

Theme: Jesus Our King

Scripture: "Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.' So he delivered him (*Jesus*) over to them to be crucified." (John 19:15-16 ESV)

The crown is a symbol of power and authority. Who wears a crown? That's right! A king wears a crown. Being a king is different from being the president of a country. The people elect a president, but a king is not elected, he is born to be king.

Have you seen the movie "Lion King?" As a lion, Simba was born to be the "King of the Beasts." In one scene from the movie Simba sings, "I Just Can't Wait to Be King." If you have seen the movie, you will remember that one reason why Simba was so anxious to become king was that he didn't want anyone telling him what to do. He didn't want to hear anyone saying, "do this" or "stop that." He wanted to be free to run around all day doing everything he wanted and doing things his way.

It wasn't just that Simba didn't want anyone to tell him what to do; he was also looking forward to telling everyone else what to do. Just listen to what he says! "I'm gonna be a mighty king so enemies beware! I'm gonna be the mane event like no king was before. I'm brushing up on looking down. I'm working on my ROAR! Oh, I just can't wait to be king!"

I think that Simba had a very poor idea of what it means to be a king. You see the real role of a king is to look after the needs of his people. A good king is more concerned with caring for his people than he is in the people serving him.

During His last days on earth, Jesus was arrested and put on trial. When asked if He was the King of kings, Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world." Yes, Jesus was a King, but He wasn't interested in running around free and doing things His way. He was only interested in doing the will of His Father. He was born to be King, but His kingdom is not on this earth -- it is in heaven. He only came to earth to make a way for us to be brought back to God the Father and to live with Him in heaven.

Jesus "Just can't wait to be your king." He has invited you to enjoy eternal life in His heavenly kingdom. If you haven't already accepted Jesus' invitation, then you need to ask your dad and mom what it means to have Jesus as the King of your heart.

Lets take a moment to pray to Jesus our King. Dear King Jesus, you are our Lord and Our Savior. We invite your into our heart to rule our lives as the King of kings. Amen.

Jesus' Trial, Part III – Failures of Men

Opening

In truth, the trial of Jesus ended when Pilate said, “I find no guilt in him” in verse 38. At this point he should have released Jesus. What we consider this morning in chapter 19 verses 1 to 16 is the interval between Pilate’s formal verdict of acquittal and the execution of Jesus in the second half of chapter 19. John records Pilate’s attempts to escape making a judgment. Pilate tries several ways to offload this problem, but finds himself failing in each attempt and getting in deeper and deeper until there is no escape. If we live in reaction to and wanting to please the world by what it deems “good” or “bad” we may find ourselves in the same predicament as Pilate.

In an effort to rid himself of having to make judgment, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. It was an attempt that failed to transfer the problem of Jesus. The Gospel According to John does not deal with the time Jesus spent with Herod. From Luke’s gospel account, we know that Herod found Jesus blameless. Concerning Herod’s verdict of not guilty, Pilate said, “Neither did Herod (*find Jesus guilty*), for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. **16** I will therefore punish and release him.” (Luke 23:15-16) Herod had dodged the bullet, but Pilate was squarely in the “crosshairs” of Caiaphas. People want to place the blame for Jesus’ death on the Jewish leaders, and if not the Jews, then on Pilate, and if not Pilate, then the fickle crowd.

The truth is the real responsibility for Jesus’ death is God’s. God the Father had

determined from before time began that His Son would die on the cross for the forgiveness of the sins of all mankind. This was to be done so that salvation could be offered to people through the Son allowing the chosen to once again have a relationship with the living God. John the Baptist made this clear, saying of Jesus, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (John 1:29) Christ died not because of any human efforts, plots or actions, but because it was the will of the Father. Pilate and the Jews were allowed to act out their sinful nature so that God’s plan of redemption might come to fruition. But, let me be clear, the fact that God is in charge and His plan would be done does not in any way relieve people of their responsibility for the sins they chose to commit. It was the sins of the people, both Roman and Hebrew that put Jesus on the cross. Yet, Jesus was not a victim, neither the Romans or the Jews had any power to take Jesus’ life. Jesus said, **“No one takes it (My life) 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.”** (John 10:18) Further Luke wrote that Jesus was, **“delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, but it was people who ~~you~~ nailed Jesus to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”** (Acts 2:23) Like Pilate and the Jews, we desire control and as we exert our attempts of control and we sin. As we attempt to control God we try to keep Jesus on the cross instead of recognizing He is alive and risen, and submitting our lives to His authority. Letting go of ambitions has plagued mankind from the beginning because it is simply our fallen sin nature to be self-motivated. We desire separation from God because we do not want to be accountable to God.

