

**The Eternal Judge on Trial (John 18:12-40)**  
**That You May Believe: The Gospel of John**  
**Southern Hills Baptist Church**  
**November 26, 2017**

**WELCOME**

Welcome! I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and you were able to take time to really reflect on the many reasons we all have to be thankful. For those who have found grace, redemption, and reconciliation in Christ, thankfulness ought to be a way of life, right? Nevertheless, it is wonderful to have a day set aside to celebrate this foundational Christian posture.

**INTRODUCTION – Considering Death While Celebrating Birth**

This morning we are picking back up our study of John's Gospel. Interestingly, as we approach Christmas we will be studying the passion of Jesus, Jesus' crucifixion, His death, burial, and resurrection. It may seem odd to be in a study of Jesus' death as we prepare to celebrate the birth, the incarnation, the coming of Jesus, however, in many ways it is a very appropriate study.

**Give His Life as a Ransom**

Listen to the words of Jesus as He describes why He was born into our world...

**Mark 10:45**

[45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Why is Christmas a thing? Why did Creator God step foot into His own creation becoming like His creation? To give His life as a ransom for many. **Jesus was born to die.** He was born to purchase salvation, which would happen through His sacrificial, substitutionary death.

**Studying the Very Purpose of Christmas**

So, while it may feel odd to consider and study the death of Christ during the celebration of His birth, it is fitting. **We are studying the very purpose of Jesus' birth when we consider His death.**

**Our Narrative**

Where our study leads us today is through the trials of Jesus. We will see Jesus stand before both Jewish and Roman authorities, being called to give an account after having been arrested on false charges.

**OPENING THOUGHT: Irony of Ironies**

These accounts we are going to consider together are chalk full of irony. Irony is defined as,

*"A state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often shocking or amusing as a result."*

Before we begin to consider our passages I want to make sure we see and understand the incredible irony that lies within them. So with that in mind, let me remind you of who is being put on trial very briefly...

**Jesus is the Almighty Creator of the World.**

### John 1:1-3

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

### Hebrews 1:1-3

[1] Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. [3] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Jesus is the Creator. All things that exist, exist because Jesus willed them into being. They continue to exist because Jesus uphold them by the sheer power of His word. **There is none more powerful than Jesus. He speaks and matter comes into being from nothing. He is the great origin story of time, space, and matter. He owns all things as Maker.**

**Jesus is the Eternal Judge.**

### John 5:22

[22] For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

### Revelation 19:11-16

[11] Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. [12] His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. [13] He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. [14] And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

As the Righteous One who is over all of Creation, it will be **Jesus' job to judge His Creation**. As the sinless One, **only He is qualified for such a job**. As the Sovereign One, **only His verdict is eternal and final**.

### The Irony

So this is Jesus, the Creator, the Judge, and yet, yet, what are we going to see in our passage this morning?

- **Creator being tried and examined by creation.** Try to fathom this. It makes me shake. **Creation will take a posture of superiority over their very Maker. In these accounts we will see men who's hearts beat, who's lungs fill with breath, who's brain's function, all because Jesus upholds the universe.** And these men who live in **COMPLETE** dependence upon Jesus for the next beat of their heart and the next breath of their lungs will have the audacity to stand over Jesus. Unreal.
- **The Great and Righteous Judge of all people being, Himself, judged and put on trial by fallen and sinful creatures.** The Great and True Judge, being judged! Men who can pass no judgment apart from what God allows will judge the One who will hand down eternal judgment. This makes me think of Jesus' words in Matthew 10...

## **Matthew 10:28**

[28] And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

The irony here is thick. Creation trying their Creator. Fallen humanity judging the Great Judge. This is all I could think of as I studied these verses and I wanted to make sure you carried these thoughts with you as well before we took to our text. Feel the weight of the audacity and insanity what is happening here.

## **Leading to Worship**

As you feel that weight, may it lead us to worship. As Creator, as Judge, **Jesus didn't have to endure this. He doesn't owe us anything. With a word He could have caused all of His "captors" to fall over dead** in a moment. Yet, He didn't. He endured the shame that God might be glorified in the purchasing of a people unto salvation. Rejoice, that our Creator might endure such shame to save you from the wrath of God that your sin had justly earned you.

## **LET'S PRAY**

So with this in mind, let's pause and go to God in prayer as we prepare to turn our attention to our text in John 18.

