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**Rejected!**  
Mark 15:1-20

Rejection! Shakiel O'Neil in your face slam rejection, force feeding a basketball to his opponent. Those who follow basketball are amazed at his height and strength and ability to over power and dominate others. Any attempts to shoot over him, look feeble in the face of Shak's rejection. Rejection! Have you ever been slammed in the face by someone? Have you ever been force fed some difficult words? Maybe it was a manager at work that gave you walking papers. Maybe it was a girlfriend that rejected you. Maybe it was a spouse or family member. REJECTION. Can you feel the pain, the defeat, the humiliation, the anger. Rejection: I want nothing to do with you. Rejection! I don't want you anymore. You can't be a part of our group. I don't ever want to see you again. Your not what we were looking for. I expected something better. Now get out! Have you ever felt rejection?

Have you ever felt rejection because you have a relationship with the living Christ? Have you ever been on the receiving end of insults, being ignored, little jokes, excluded. Have you ever had your biblical principles and values. What you hold to be true and right and good..get slam dunked back in your face? Have you ever been ostracized by family for standing up for truth? Have you ever been dumped by a friend because they didn't love the same things you loved? Have you ever felt rejection for Christ? If you haven't then something's wrong. David Niringiye who suffered great persecution under the Idi Amin Regime in Uganda said, "If we are experiencing no opposition, we are probably going the same direction as the culture." Have you ever been the receiving end of opposition because of your faith in Christ?

II Timothy 3:2 "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Philippians 1:9 "He has granted to you not only to believe. but to suffer for His name."

I have been opposed, I have ridiculed for standing up for what I believe. In school and college I remember getting verbally slammed by teachers who didn't hold the same beliefs as I did. They didn't accept my world view, so I received downgraded papers and belittling remarks. I remember when I was in high school as a sophomore, 5'6" and just as skinny getting slammed into the lockers by a one time friend that had decided to reject God. And to him I represented God so all 6'3" enjoyed taunting me and shoving me around, egging my car. I would ask him Why? Why? He would just sneer and turn away. It wasn't until he came back to Christ that he said it wasn't anything I had done, it was his subtle rejection of God during those late teen years. People thought I was crazy to leave an excellent career in engineering to go to Seminary School. I've heard the Preacher boy comments from the neighbors because of my fathers occupation. There are those in this community do not like what we as a church are doing. They don't like what we stand for. We have definitely been opposed. But persecuted? Bodily harm? I think we in America no very little about suffering for His name. But, if you have never been opposed...there is something wrong. If you have never felt rejection, Chances are that you are getting subtly sucked into the worlds way of thinking. Who do you fear the most? Is it truly God alone?

My purpose this morning is both to warn and to encourage. There are some of us who are in danger of being sucked into the rejection patterns of the world. They are sitting right hear. They may not even realize it. They in danger of flowing with this cultures rejection of Jesus, and they don't even know it. This is a wake up call. I want to offer three rejection patterns of the world that we must look at then take a look at our life. Am I in danger here. Finally, I want to end with some encouragement. There is encouragement for those who are suffering for Christ. Notice I said for Christ. Not suffering because you are lazy, not because you are ignorant. Not suffering because you are foolish and making poor choices. Not suffering because you have an obnoxious loud mouth personality that happens to know Christ. I'm talking about suffering for His name.

Have you ever felt rejection? Our Lord certainly has. Turn with me in your Bibles to Mark. We are now in chapter 15. Two more to go.

Hasn't this gospel been fun? Mark wrote this gospel to the Christians in Rome. Times in Rome were not easy. They were tough. They really persecuted Christians then. The old Soviet Union was a walk in the park compared with Nero and his Christian eating lions. Mark vividly portrays Jesus as the suffering servant willing to lay down his life for us. Mark gives us a pattern for discipleship and compels us to follow Jesus example of suffering even unto death. Have you ever been rejected? (READ 15:1-20)

It was early good Friday morning. From the present perspective, there was very little good about it. Most of us like getting more than we deserve, but for all the good that Jesus did, he received the insults, the whips, the spit in the face, the sneers...the cross. Have you ever been rejected? Ever felt unjustly treated for Christ's name? Early in the morning Jesus comes again before a puppet Sanhedrin. Not to determine guilt, they had decided that before the arrest. "They consulted" verse 1 on how to best act on their decision. They had no power to carry out their condemnation of death but the Romans did. They must emphasize the political accusations and downplay the religious ones. After formulating a case setting Jesus up as a dangerous revolutionary intent on undermining the authority of Rome, they deliver verse 1 Jesus to Pilate. It is not without meaning that the word delivered, *paradokon* in the same word used for Judas's betrayal. They betrayed their Messiah, They gave him over, delivered him to the Roman official named Pontius Pilate. Jesus was REJECTED