Failed Attempts

Lets now explore Pilate's failed attempts to deal with Jesus, Caiaphas and the building crowd, and see how this is a problem for us today. Reading beginning with verse 1 of chapter 19 of John, "Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. **2** And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. **3** They came up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands. **4** Pilate went out again and said to ~~them~~ *the Jews*, 'See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.' This is the fourth time Pilate pronounces Jesus' is innocent. **5** So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold the man!' **6** When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.' Pilate says Jesus is not guilty for the fifth time. **7** The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.' " According to Roman protocols of justice Pilate should have released Jesus. Herod bolsters Pilate's position for releasing Jesus by also finding no guilt in Jesus. However, we know from Pilate's background that he is not a man of principal and justice but a politician. It seems like in our own day we find the same type of people leading our cities, states and nation. They reflect the majority of society.

Pilate thinks he can resolve this problem by unjustly flogging Jesus and this would satisfy the Jewish leaders. He misjudged and was wrong. This was his first failure of these last attempts to get out of taking responsibility. At this point Jesus' disciples are not standing for righteousness. No one is defending Jesus.

How often do we make decisions that are contrary to what is right? How often

once we make a bad decision and come to realize it is a bad decision do we work to defend that decision? We may not be making the decision to crucify Jesus, but by our sins and by our defending our sins we are denying Jesus. Should not our lives be marked different from the world by our faith in Jesus? Does not faith require we submit to Jesus and the Word of God? What are your motives for **not** living the scriptures? Could your motives be greed, self-importance, ambition, laziness and lack of commitment or doing what is right because of fear? Pilate acted out of fear. To live the scriptures and live for Christ means to live without fear.

In Matthew the angel told Joseph not to fear taking Mary as his wife. Joseph stepped up to the plate and did as God required. Jesus told his followers, **“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”** (Matthew 10:28) The martyrs throughout the centuries who have given their lives for the cause of Christ understood their souls were more important than their mortal life and in Christ their souls were safe. Jesus told the people, **“Do not fear, only believe.”** (Mark 5:36) Standing for truth and right in the eyes of God is the result of true faith. Where do we stand in both the little daily decisions and the bigger decisions of life? Behavior is the outward sign of our inward belief. What is the worst the world can do to you for standing for truth? Take your mortal life and send you to heaven to live forever with God? That does not sound all that bad to me.

Now back to Pilate. He now decides he will outsmart the Sanhedrin by attempting to release Jesus instead of Barabbas, but this backfires because Pilate underestimated the power of the Jewish leaders over the crowd and the fickleness of the people. Having flogged Jesus and this attempt failed, Pilate has Jesus again brought before the crowd **“wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.**

Pilate said to ~~them~~ the crowd, 'Behold the man!' 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw ~~him~~ Jesus, they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' " When Jesus is brought out Pilate says, "Behold the man!" Pilate is saying who is this Jesus? Jesus represents many things to the world, but who do you say Jesus is? For nearly 2000 years every person has had to answer this question, "Who is Jesus?"

Another question that should be asked, "Was Jesus innocent?" At the time of this mock trial Jesus had committed no crime. No crime has been revealed over 2000 years of history. Even the betrayer Judas declared to the Chief Priests and elders, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." (Matthew 27:4) This makes Judas the only true witness to appear before the chief priests. Claudia, Pilate's wife, was the only true witness before Pilate by writing her declaration that Jesus was righteous. Despite all the facts "they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' " Do we succumb to the pressures of the crowd or mob or the world as Pilate did? Pilate was convinced of Jesus' innocence. As believers you say you are convinced not only of Jesus' innocence, but you believe Him to be God. If this is true, how is your belief lived out? What is the evidence in your life of what you say?