Dear Heavenly Father,

The shocking irony of Jesus' trials go deeper than we will ever understand. His glory is infinite, yet He endured great shame for the cause of your name and our joy. Would you glorify Jesus this morning through the adoring hearts of His people? Would you cause our hearts to brim with gratitude over His sacrificial work? Would you cause us to mourn over our sin that brought this about? Would you use the heaviness of this situation to fuel our fight against sin? Do all these things for your glory and our joy.

We pray these things in Jesus' name,  
Amen

We have 2 primary sections in our text this morning. We have Jesus standing before the Jewish religious leader, the High Priest, Annas, and then Jesus standing before the Roman Governor, Pilate. Let's open by reading our first section of verses...

## **HEAR THE WORD OF GOD**

### **John 18:12-14**

[12] So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. [13] First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. [14] It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

### **John 18:19-24**

[19] The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. [20] Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. [21] Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." [22] When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" [23] Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness

about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" [24] Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

### **Isaiah 40:8**

[8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

## **JESUS BEFORE THE JEWISH HIGH PRIEST: ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS (John 18:12-24)**

These two passages give us John's record of Jesus standing before the Jewish authorities.

### **Take Note of the Arresting Crowd**

As we begin to walk through this text, take note of all the people who are sent to arrest Jesus. Jesus had never once been violent or threatened violence. Yet, Luke records that many of the guards who had come were of high rank. In the Greek, the title "Captain" that we see in verse 12, means, "Commander of a thousand." Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that there were a thousand guards there in this moment, but it indicates that the men there were not just the over-night shift. They were men of rank and importance. And likely there were a great number of soldiers there, as the term "band" indicates.

### **Fear of Riots**

Now, why did they feel the need to bring guards and men of rank (Luke 22:52)? Clearly, both the Jews and the Romans feared riots and upheaval from the people. At this point Jesus was a beloved figure that many had set Messianic hopes on. So again, the plot took place under the cover of night under the watch of many skilled and accomplished soldiers. No chances were going to be taken.

### **The Blinding Power of Sin**

As we see the arrest of Jesus in our text, notice of the blinding power of sin at work. Just moments earlier Jesus had displayed His divine power twice. He spoke His name and caused all of the soldiers to fall to the ground. Then He miraculously healed Malchus's severed ear. **He had done these miracles in the presence of the soldiers and how do they respond?** Do they respond in worship? Do they question the obviously shady mission they are on? No, they carry out their orders as if nothing had happened. **Sin blinds. It can keep us from seeing the obvious truth of the glory of God.** May we remember this. **Sin is deadly and we too can find ourselves blind to it once again** if we entertain it and take our eyes off of Jesus.

### **God in Captivity**

Something else that is worth noticing in the arrest of Jesus is how He was taken captive. Jesus was bound by the soldiers. Let that sink in. If it wasn't so sad it would be funny. **These guards have taken some rope and tied up the hands of Jesus, the Omnipotent God. As if the Almighty, Sovereign One could be forced or coerced to do anything apart from His will.** It is laughable, but it is telling us something about Jesus, which we will point out as we get deeper.

### **3 Phases of Jewish Trial**

So Jesus is bound and led by this band of soldiers to Annas, which marks the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 phases that would be included in Jesus' trials before the Jewish religious authorities. He would start here with Annas; then secondly, be led to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin; then finally, after sunrise, the next morning Jesus would stand before all of these authorities once again as their decision to move forward with the murder of Jesus was confirmed.

### **Annas: True Power Broker**

John records the first of the 3 phases of Jesus' trial, which starts with Jesus being taken to Annas. Annas was the most powerful religious leader of the day. Now, Annas, didn't have the formal position of High Priest any more, as he was removed from this position by Pilate's predecessor. The Roman Government wanted someone in the role of High Priest that they believed they could control more. So they put Caiaphas in this position. Nevertheless, the people and even Caiaphas continued to look to Annas for leadership. It probably helps to know that Annas was Caiaphas' father-in-law.

### **Lost the Job, Kept the Title**

So Annas is the real power broker here and thus as soon as Jesus is arrested He goes to Annas first. When this narrative picks back up in verse 19, and it says the High Priest questioned Jesus, it is still talking about Annas. Again, Annas wasn't the current High Priest, but he was a previous High Priest and much like the presidency here in America, once you get the title of High Priest, even after your term is done, the title stays with you. So Annas is the one questioning Jesus here.

