

What is Truth?

John 18:33-38a

November 26, 2006

Gospel Lesson

³³ Then Pilate went back inside and called for Jesus to be brought to him. “Are you the King of the Jews?” he asked him.

³⁴ Jesus replied, “Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?”

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate asked. “Your own people and their leading priests brought you here. Why? What have you done?”

³⁶ Then Jesus answered, “I am not an earthly king. If I were, my followers would have fought when I was arrested by the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”

³⁷ Pilate replied, “You are a king then?”

“You say that I am a king, and you are right,” Jesus said. “I was born for that purpose. And I came to bring truth to the world. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.” ³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked.

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

Today is Christ the King Sunday. It is the last Sunday in the long season of Pentecost and the end of the church year. We start the new church year with Advent and the preparation of the birth of Christ. Jesus as our king didn't fight an earthly war for us, but a war against the Devil and his power, sin and death. Jesus won the fight against evil and the devil, with His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. So today we celebrate our Lord as Christ our King.

In our lesson today we find Pilate going from inside his headquarters in Jerusalem, where he is talking with Jesus, and then back outside of the building to talk with the religious authorities. We learn from verses 28 and 29 the reason why the leaders wouldn't go inside Pilate's headquarters, it states:

²⁸ Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go in themselves because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover feast. ²⁹ So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, “What is your charge against this man?”(1)

By Jewish law, entering the house of a Gentile would ceremonially defile a Jewish person. He would then have to be cleansed in order to celebrate the feasts of the Passover. By staying outside they kept their ceremonial requirements, but they were still holding murder in their hearts. They wanted Pilate to get rid of the threat they felt with Jesus. The people were talking about Jesus as their Messiah, the King of Israel, this made the religious leaders fearful of their positions, and they wanted to get rid of this threat.

1Holy Bible, New Living Translation, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

At first Pilate is the one in control, is the judge and appears to have authority. Jesus was brought before him with charges of ecclesiastical and political reasons. The chief priests have accused Jesus of blasphemy, which Pilate feels is an area that is out of his control. But as time goes on the religious leaders take over and back him into a corner. They push Pilate to investigate Jesus for the political issue of Jesus being called the King of the Jews. This could be seen as an act of treason, which would be punishable under Roman law by death.

But we know who the real judge and ruler is: He is the one who is at the center of all of the debate, Jesus. When Pilate asks Jesus if He is the King of the Jews, Jesus replies with a question of His own: **“Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?”** He wanted to know if Pilate was asking this question for himself or for the Jews. Pilate then gets defensive and says: “Am I a Jew?” ... “Your own people and their leading priests brought you here. Why? What have you done?” Jesus answers him and tells him that He is not an earthly king and that His kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate sees before him what he thinks is a weak and beaten man. He knows that the strong rule the weak, and the powerful will rule those who have a lesser station in life. Pilate doesn't see a political threat in the man of Jesus.

When Pilate finally gave in to the religious leaders and lets them put Jesus on the cross, he has a sign made to place over Jesus' head saying, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” It was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. These were all of the languages that were spoken locally. In doing this, Pilate was making a mockery of the people that were accusing Jesus. Pilate and those who were accusers of Jesus didn't understand how true this sign was. That Jesus is a King and that His throne is in heaven. That He will one day return and rule over all here on earth.

All of this is hard for us to grasp. We need to use many different aspects in life to try to understand what is happening. We need to use scientific experimentation, the arts, and our thought process to understand what we read in the Bible. But the most important tool we can use in life is our faith and trust in God. We need to let Him guide us in our thoughts and decisions. We need to, as the saying goes, “Let go and let God”.

When I was laid off from my last office job, I had difficulty accepting it at first. I took it as something personal instead of the company needing to cut costs and let some people go. I filled my days with work around the house, but my mind was still having trouble accepting my job loss. When I finally let go of my frustrations and lifted the situation up to God and asked for His guidance, things went much smoother. That was when He got my attention through the want ad that brought me here to Faith Community Presbyterian Church. So when I let go and let God, everything fell in place. It really does go a lot smoother when we let Him be in charge.

With faith we can accept as true the words we use in the apostles creed. That Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, descended unto hell, resurrected on the third day, and that He sits at the right hand of God. This we can understand and accept. There are other questions, however, that we still have, such as what will heaven be like? Will I get to see my family that died before me? Are their animals in heaven? Did I live my life the way God wanted me to? What is truth? To get the answers we need to trust in God and have faith that in His time, we will know the answers to these questions and many more.

Amen.