Pilate was the Prefect of procurator. He was the Imperial Magistrate. The judge that kept things under a dull roar. He was a heavy handed administrator that ruled from AD 26-36. He had made some political mistakes that enraged the Jews. When he sent Roman soldiers into Jerusalem with flags bearing the image of Caesar it almost touched off a riot. He was despised for sending soldiers into the temple to rob the temple Corban treasury to pay for the construction of an aqueduct. His track record with the people was tension filled at best. Normally he resided in the coastal Mediterranean town of Caesarea but during the feasts and special occasions, he would come to Jerusalem to keep order. Tension between the Jews and the Romans were at an all time high. The festive atmosphere was ripe for a rebellion.

Pilate questions Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Did Pilate believe that? No. He'd been told that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. Treason. Punishable by death. Jesus answers. You sayeth. You have spoken. It is as you (that you is emphatic) as YOU say. The designation was left up to Pilate. Yet Pilate's concept of Kingship was very different than Jesus. Was Jesus on trial here or was it Pilate? How do you call Jesus? Is he King..in your heart? He is not your king if you do not allow Him to call the shots in your kingdom. he is not your king if your allegiance is to a different kingdom. How do we know if our allegiance is fully in His kingdom? Lets look at the first rejection pattern of the world. It can be subtle Oh so subtle.

Rejection pattern #1 I want to be in control. I want to have the power. I want to call the shots. I want to choose what my life will be like. I don't like what you are telling me to do Jesus! Where do we see this rejection of Jesus. It's not so subtle in the chief priests. Jesus is a threat to their power. Pilate could see right through their false accusations of Jesus being a dangerous revolutionary. Look at verse 10. Pilate could see to their envy. Jesus was a threat to their power. He could sway and hold the attention of the crowds. Jesus spoke against their white washed fake religiosity. The priests feared the people. They desperately needed to please the people, because that is where they received their power. We know their power came from people and not from God because they don't care about the truth but defer to the people "look to the reactions of men. They rejected Jesus because they wanted to be in control, and Jesus was a threat to that. While Pilate could easily see the hypocrisy in the Chief Priests, He had trouble with the same problem in his own life. The areas we struggle with most we find easier to see..in someone else.

Pilate was a pragmatist. Whatever works was right. He had little concern about truth or right. Whatever would keep him in power whether he had to snuff out the innocent...it didn't matter. Whatever seems to work in the present is right. Pilate tries everything to finesse the crowds and the religious leaders. Verse 4. Jesus aren't you going to defend yourself? Pilate is amazed at Jesus response. The crowds have been awed by Jesus. Pilate is amazed at Jesus, but awe alone is not an adequate response. From Luke's gospel we know that he was warned by

his wife in a dream to not have anything to do with Jesus. Pilate finds out Jesus is from Galilee, so he sends Jesus over to Herod who dealt with folks from that area. Herod couldn't find any fault with Jesus, so he sent him back.

Then Pilate remembers every year during feast time he tries to appear benevolent and pacify the crowds by releasing one political prisoner. Pilate appeals to the crowds. Surely this Jesus they had been singing praises for last week, they will want released. Pilate loves this plan. He gets Jesus off his hands and at the same time does a political slam dunk on the religious leaders undermining their authority, all the while appearing to the people to be the most generous, kind ruler in the land. Pilate himself was so convinced of Jesus innocence he takes Jesus out to the crowds and begins acting as His defense attorney. Verse 9 Would you like me to release your king? But he wasn't counting on the crowd being stacked by the priest. They had infiltrated the crowd. Barabus...ask for Barabus. Pilate, the chief magistrate then in verses 12 asks the crowd for advice on sentencing. What do you want me to do with this King of the Jews? Pilate was ready to release two political prisoners this year. If the crowd had yelled "Release Jesus too." Pilate would have jumped at the chance...But they didn't. The crowd yelled crucify him! Pilate, What evil has he done? This man is innocent.

Like Pilate, you too could be amazed with Jesus, His teaching, his response, his control and discipline. You could be convinced he was a perfect and innocent good man...yet still be swayed by the crowds. You too could be sucked into the world's pattern of rejection #1 I want to be in control. Pilate thought he was in control and had the power over Jesus life. The chief priest thought they were in control because they got the crowds on their side. Jesus was rejected because he threatened their power. At school you don't get in with the popular crowd by being a committed Christian. At work sometimes the committed Christians get passed over. They don't get invited to the parties, because they love God more then the world. Don't be tempted to reject Jesus because you want to call the shots in your life and Jesus is getting in your way. Don't do it.

