**Livin’ the Life**

**Jesus’ Trial Before Pilate**

**John 18:28-40**

August 18, 2019

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We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises. We are in chapter 18:12-27, looking at Jesus’ trial before Pilate. Last week we saw Jesus interrogated by the High Priest, this week he is before Pilate, who was the Roman Governor over Judea.

**Jewish Leaders Present Jesus to Pilate (28-32)**

John picks up where Jesus is brought to Pilate’s Jerusalem headquarters. Pilate is in Jerusalem to enforce Roman rule during Passover week, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jewish leaders would not go inside the palace for fear of defiling themselves, making them ceremonially unclean and unable to participate in the religious festivities. The religious leaders are so meticulous about following the law yet did not see that the law pointed to and his fulfilled in Jesus. They are blind to their own sin and hypocrisy in seeking to murder Jesus. They are an example of religion without genuine faith.

Since the Jewish leaders won’t come inside, Pilate comes out to ask for a formal charge (29). The Jewish leaders tell him that they would not have delivered Jesus over if he were not doing evil (30). Notice, they are not making an accusation. Rome normally stayed away from religious disputes (Acts 18:14-15) so Pilate wants them to judge Jesus by their own law but according to Roman law they could not execute anyone. Then John tells us that this fulfilled Jesus' words that he would be lifted up in death or crucified (3:14; 12:32-33). They wanted Jesus crucified because the Old Testament stated that the one hung on a tree was considered cursed, rejected and condemned by God (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). Jesus was cursed by God on the cross but that curse brought God’s blessing to his people. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (see Gal 3:10-14). Fallen humanity is under God’s curse, condemnation and death (3:18), but Jesus’ death on the cross opened the door to God’s blessing, justification and eternal life. The cross delivers us from the curse of the law and brings justification and life by faith. Jesus’ death was infinitely evil and infinitely unjust yet it was God’s eternal purpose and accomplished the infinite good (Acts 2:22-23; 4:25-28).

**Pilate Questions Jesus (33-38)**

Pilate goes back inside to question Jesus. The official charge by the Sanhedrin was that Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews and therefore treason against Rome. The Jews wanted Pilate to see Jesus as a threat to Rome. The Roman Empire was one of the greatest Empires ever known who controlled almost all the known world. Many tried to rebel against them and they crushed everyone. They once crucified 6,000 rebels on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho as a warning to anyone who rebelled against them. So, Pilate investigates, are you the king of the Jews (33)? Jesus asks Pilate, is that what you think or what the Jewish leaders think (34)? Pilate gets irritated, I am not a Jew (35) and I don't want to be in the middle of this, it’s your own people and leaders who handed you over to me! This is what they say! Pilate is dumbfounded, what have you done that they have such animosity toward you (3:19-20)? Jesus responds, I am a king but my kingdom is not of this world, my kingdom is a spiritual, not a political kingdom (see 6:15). If my kingdom were like yours, my disciples would have fought to keep me from being handed over (see 18:5) to the Jews (36). In other words, I am no threat to Rome. I surrendered to the Jews.

Pilate asks again, so you are a king?  Jesus responds, I am but I am not the type of king you think. My kingdom conquers followers in a different way. I was born to be a king (1:1-2; 8:23), but a king who testifies to the truth (1:14; 4:24) because I am the truth (14:6). I reveal the truth about God, eternal life, and judgement. Jesus is the one of a kind Son and greater King who is full of truth and glory (1:14, 17:25-26, etc). I am the truth here; not these proceedings. All who are on the side of truth can hear truth in my word (37) and receive eternal life and see my kingdom (3:3-5). Do you hear the truth Pilate? Are you on the side of truth? Apparently, Pilate is not interested in truth, he response with, what is truth? The one charged with determining the truth in the matter dismisses the relevance of truth.

**Pilate Proclaims Jesus Innocent (38-40)**

After the conversation with Jesus, Pilate goes back outside to the Jewish leaders and gives his verdict, not guilty (38).  Jesus has done nothing wrong and is no threat to Rome. That should have ended the case and Jesus released. Pilate sought to release Jesus through a custom of letting a prisoner go during the Passover. He offered to release Jesus because Jesus is innocent but he leaves the decision in the hands of the Jewish leaders (39). They rejected his verdict and his choice, demanding that Barabbas be released, a Jewish revolutionary and murderer who was an actual threat to Rome (40)! Jesus is presented as Israel's innocent king, his life substituted for a revolutionary, a criminal who is a threat to Rome. All of us are like Barabbas, guilty, but Jesus’ is our substitute. He was cursed, condemned by God, so that we might experience God’s blessing, justification and life. Jesus’ trial before Pilate reveals the nature of the true and greater King who rules through his word, making his enemies friends.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you?
2. Have you experienced an injustice or something unfair?
3. Why do you think the Jewish leaders could not see that Jesus fulfilled the law?
4. Why did the religious leaders have such animosity toward Jesus?
5. How would you summarize the main point of the teaching in one sentence?
6. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
7. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
8. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
9. How does this teaching affect Jesus’ command to make disciples?