The Day the Revolution Began
Part I
Jesus had two passions:

1. The Kingdom of God – a demand of a fair share of a world which belongs to and is ruled by God.

2. The suffering – too often those who promote non-violent justice die from violent injustice.
We are going to continue our look at the story through the lens of Mark’s gospel.

It would have been written about 25 years after the events (?)..

It’s not “history” as you and I would define the term.

Instead it’s history remembered and history interpreted.

Mark’s gospel was used by Matthew and Luke (Markan Priority).
The Day the Revolution Began

Sadly, Protestant liturgy has collapsed this week into a dyad of Palm Sunday and Easter while skipping all of the “mess” in between.
Dramatis Personae
Jesus of Nazareth

Born c. 4BC in Bethlehem of Judea.

Very little is known about his childhood.

The gospels record only one episode early in his adolescence.

He breaks on the scene c. 26AD with his baptism in the Jordan River by his cousin John the Baptist.

His ministry lasts about three years and culminates on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem (c. 30AD).
Pharisees

Name Pharisee is derived from the Hebrew word הָרֶשׁ (parah) which means to separate.

Religiously they were the direct descendants of those who refused to compromise their faith during the exile and later.

For the most part, they belonged to the middle class of Judaism.

They formed the orthodox core of Jewish society.
Pharisees

They believed that God revealed himself through the Law.

They held that the Torah (law), the Prophets and the Writings were normative and represented God’s will for His people.

They believed that God was historically involved with His people but that individuals had the power to choose right and wrong.

Each individual had an eternal soul.

The virtuous would eventually be resurrected while the wicked were doomed to eternal punishment (Lk. 16:19-31).
Pharisees

The Pharisees believed in a spirit world including angels and demons.

They were dedicated to a strict observance of the law down to the minutiae. At times it was literally ridiculous.

Because they often “talked the talk” but did not “walk the walk,” Jesus referred to them as hypocrites.
Sadducees

Numerically, they were much a much smaller group than the Pharisees.

They occupied the upper echelons of the priesthood.

In Jesus’ day they were the dominate aristocracy of Judaism.

They only held the Torah as normative.

They did not believe in a spirit world – no angels or demons.
Sadducees

Because they did not believe in spirits or souls, there could be no resurrection.

They were much more materialistic than the Pharisees.

This allowed them to cooperate more fully with the occupying powers.

They also were able to yield more readily to cultural pressures and to work in the interest of political expediency.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD, this segment of Jewish society disappeared all together.
We know very little about Pontius Pilate other than he must have been of the equestrian order (knight).

We believe he was born in Italy.

He was appointed to be prefect of Judea in 26AD by emperor Tiberius.

He was said to be a very arbitrary and reckless administrator.

He was removed from office in 36AD after an insurrection in Samaria.

In 1961 archaeologists found an inscription confirming Pilate’s holding the office of prefect.
Maundy Thursday

Meanwhile, back in the Garden
Mark 14:43-46 - Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

John 18:3 So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.
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So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. The Greek word used by John (spei/ra) denotes an entire cohort (about 500-600 men).
Mark 14:47 - Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Luke 22:49-51 - When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

John 18:10-11 - Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

One must wonder if Jesus' disciples were always armed, or if for some reason Peter carried a sword just this one night.
Mark portrays Jesus as a vulnerable human being whereas John has Jesus being perfectly in charge.

**Mark 14:36** - "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

**John 12:27** - "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

**John 18:11** - Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"
Mark portrays Jesus as a vulnerable human being whereas John has Jesus being perfectly in charge.

**Mark 14:50** Then everyone deserted him and fled.

**John 18:6** - Then Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

**John 18:8** - "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."
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This is a remarkable part of the story. All 600 soldiers collapse on the ground? What could one man possibly do that would cause this? Remember the sacred name of God is I AM (Ex. 3:14).

The soldiers fall down at the very mention of the sacred and then apparently get back up again and arrest him – truly remarkable!
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Historically this is an impossible scene. 600 armed men acknowledge the presence of the sacred in Jesus and then arrest him anyway.

Theologically it’s very effective. The empire that kills Jesus acknowledges his lordship and then tries to do away with the Lord!
Let’s finish with a look at the disciples:

Judas hangs himself - **Matthew 27:5** - So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Peter denies Jesus – **John 18:17** - "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."

The disciples then disappear until Easter.
Once Jesus is arrested, he is taken to what many scholars refer to as the “Jewish Phase” of his interrogation and condemnation.

According to Mark, the first stop is the house of the high priest (Caiaphas).

**Mark 14:53** They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.
Most likely, Mark and the other gospel writers have no first-hand knowledge of what happened during the interrogation by the Jewish leaders. Remember that all of the disciples fled while Jesus was being arrested.

**Mark 14:50** Then everyone deserted him and fled.

We are not sure exactly what Mark means by the Sanhedrin (v. 54). This would have been nearly 70 members plus elders and teachers of the law.

Regardless, the temple authorities did not represent the rank and file. They were those who were in league with the Romans – equally oppressors of the Jewish people.

Still, the trial and execution of Jesus is a story of terror for the Jewish people in subsequent centuries.
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Finally, there is much debate over whether the proceedings were legal at all.

1 – Capital trials were to be conducted during daylight hours.

2 – Trials must be held in one of three locations – neither of which was the courtyard of the High Priest’s house.

3 – Capital trials could not be held on the eve of a festival.
Most likely, Mark and the other gospel writers have no first-hand knowledge of what happened during the interrogation by the Jewish leaders. Remember that all of the disciples fled while Jesus was being arrested.

Regardless of the legality of the proceedings something took place that night.

Clearly the Sanhedrin had the capacity to tried and convict persons of a variety of crimes perhaps including capital crimes (e.g. stoning of Stephen).

However, the power of the sword was jealously guarded by Rome. Therefore, in addition to the charge of blasphemy, the “court” needed to develop some form of political charge to convince Pilate to invoke capital punishment.
Mark’s story of the trial of Jesus before the temple authorities comes in three stages:

1) Witnesses appear and give false and contradictory testimony.

**Mark 14:55-59** - The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

**Deuteronomy 19:15** One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

**Deuteronomy 17:6** On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
Mark’s story of the trial of Jesus before the temple authorities comes in three stages:

2) Jesus response.

Mark 14:60-62 - Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
Mark’s story of the trial of Jesus before the temple authorities comes in three stages:

3) The verdict and abuse.

**Mark 14:63-65** - The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him.