mad, they're mad; they are crazy, they're dominated by emotions that are not truly spiritual.

Secondly, this choice is typical of all the great choices of life, Jesus who is called the Christ, or Jesus Barabbas. Pilate's inquiry, "What then should I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" is still apropos, I sometimes sit in audiences and listen to men who are not really sure what to do with Jesus when they are preaching. They present a kind of Jesus that is really questionable whether we should pray to him or not. They present a Jesus and you wonder if he's really man only or if he's man and God. Or they present a Jesus who is a kind of example and not a redeemer. And I kind of get the feeling that Pilate's question is still being asked from the pulpit today. What then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ? It's the simplest answer in the world for anyone to answer. What does a blind man do when a friend comes up and offers an arm for guidance? He takes the arm. What does a man who's desperately sick do when the doctor prescribes and brings him medicine? He takes the medicine. What does a drowning man do when somebody throws him a rope? He takes the rope. What then shall I do with Jesus who is

called the Christ? Receive him as your Savior. Your condition is desperate, you're drowning, you're sick at the point of death, you're blind and you can not see. All of life's choices ultimately come Jesus Barabbas, Jesus the Christ.

And thirdly and finally, that decision is to be made now. It's not enough to be near Christ; Barabbas may have had a cell right by Jesus'. He knew about him. Oh the pathos of what Barabbas missed. The answer to his political quest was right before his eyes. Men today are very interested in politics; they want the answer to problems, national problems. There is something more important than that and ultimately all national problems are solved in the relationship to Jesus of Nazareth. Here was a man, a rioter, an insurrectionist, a nationalist looking for the glory of Israel and the glory of Israel was right by his side in Jesus of Nazareth but he missed him. And so there stand the two men, they stand before you today, Barabbas and Christ, Jesus Barabbas he'll never cleanse you he'll never remake you, he'll never take over your life and give you the guidance and peace and joy that the other Jesus, the Son of the Father will. One is the choice of the crowd however; the other is the choice of public opinion. The other's the choice of society, but this is the choice of divine wisdom, Jesus, the Son of God.

I once heard that an old man made the statement, “The sense of an irretrievable error in life fastening upon the mind is a foretaste of Hell.” Have you ever made a decision for which you are sorry that can not ever be rectified? I think I know what he means, I've made such decisions. I've made some decisions I would like to reverse and as I think about it, it is a kind of Hell isn't it? Oh how terrible it would be to make that decision to reject Jesus Christ, Hell is terrible, and no doubt far more than that. But that would be Hell.

Charles Lamb was a great man, he and some friends of his were gathered together one night, they were discussing what they would do if they had an opportunity to talk with certain historical characters. One of them said, “what would you if Chaucer were here?” One of the others said, “What would you do if Sir Thomas Brown were here?”

And finally the name above every name came up in conversation. Charles Lamb spoke up, he said, “you know men, if Shakespeare came into this room, we’d all stand up, but if Jesus came into this room we would all kneel.” That’s it, if Shakespeare came in, we would stand up, but if Jesus came in we’d kneel down before him and worship him, or would we? Would you? Would you? Would you really down in your heart? And why don’t you as we close in prayer this morning put your trust in Christ. Might be a good idea for Christians too, to make that decision again in the presence of God. Christ, Jesus the Son of the Father rather than Jesus Barabbas. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Son of the Father, who has loved us and given himself for us with a love that is everlasting and that cannot be broken, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the assurance of acceptance before God, the love of God the Father who gave the Son and who gives the Spirit be and abide with all who know him in sincerity who said I want Jesus who is called the Christ. May oh God, if there should be anyone in this audience who has not yet believed in Christ, oh at this moment, may they be choosing Jesus who is the Christ. Now as we part, may all of Thy blessings go with us. And use us throughout this week for Thy glory, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.