

“A King Among Men”

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The Gospel Lesson for today is read from John 18:19-40

Hear the eyewitness account of Jesus’s arrest and trial from the disciple John:

Read John 18:19-40

“The Word of God for the people of God.”

“Thanks be to God”

Let us pray:

Lord, by Your grace may I be given Your words, Your message to proclaim fearlessly. As I prepare to speak Your message, inspire my words by Your Holy Spirit and give them life. Intercede my vocabulary and speech so that all who hear it do not hear me, but instead, hear You. Never let me get in the way of Your life giving Word. Help me get over myself so that I may surrender all of myself to You. My thoughts and my words are not mine, but Yours. Therefore, use these words I speak as an instrument, O Lord, to help others see truth in Your Son. In Jesus Christ’s name, who came to make your message perfectly clear – and perfect. Amen.

Intro:

Is this not the epitome of injustice?! Betrayed by His own disciple for meaningless coin, denied by Peter, not once but three times, and arrested and convicted of a crime He was so clearly found innocent for before Pilate. And yet, Jesus is prepared to take the cup God has given Him. Why must it go down like this? Surely someone will stand up and speak the truth and come to Jesus’s defense! But as we see here in this passage it is not so. No one comes. Jesus is alone, left to defend His identity against a world He so lovingly brought into existence, which now hates Him and is calling for His death. The irony of all of this, is saturated throughout the Passion narrative. But is it irony? Was this not the plan all along?

Numerous times Jesus speaks plainly to his disciples and tells them of the very events that are now transpiring. So we can assume Peter knows the answer to Pilate’s question to Jesus in verse 28, “What is truth?” because Jesus told him. Jesus told his disciples in John 14:6, “I am

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the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” If Peter knows this to be truth, then why does he not speak up? Why does he stay silent and deny Jesus three times?

Peter’s denial was based partially on weakness and fear. To his credit, although all the others had fled (Mark 14:50), Peter still followed Jesus after His arrest, but he kept his distance so as not to be identified with Him (Mark 14:54). There’s no question that fear gripped him. From the courtyard, he watched Jesus being falsely accused, beaten, and insulted (Mark 14:57–66). Peter was afraid Jesus would die, and he was fearful for his own life as well. The world hated Jesus, and Peter found that he was not prepared to face the ridicule and persecution that Jesus was suffering. He was not yet able to take up the cross and follow where Christ was going.

Where in our own lives do we stay silent of the Truth? In my own life I have lived with people who openly ridiculed and belittled my faith everyday and everyday I kept my distance from the Truth – because I wished to be liked rather than hated.

Earlier, Jesus had warned His disciples as well as for us today that, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 16:18; cf. Matthew 24:9). Peter quickly found he wasn’t nearly as bold and courageous as he had proclaimed, and in fear he denied the One who had loved him. (Plus Peter wept after his final denial). Do we in fear deny the One who loves us? Where in our own lives are we afraid to say out loud Jesus was and is the King to come? Where are we too ashamed to come to our Savior’s rescue and shout out the Truth with excitement and assurance?

Perhaps this hits closer to home than we realize. Maybe, we, who know the Truth are more like Peter, and the world, those who does not know the Truth, are more like Pilate. The world, like Pilate, only does what it does best; uses rationale and logic to test the Truth. So, Jesus

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is constantly put on trial and we are forever forced to make a decision on whether Christ's claims of being our Savior and King are valid. And as we look closer into Pilate's interrogation of Jesus in verses 33 through 38, we really see that it is our interrogation of the Truth and more importantly coming to terms with the reality of finding faith.

1. Pilate's question reveals doubt. He asked, "**Are You the King** of the Jews?" He asked it because Jesus didn't look like a revolutionary or a criminal. Revolutionary's and criminals were the only types who would be foolish enough to claim to be the King of the Jews in the face of Rome.

2. **Are you speaking for yourself:** Jesus must clarify the question, because the Roman conception of king Pilate has is not the same. To the Romans, "king" meant a political rival. Though Jesus was a King, He was not a political rival in the sense Pilate thought. Pilate's view of king and kingdom were in an earthly sense not in the heavenly spiritual sense in which Jesus was speaking of.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

3. **My kingdom is not of this world:** Jesus here declares the great and permanent difference between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Jesus' kingdom originates in heaven (My kingdom is not of this world). The foundation of Jesus' kingdom is peace (His servants will not fight).

4. As we Christians must take care that we live and serve with the power demonstrated by the cross, not the power of Rome. The key to living in Jesus' kingdom is not found in trying to rule over others or things, but in being more fully ruled by God.

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a. "This is a crucial point. While human politics is based on the premise that society must be changed in order to change people, in the politics of the Kingdom it is people who must be changed in order to change society."

b. The eternal King who rules over the souls of men is mightier than an external foe with powerful armies. Rome is gone, Napoleon is gone, Hitler is gone, but the Kingdom of Jesus marches on.

Yet Pilate still does not understand. Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. " Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.

1. What is truth?

a. For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth, Rome was truth, Caesar was truth, political power was truth, but Jesus knew what truth was, while Pilate was still seeking. So why do we Christians try to advance the truth of Jesus by means of the truth of Pilate?

b. I find no fault in Him at all: In this, Pilate declares Jesus "not guilty. " It's hard to say it any more plainly. Jesus, who was tried by a Roman governor, was declared innocent - and He still went to the cross.

So what are we to do with this passage? What are we to do when we are weak and afraid to speak the truth about Jesus and His Kingship in opposition to clear persecution?

We are to have hope and confidence in the cross! Hope for us is that we have been given grace and mercy by God who sent Jesus, His own Son, to bear our sins. We have the Good News given to us that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for us and that there is nothing we can do or have to do

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to earn salvation. It is a gift from God that we have been given this Truth. Jesus is Truth. Jesus is the Way.

We might well wonder why Jesus allowed Peter to fail so miserably and deny his Lord three times that night. But the truth is He was equipping Peter to strengthen his brothers (Luke 22:32). Not only did Peter strengthen the other disciples, but he became the pillar of the early church in Jerusalem, exhorting and training others to follow the Lord Jesus (Acts 2).

And as with all our failures, God used Peter's many failures, including his three denials of Christ, to turn him from Simon, a common man with a common name, into Peter, the Rock. But Peter became the Rock through weeping after his denials in guilt. But for every time I feel the weight of guilt and sin, just like Peter, I need to look at the cross that much more and that often. This is the good news! Christ always succeeds in our failures because of his fulfillment of the word in death on the cross. We must remember that Jesus is Truth. He is our king of a heavenly kingdom. He is holy and blameless and was put to death on the cross. He did die for our sins and suffered for our sake. But he was also resurrected and became proof to all who doubted his royalty and kingship that he was indeed he who said he was and is and continues to be for all eternity.