### **Annas Goes Fishing**

Annas' questioning began with a focus on Jesus' followers and His teaching. **Annas is looking to get Jesus to talk. He is fishing here.** He is hoping he can find something in Jesus' response that he will be able to use with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin as they progress with charges.

### **Illegal Tactics**

A little background for you that would help... Annas' tactics here are illegal, in many ways. One that is clearly on display in our text deals with the fact that **according to Jewish judicial law the accused was not allowed to be directly questioned. Instead a conviction was to come from the testimony of eyewitnesses.** Thus, he shouldn't have been asking Jesus these questions, he should have been asking these questions of an eyewitness. **Of course, they didn't have any of those because this trial was illegal and it was being done in secret.** The last thing they wanted to do was to let word leak out that Jesus had been arrested by bringing people into a trial. Not only that, but bringing others into this trial would have exposed its illegal nature, which would have set them back as well.

### **Jesus Sees Through It All**

Jesus knew all this. He knew the law. He knew how Annas is trying to play Him. So rather than give Annas answers, Jesus pointed Annas back to the lawful way to handle this. Jesus says,

*"Why don't you bring in an eyewitness? Everything I have said in the temple and in the streets is consistent with what I have taught my closest followers. I have nothing to hide. Don't ask me, follow the law and ask a witness."*

### **Angry and Reasserting "Control"**

I'm sure Annas, an expert in the law, didn't love being publically corrected and having the law thrown back in his face. He just got taken to school and everyone in the room knew it. **So one of the officers proudly reasserts the "control" that they have over Jesus by hitting Him in the face** and asking Jesus if He thought He could talk to the High Priest that way. **This is an ironic power move. The officer hit Jesus in the face to show him who was in charge.** Again, if it wasn't so sad, we could laugh.

### **Who's In Charge?**

**Who is in charge? It ain't you!!!** It is the One who spoke our world into being. It is the One who will sit on an eternal throne and rule and reign forever. It is the One who will judge the souls of mankind. **Jesus isn't at your mercy, you are at His!**

### **Incredible Self-Control**

As worked up as I get over this exchange, Jesus demonstrates incredible self-control. I read this and want to yell and put that man in His place. Jesus, knowing the road He was on was God-ordained, responds meekly.

*"Was I wrong in what I said? If so, tell me. If not, why did you hit me?"*

Jesus wouldn't be intimidated, but He wouldn't allow Himself to go off course and undo this path that God had laid out for Him. He endured this sham of a trial. He continued to face the shame, lies, embarrassment, and slander that these Jewish religious leaders brought.

### **Opened Not His Mouth**

This reminds me of Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus...

#### **Isaiah 53:7**

[7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Jesus could have opened His mouth and stopped these men dead in their tracks. He could have out-argued and outwitted them. Yet that wasn't His goal.

### **The Good Shepherd**

His goal was something far bigger.

#### **John 10:11, 17-18**

[11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[17] For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

### **Not Taken, Given**

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. Jesus willingly gave up His life.

- No one could take it from Him.
- No one could overpower Him.
- No one could outmaneuver Him.
- No one could outwit Him.

### **Gave it to Buy Salvation**

Jesus willingly gave it up to purchase salvation for His sheep. This is all so clearly depicted in this account. Jesus endures great shame and suffering that He might guard His sheep. In John 6, Jesus promised God the Father that He would lose nothing of all the elect that the Father had entrusted to Him. He won't fall short so He walks towards the cross and endures the shame and mockery from His own creation. He endures lies and slander towards His name. He endures injustice and hatred from people that He had lovingly made. Jesus walked towards suffering and this trial is but one evidence of this truth.

Here we see...

- The Eternal Judge on trial.
- Creator being questioned by creation.

- The Righteous One being condescendingly cross-examined by sinners.
- The Almighty Sovereign held in “captivity” by the weak and finite.

### **Embrace This Picture of Love**

Brothers and Sisters, **this is a picture of Jesus’ great love for you. Don’t miss it.** Jesus is enduring all of this out of love for the glory of God and out of love for people of God. Jesus would go on to suffer physically as He was tortured and killed via crucifixion. Jesus would go on to suffer spiritually as the wrath of God was poured out on Him for the sins of the elect. Let’s not miss this the suffering going on in this account. **Jesus is being mocked, shamed, embarrassed, belittled, slandered, lied about, falsely judged, and hated. These are all things that we run from in life, things that we avoid at all costs, but Jesus allows it to be piled on** as He pursues what you need most in this life, salvation. This is love on display.

