



When You Wonder Why Life's Unfair

Matthew 27:11-26

What did Jesus do for us?

1. He intentionally accepted our _____ — 27:11-19

Isaiah 53:6-7

2. He took our _____ for us — 27:20-23

Isaiah 53:4-5

3. He makes us _____ before God — 27:24-26

When you wonder why life's unfair...
remember what Jesus did for you.

Jesus Barabbas

All four Gospels describe Pilate's offer to the crowd during the trial of Jesus to free one prisoner—a customary favor bestowed by the Roman governor at the time of the Passover feast. The choice given was Jesus or Barabbas, a man who had been arrested for insurrection and murder and was a notorious prisoner. Urged on by their leaders, the people clamored for Barabbas to be freed and for Jesus to be executed.

Barabbas may have been a leader of the Jewish militants who wanted to throw off the Roman yoke by force. As an insurrectionist, Barabbas would have been sentenced to death by crucifixion as a warning to others. Some ancient manuscripts give Barabbas's first name as Jesus, a not uncommon name of the time. This would have made Pilate's offer even more poignant: "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ?" (Matthew 27:17).

No doubt, the cross upon which Jesus hung was the very cross intended for Barabbas.



Matthew means for us to identify both with Jesus and Barabbas. Jesus in that by identifying with him, through being united with him by faith, his death is our death. His condemning of sin is our condemning of sin. And Barabbas in that we are sinners, criminals who have broken God's law, guilty as charged, deserving death for our rebellion against our creator and the ruler of the universe. And Jesus, through the grace of giving himself for us at the cross, takes our place and we are released.

As we more greatly understand the depths of our sin, we see with Matthew, "I am Barabbas." I am the one so clearly guilty and deserving of condemnation but set free because of the willing substitution of the Son of God in my place. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," Jesus says in Mark 2:17. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

— David Matthis, "Barabbas and Me," <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/barabbas-and-me>. April 5, 2012.

— Reader's Digest, Who's Who in the Bible. 1994.