



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 12, 2022

The Lord be with you.

I want to take the next few moments with you to read between the lines of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to read between the line to see there what I would call the Gospel according to Barabbas.

Now, Barabbas comes up in all four of the New Testament Gospels, which tells us that Barabbas is a significant figure in the Gospel story. Why Jesus' birth is mentioned in only two Gospels and off all the miracles that Jesus performed only one, the feeding of the 5000 is mentioned in all four Gospels. So the fact that Barabbas is mentioned in all four Gospels tells us that there was something in Barabbas' story that we dare not miss.

Barabbas is the man declared guilty, but he goes free, and Jesus is the man declared innocent who will be crucified in the place of Barabbas. The Gospels together devote 32 verses to Barabbas, so that means that there's something important here for our understanding of the meaning of Good Friday, the meaning of the cross of Jesus.

Now, here's what we know about Barabbas. First, John's Gospel tells us that Barabbas is a bandit, that's the word that Jesus used in His Parable of The Good Samaritan about a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who was ambushed by bandits, that's the word, and he's beaten. Stripped naked. Left for dead. Barabbas is a bandit. That in that day, he's the worst kind of criminal.

Now, the Gospels of Luke and Mark tell us that the Barabbas was part of an insurrection in Jerusalem in which people were murdered. Barabbas is on trial before Pilate for multiple counts of murder. The Gospel of Matthew adds to this telling us that Barabbas is quote, he is a notorious prisoner, that means that people from Galilee to Judea breathe a sigh of relief when Barabbas is locked up. That's what we know about Barabbas. He's not a good guy. He is public enemy, number one.

Now it's his name, Barabbas that, well, it leaves us scratching our heads as his name. Well, his name is a puzzle, his name is what is called a patronem, that is... Barabbas gets his name from his father. Now, keep in mind that in the world of that day, that ancestry was important, who your father was, was important, and in any culture where ancestry is important, that they have a way of saying son of. For instance, for the Scottish McGregor means son, Gregor, for the English Johnson



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means son of John, for the Russians Petrov means son of Peter. Now, in the Aramaic that was spoken in Jesus' day, the prefix bar, that is bar meant son of. So, Jesus calls Peter Simon Bar Jonah, that is Simon, son of Jonah. When a Jewish boy entered manhood, he was called Bar Mitzvah, that his son of the law. Okay, with that in mind, let's take this name Barabbas, Bar-abbas, it means literally, son of a father. Kind of strange isn't it? Son of a father because well, all of us are a son or daughter of a father. Barabbas, Barabbas, you might as well call him everyone.

And here's what I think we're getting to at the point of the story, as alongside Barabbas, son of a father, stands Jesus, the son of the God. Barabbas son of a father, every man has been found guilty. Jesus, the Son of God, has been found innocent. Herod examine Jesus and found him innocent. Pilate examined Jesus and declared, I find no fault in this man. It is no accident that Barabbas, son of a father is condemned to die. But he goes free. While, Jesus, the Son of God dies in the place of Barabbas. He dies in the place of everyone. In this moment, Barabbas becomes a flesh and blood symbol for you and for me, Barabbas becomes the first person who can say, Jesus died in my place. Jesus took for me the judgment that I deserve, the guilty one goes free, and the holy Son of God dies. Writing 700 years before this event, the prophet Isaiah foretells, the meaning of the cross, the meaning of Good Friday, that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep are gone astray, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

There's an old hymn that sums up, I think the meaning of Jesus life and death for you and me. It says, upon a life, we have not lived, upon a death, we did not die. Another's life, another's death. We stake our lives. We stake our eternities.

That I think is the Gospel according to Barabbas.

Something to think about this Holy Week. Something to tell others.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.