### **Transition**

John only records this one interaction with the Jewish religious leaders, but there were two more that followed that you can read about in the synoptic Gospels. John jumps ahead to the time that Jesus stands before Pilate. Let’s go ahead and read that account now, picking back up in verse 28...

#### **John 18:28-40**

[28] Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. [29] So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” [30] They answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.” [31] Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” [32] This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

[33] So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” [34] Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” [35] Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” [36] Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” [37] Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” [38] Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. [39] But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” [40] They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

### **JESUS BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR: PILATE (John 18:28-40)**

So the next stop for Jesus after the Jewish religious leaders had tried Him and come to a consensus on moving forward with their plot to kill Him at the hands of the Romans was the Romans, more specifically, Jesus was sent to Pilate the Roman Governor of the area.

### **Irony and Hypocrisy – Fear of Defilement**

As I said before, the Scriptures are full of irony and verse 28 continues to display this. Again, if it were not so sad, it would be funny. We see the Jewish guards who are delivering Jesus over to Pilate for judgment and sentencing unwilling to go into the home of a Gentile as that would have made them ceremonially unclean and thus unable to participate in the Passover celebration.

### **Backwards Nature of this Religion**

Grasp the backwards nature of how the religion of these Jewish men functioned. **They couldn't go inside the home of a Gentile because that would have made them unclean, but sure it was fine to be complicit in the murder of an innocent man** since it came down from the High Priest. That was acceptable. No defilement there. Again, if it were not so sad, we could laugh. But these men serve a religion, not God and thus they betray His Son by handing Him over to Pilate.

### **Pilate Meets the Guards Outside**

Again, the Jewish guards were unwilling to go into the Governor's headquarters so Pilate, understanding their customs, met them outside. As Pilate stood in front of the guards holding Jesus, he quickly understood the situation. A prisoner was being transferred for judgment and sentencing, but to get to that Pilate would need more info so he asked them what charges they were being brought against this man. What was there to judge without a charge?

### **Mutual Disgust**

In the exchange that follows you can hear the disgust that each side holds for the other. The Jews hated the Romans. They hated living under their rule. The Romans hated the Jews because the Jews were not compliant citizens. They were stubborn and resistant.

### **Jewish Reply: He's Bad, Trust Us**

So to the question of a charge the Jewish guards defiantly respond,

*"Look, He is a bad guy, doing bad things, we wouldn't bring an innocent man to you, would we?"*

### **More Irony - Truly Innocent**

Ironically, that is exactly what they had done. They had brought the one and only man to ever live who was truly innocent in every respect. Jesus had never sinned.

- He had never had a sinful thought or attitude.
- He had never neglected responsibilities that were his or even passed opportunities to do good unto others that God had presented Him with.
- He was righteous in every respect.
- He was perfect.

Again, this didn't seem to bother the Jewish guards though so long as they remained ceremonially clean to meet the external standards of the law.

### **Pilate's Dismissal**

Pilate didn't take too kindly to their tone of their lack of basic information so he began to dismiss them, saying,

*"Look, why don't you just handle this according to your law. You don't want to play by the rules, you don't want to give me details, fine, just go handle this on your own."*

### **Why the Jews were Vague**



You see, the Jews didn't want to have to name a charge against Jesus. They wanted all of this to be vague and ambiguous, for multiple reasons. **First, they didn't want the Jews to have a clear understanding of what was happening because they couldn't prove any of their charges. Secondly, they didn't want the Romans to understand their charges because they would have never put a man to death over blasphemy,** which is what the final charge ended up being when Jesus admitted Himself to be God. So the Jewish guards had clearly been instructed to keep things murky and have Jesus pushed through the system for execution.

### **Forced Their Hands – Need Help with Execution**

That wasn't good enough for Pilate though. If he was going to put his name on this judgment he wanted some specifics. So pushing Jesus back to the Jews was a way to force their hand as the Jews had to go through the Romans to get what they wanted in a way that wouldn't have upset the Romans. **You see, the Jews were not able to execute capital punishment without Roman approval. Additionally, the Jews wanted the Romans to be the one to do the execution as they wanted to distance themselves from this action as much as possible.**

### **Taking the Case**

When Pilate said this, the Jews admitted what they wanted was the death penalty imposed upon Jesus. Something they couldn't do on their own by Roman law. With this shared Pilate agreed to take the case. As we hear the questions asked by Pilate we do see that the Jews did give some charges to be reviewed.