Pilate stood before the Jewish leaders and the crowd with Jesus. He now realizes how badly he has misjudged the reactions of the Jews. In response to the crowds shouts of "Crucify him, crucify him!" He tries yet another attempt to give Jesus back to the Jews and wash his hands of this problem. "Pilate said to them, 'Take ~~him~~ Jesus yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.' " This is the fifth and final time Pilate declares Jesus is innocent. Capital punishment was a right Rome reserved for itself. No occupied provinces were allowed to exercise this judgment. The fact that Pilate would concede this right that belonged to those of

Roman rule is further indication of his loss of control in this situation. Reading again at verse 7, “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.’ **8** When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.” The Jews are saying that Jesus needs to die for blasphemy and because Jesus has claimed to be the Son of God he is therefore a threat to Caesar. A major element of the success of Roman rule over conquered nations was Rome granted to these subservient nations autonomy in their civil matters. But here we find the Jews going beyond this. They demand Rome yield to their legal right for the death penalty and their rights are the responsibility of the Roman ruler. Pilate is being boxed into a corner because he failed from the start to do what was right. The last thing Pilate wanted at this point was for the Jews to report him to Rome. They had done this in the past and created problems for him. Upon inspection Rome would find Pilate inconsistent and lacking in sound judgment by Roman standards. Is this not where sin leads us? When we sin and try to defend our sin we are inconsistent in right behavior and retrospection shows the lack of sound judgment.

Failure - Rejection of Truth

Both the Sanhedrin and Pilate heard the truth from a number of sources. Yet, they rejected the truth. The Bible is clear that when people persist in rejecting the truth of God, He will then reject them. Like Judas who finally swore the truth and Claudia who wrote the truth – they and we are not responsible for those who hear the truth to accept the truth. We read, **10** “the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.’ ” (Judges 10:10) The people of Israel turned their backs on

God and then when they were in trouble and ready to be wiped out by various nations, they would once again call out to God. God said to Israel, “Did I not save you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines? **13** Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; **therefore I will save you no more.**” (Judges 10:11 and 13) You see God is patient, but there is a limit to His patience. In 2 Chronicles it is written, “The Spirit of God came upon Azariah (az·ar·yaw) the son of Oded, **2** and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but **if you forsake him, he will forsake you.**” (2 Chronicles 15:1-2) Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin and Pilate all heard the truth and rejected it. God did not change His plan or spare Christ from the price of our salvation. However, God does turn from those who reject Him and His truth.

At this point Pilate seeks the refuge of his headquarters. Reading from verse 9, “He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are you from?’ Pilate knew where Jesus was from. From Luke we learn, “When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. **7** And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.” (Luke 23:6-7) Pilate had earlier established that Jesus was from Galilee and this is why he sent Jesus to Herod. “But Jesus gave him no answer. This question deserved no answer. **10** “So Pilate said to him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’” Here is Pilate’s boastful statement of having authority over Jesus, but we know this is not true. Pilate may have thought it true, but the only authority that controlled all that happened here was God’s. Jesus said to the people of Galilee,

“Do not grumble among yourselves. **44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” (John 6:43-44) Jesus took comfort that God was in control and sovereign. In verse 11 of John 19, “Jesus answered ~~him~~ Pilate, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.’” So as guilty as Pilate was for rejecting the truth of God, Caiaphas bore even greater guilt. Why? Several reasons. First, Caiaphas was aware of the fulfillment of the scriptures by Jesus. He heard from Judas and others who testified of Jesus’ innocence. It was Caiaphas who bought false witnesses and orchestrated Jesus being turned over to Pilate. Pilate was of weak character and history shows him as an ineffective politician. On the other hand, Caiaphas was an agent of evil motivated by ambition and power.