Rejection pattern #2. I want it my way! Frank Sinatra holds as the highest virtue that whatever he did, at least he did it his way. Jesus did not fit the expectation of a Messiah for the chief priests or the crowds.

They were looking for a conquering hero. Some military leader who would kick Rome out of town. The priests were pretty sure the Messiah would come from one of them. They just didn't understand. Even Pilate's concept of kingship was totally different than Jesus. Jesus did not fit their expectations of their system. The crowd was disappointed by Jesus. They expected him to act a certain way, as a miraculous warrior and deliverer. Yet Jesus refused to fight. He refused to defend himself. Their last week hero became a goat. Get rid of him. He's a fake a charlatan. The crowd wanted a king that did things their way. That's not what we were looking for. They wanted a Barabus. It is not insignificant that his name Bar. (son of) Abbus (the father). He was an ugly form of the Messiah they craved for. A man of action who had murdered in his desire to overthrow the government. Not all talk, he did something. The crowd chose lawlessness over righteousness. Violence instead of love. War instead of peace. They didn't realize that Jesus would be rejected and be put to death.

Have you ever been disappointed with God? Expecting Him to act a certain way and He didn't? It's tempting to reject God when we think he moved in a way we didn't like, in a way we were not expecting. When a brother gets killed in an automobile accident. When a young child is drowned in a pool. When a child you've hope for never comes. When you are passed by for that much needed promotion. Rejection. It's very tempting to fit God into our expectation and to treat Him like a rabbits foot that will come running when we rub Him the right way. Watch out for rejection pattern #2 "I want it done my way."

#3 Rejection pattern of the world. Don't expose my faults. I think this is one of the reasons that the Chief priests hated Jesus. Because he exposed them for who they were. In his debates he forced them to look at their own hypocrisy. They did things all for show and not for a heart of love to God. He trashed the temple for turning God's house of worship into a money making scheming rip-off. Jesus was a mirror to their own souls and they hated what they saw. They wanted so desperately to destroy that mirror.

Bishop William Temple "The world does not hate angels for being angelic; but it does hate men for being Christians. It grudges their new character. It is tormented by their peace. It is infuriated by their joy."

When you came to Christ, did any of you feel some rejection by your friends? They tell you they're sick of your pious preaching. They are tired of you thinking you're better than them. You begin to have less and less in common. They reject you because you are a mirror that is placed before them. They either change or always are a bit uncomfortable. People don't like their faults exposed.

They will reject Jesus because he reveals our sinfulness...but the great thing is he did something about cleaning us up. He gave us the chance for a new life. A purpose filled life with meaning. Not froth. Not wasted. Meaning! Not scrambling for power and control. Not blown around by the winds of the crowds. We can stand alone for truth. We can endure rejection for His name. (What will we defend to support our own name?) Because Jesus did. That same power that Jesus was drawing on to endure the spitting, hitting, torture. We can endure. In the face of rejection we can endure. Jesus endured the last enemy..even death. There is nothing left that Satan can do to Him, he no longer has any power over Him, or us because we who are in Christ are connected, identified with Him. The true test of endurance, the proving quality of commitment comes not on the days when everything goes smoothly. When all your expectations are met. A true test is when you are misunderstood, ill-treated, wrongly accused, rejected. Made fun of. Passed over. That same strength that Jesus had is with us. Draw on that power. Don't be tempted to run to the world's rejection patterns. Don't be sucked into wanting it your way. Being in control. Fearing exposure. Endure.

In spite of the worst that humans could do. God brought about his best. Is that not an encouragement for us who need to endure. "for God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Folks, God is sovereign. He is in control despite the appearance in the present. That same strength available to Jesus is ready for us to draw on. Jesus was silent before his accusers not because he wasn't able to defend himself. He needed no defense. Even the judge was convinced of His innocence. Jesus was silent because He was totally convinced in God's sovereign plan. He knew even though men meant it for evil, God his father would turn it to good. Have you been rejected for the name of

Christ? Be encouraged...you are probably doing something right. Think long term. Ultimately there will no rejection for those who are in Christ. Revelation revealed demands response.

Revelation rejected brings darkness. Why does a person reject the knowledge of God, reject Christ? All unbelief involves a refusal. It's not "I can't accept Christ," but "I won't accept Christ."Who are you going to fear? The people? or God alone?