### **Prophecy Fulfilled Concerning Jesus' Death**

We will see that in minute, but before we do I want to make sure we catch what John points out in verse 32. The fact that Pilate took the case ensured that prophecy around Jesus' death would be fulfilled. Let me show you that now...

#### **Mark 10:32–34**

[32] And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, [33] saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. [34] And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

Jesus' trial followed the exact roadmap that He foretold. The Jewish religious leaders plotted against Him and delivered Him to the Gentiles, the Romans, who would kill Him. We see another in John 3...

#### **John 3:14–15**

[14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Had the Jews killed Jesus, it would have most certainly been by stoning, which is what the law calls for when someone is convicted of blasphemy. The Romans levied a different execution method, however. They used crucifixion, which had the sentenced nailed to a cross and lifted up for all to see. So just as Jesus foretold, He too was to be lifted up in His death.

### **Humanly Out of Jesus' Control**

What is incredible is that both of these prophecies were seemingly out of the control of Jesus, right? He didn't ask to be handed over to the Romans, even if He had, apart from a supernatural effort, Jesus couldn't have forced their hand, right? The actions taken in these verses confirm the divine nature and

omniscience of Jesus. He holds divine wisdom and knowledge. He sees through time as time is His creation.

### **Interrogation – Charges Political, Not Theological**

Getting back to our text, Pilate takes Jesus into the praetorium, the office and home of the governor and he begins to ask Jesus questions, trying to understand the charges brought against Him. The first question Pilate **asks Jesus is if He is the King of the Jews**. This question very likely came from the background information and the charges the Jewish guards wound up giving Pilate. Very likely, rather than focusing in on the blasphemy charges they tweaked the focus. Rather than making the charges theological and charging Jesus with blasphemy, they made the charges political and charged Jesus with insurrection as the Roman empire wouldn't have stood for another king in their territory.

### **Just Hearsay**

Jesus' response acknowledges that Pilate likely got his info from the Jews. Jesus asked, "Are you asking me this because the Jews told you I said I was king or is this a question you have yourself?" Essentially asking, where did this question come from? **Jesus is pointing out that Pilate is working off nothing more than hearsay. There are no witnesses. There is no evidence. There is nothing, but charges and accusations.**

### **Pilate's Response – What Did You Do?**

Pilate responds with frustration, admitting that his info isn't first hand, but from the High Priest. Pilate asks, "Am I a Jew?", expressing frustration in the cultural barrier that exists. Pilate really doesn't get what is going on here. He just knows the religious leaders want Jesus dead.

Pilate, still trying to understand asks, "What is it that you have done exactly?"

### **Jesus' Kingdom – Not of this World**

Addressing the questions of His kingdom, **Jesus replies by telling Pilate who He is**. Jesus is a King, but His Kingdom is not of this world. That clearly is the case, right? Jesus is a King, but a King without any outward emblem of worldly power. Again, **Jesus' Kingdom isn't of this world. Jesus' Kingdom has a different source, a different authority. Jesus' Kingdom is a heavenly Kingdom**. Now that doesn't mean that Jesus' Kingdom doesn't reach down to our world, it does, it just finds its authority and origin in the Creator, not in the creation.

### **Thus, No War/Fighting**

Jesus points out one of the differences by saying if His Kingdom were of this world His followers would be fighting right now for His freedom. Peter tried to do that back in the garden, but Jesus had Peter put his sword away. **Jesus' Kingdom is spiritually active today, changing lives and saving lost souls. The physical aspect of Jesus' Kingdom isn't here yet, but it will be one day, when Jesus returns and establishes that Kingdom in full.**

This reality rendered the Jewish charges against Jesus baseless and empty. Jesus wasn't going to lead a revolt against Caesar. **He was going to lead a revolt against sin and self-dependence.**

### **Clarifying – A King, Right?**

Pilate, trying to make sure he has his mind wrapped around the words of Jesus, clarifies, "So you are a king?"

### **Kingly Mission - Truth**

Jesus replies, "Yes" and begins to unfold His kingly mission. Jesus had come to bear witness to the truth; to set people free with the gracious truth of the Gospel of God.