Pilate continued to try and release Jesus. We take up our study passage in verse 12, “From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.’ ” These Jewish leaders were so obviously hypocrites. They accuse Pilate of not being a friend of Rome if he does not execute Jesus. Yet, these Jews hated Rome, hated the occupation of Judea by Roman soldiers and had demonstrated their hatred for Pilate. However, their accusing Pilate of not having allegiance to Rome pushed Pilate over the edge. He could not have them reporting this to Rome. They would claim he released a terrorist who claims to be a king and whose kingdom opposed Caesar. He is a weak man and collapses under pressure. Let’s be honest we are all weak as well. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in believers that we have the strength to overcome our cowardliness. Saul who Jesus calls and changes into Paul understood what it meant to be a man

of honor and not to be cowardly. He wrote Timothy, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:6-7) This is one reason we pray over each other with the laying on of hands. We acknowledge we have no power; all power is of God and for his glory, not our own. When we submit to Christ’s authority in our lives He works good through us. Pilate is working under his own power and now makes his final move.

Final Failure

Pilate gives into pressure and fails to free an innocent man. Reading beginning at verse 13, “So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic **Gabbatha** (gab·bath·ah).” Pilate sat in the judgment seat of man to pass judgment on the Son of God, whom God the Father had given all authority to judge. Jesus made this clear earlier in John, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, **23** that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:22-24) Both Pilate, in pronouncing judgment of execution upon Jesus, and Caiaphas, with the Sanhedrin with their false testimonies against Jesus, in truth, pronounced judgment upon themselves. With this judgment they passed from life into eternal death. Their judgment was based upon their rejecting God’s only begotten Son.

Could Pilate and Caiaphas have been saved? If they had confessed their sin,

repented and believed in Jesus as the Christ, then the answer would be “Yes.” What sins have you failed to confess and repent of? Jesus said, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”** (Mark 1:15) In the Bible is the record of the written gospel and Jesus is the living gospel. The Apostle Peter declared that Jesus had given a command and this command applies not only to the disciples of Jesus but to all believers, to you and me. Jesus **“commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.”** (Acts 10:42) My beloved, are you fulfilling this command? Jesus died that we might be saved and fulfill His commands. We are to live and preach Christ.

As we finish up this morning we come to a verse that non-believers use to try and discredit the Bible. However, when understood, it stands as truth. Verse 14, **“Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ ”** According to Jewish tradition the sixth hour is noon. The Jewish day begins at sundown, but time is marked from sunrise or 6 in the morning. The Apostle Mark records, **“And it was the third hour when they crucified him.”** (Mark 15:25) How could Jesus be taken to be crucified at noon in John’s account, if Mark says it was 9 am? The answer is Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, was dealing with Jesus in John’s account and John uses Roman time. The Roman day and time begins at midnight. By Roman tradition it was not noon but 6 am. This makes sense for even though Jesus is now condemned to be crucified he still had to make the journey to Golgotha. Now that we have settled this huge problem for non-believers we can move on.

Pilate said to the Jews in verse 14, **“Behold your King!’ 15 They cried out, ‘Away**

with him, away with him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ **16** So he delivered ~~him~~ *Jesus* over to them to be crucified.” This last passage is filled with irony. The Jews reject Jesus as their King, the Messiah sent by God. By this action they are left with Caesar as their king and god and this was truly an act of blasphemy!

Pilate had faced a dilemma that is voiced by his question, “**Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?**” (Matthew 27:22) Pilate rejected Christ. People today are faced with the very same question. One must stand with those who believe in Jesus as the Christ or with those who reject Jesus. There is no middle ground. Pilate tried to find the middle ground and found that in truth there is no middle ground and in the end he rejected the only true God. Pilate stands as an historical figure of failure, a man of weak character and one who could not see the truth that stood in front of him - Jesus. It was his pride and fear that led to his failure. Jesus marked the “line in the sand” clearly saying, “**Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**” (Matthew 12:30) Most of us will not be remembered through history as Pilate and Caiaphas are. However, we are called to mark our time in history by living lives faithful to Christ Jesus and preaching His gospel to anyone who will listen. I am excited about the time I have left here on earth - long or short – I desire to live the great adventure of the Gospel of Jesus! How about you?

I pray by the power of the name of Jesus we will be faithful and when we arrive in heaven we will all hear from our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, “**Well done, good and faithful servant.**” (Matthew 25:21)