- **Jesus came to open blind eyes with the truth**, helping people to **see that our sin** has separated us from God for He is holy and we are not.
- **Jesus came to give hope with the truth**, telling people of the **grace of God** that would pursue and forgive.
- **Jesus came to share God's love with the truth**, by giving up His life and **standing in the place of sinners** that the unholy might be made holy and reconciled to God.
- **Jesus came to give rest with the truth**, teaching that we are **saved not by works**, but by faith.

Jesus' mission with the truth is a gracious mission that brings with it salvation. Jesus Kingdom is unlike any other Kingdom.

- It doesn't oppress, it frees.
- It doesn't merely promise treasures, it is the treasure.

### **What is Truth?**

Pilate, hearing this responds like so many skeptics in our world today, "What is truth?", he asks. Jesus came to bring the truth, but Pilate can't fathom a truth that is universal. This is how so many in our culture live. We all hear things like, "That may be true for you, but it isn't true for me." Or "How can you claim to know the truth? The truth is unknowable."

### **Resting in the Truth**

**While our world, like Pilate, dances around the very idea of truth so often, we as followers of Christ can rest in the truth. Jesus is the truth.** He is the King of truth. He brought truth on His Kingly mission. His Word and Message are truth. Thus, we can live our lives in certainty when we follow after Him.

### **No Fault – Release Offered**

Getting back to our text, Pilate has heard enough. He knows that Jesus poses no real threat so he goes back out to the courtyard where the Jewish guards were. John doesn't record this, but we see in other Gospel accounts, time has passed and a large crowd has gathered. Pilate announces that he has found no fault in Jesus and offers to release Jesus as a part of the annual custom to release one prisoner each year. Pilate knew of Jesus. He knew the accolades Jesus was receiving amongst the people and thus he thought offering up Jesus was a safe bet. The people would want to see him freed and allowing the crowd to decide would take heat off him from the Jewish religious leaders.

### **Bribed Crowd**

**Pilate however underestimated the resolve of the High Priest and the other leaders. They had bribed the crowd** to call for Barabbas instead of Jesus. And rather than freeing an innocent man, Barabbas, a robber, a terrorist as described by some historians, was set free.

### **Incalculable Injustice and Evil**

Jesus' trial ends with a pointed picture of incalculable injustice and evil...

- We see a **crowd of people so moved by their love of money** they are willing to forsake their Creator, a righteous man, they are willing to see a murderer set free and an innocent man murdered.
- We also see a group of **leaders who are so in love with the power they hold over people** that the mere threat of it being taken away drives them to murder the Messiah they were supposed to be pointing people towards.

- We also see a Roman Governor who was **so afraid of political backlash** that he did what he knew to be wrong to keep the peace with other influential people.

Maybe the more Cosmic storyline here is that **the Creator of all things has been sentenced to death by the creatures He gave life to.**

### Heavy Hearts

This story should make our hearts heavy with the sinfulness and evil of humanity. It can be easy to look at these stories and shake our heads at the sin we see. We can look to the power-hungry religious leaders, the greedy crowd, or the cowardly Pilate and condescendingly pity their foolishness. However, know this,

- We are often **the power-hungry**, chasing after positions and trampling over others who are in the way.
- We are often **the greedy** who are more concerned with that we can consume or what we can have than the God who gives.
- We are often **the cowards** who run from opportunities to do what is right or share the Gospel so that we may be comfortable ourselves.

### Find Thankfulness

**We are so often the ugliness that we see in this story. These sins, your sins, are what Jesus was walking to atone for. This story is ugly and you are a part of it, I am a part of it. It is my sin that caused Jesus to have to be there.** May this heavy reality lead us to thankfulness over our Savior who graciously walked this path willingly.

### At Jesus' Mercy

Time and again in this story we saw Jesus belittled and shamed.

- At any point He could have stood up and caused the ropes or chains that bound Him to fall off.
- He could have uttered a word or held a thought and caused all of His captors to fall over incapacitated.
- He could have summoned a legion of angels to free Him and escort Him to the right hand of God the Father.
- He could have turned the tables and judged those men right then and there.

**It may not have looked it in this story, but all power was His. Jesus was never at a disadvantage. He was never at the mercy of these men, they were at His. And Jesus' mercy and grace for lost sinners caused Him to walk down this path of shame and disgrace,** knowing it would lead to unfathomable glory for the name of the Father and unspeakable joy for His people.

### Worship Jesus!

Brothers and Sisters, worship Jesus! He loves you! He is gracious! He went to unthinkable lengths to purchase your salvation and that story is only starting as we will see in the coming weeks.

### LET'S PRAY