

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Jesus on Trial.

The trial of Jesus judges human justice and power.

Scripture: John 19:1-16

Rev. Steve Filyk

April 3, 2022

Opening Hymn: Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts [366]

Choruses: How great is our God, How Deep The Father's Love For Us

Communion Hymn: Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn)

Closing Hymn: Thou didst leave thy throne [204]

Do you trust your religious leaders?

Do you trust your religious leaders?

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is ruled by a system of courts

Composed of you elected elders and ministers.

These courts make decisions for the church.

While there has been a lot of controversy

Over the decisions made by our church courts,

There has been as much controversy

Over how those decisions have been made.

Last year's General Assembly was held over zoom

And covered two years of business in a period of time

Shorter than an in-person General Assembly.

How was that possible?

Large omnibus motions were used.

Less discussion was allowed.

Many were unhappy with the process,

And some felt it was manipulated for political gain.

Do you trust your religious leaders?

How about your government?

Do you trust your government?

In Canada we elect our members of Parliament.

Together they design and pass legislation

To provide social, economic, and moral leadership

For our nation.

Now there are always controversies

about the different policies pursued

By different governments.

But during COVID we have seen the unprecedented use

of the power of the purse as well as



the invocation of the Emergencies Act  
With its broad and sweeping powers.

Wikileaks whistleblower, Edward Snowden,  
compared the freezing of bank accounts  
to similar actions by the Chinese and Russian governments.<sup>i</sup>

Do you trust your religious leaders?  
Do you trust your government? PAUSE

Last week our passage from John's Gospel  
Moved between the examination of Jesus,  
in the High Priest's home,

And the questioning of Peter  
in the High Priest's courtyard.

The contrast we were given  
showed the abysmal failure of Peter  
(The representative disciple)  
to demonstrate faith under fire.

Followers of Jesus  
need Jesus' closer presence to succeed.

Today we are presented with another trial.  
Today we have heard the second half  
of Jesus' examination by Pilate.

Like last week's reading  
This is not just the trial of Jesus.

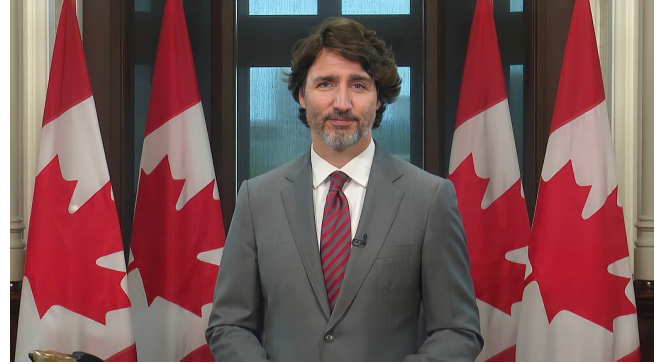
It is a trial of the religious authorities who are accusing him,  
And a trial of the governing authorities  
who are adjudicating the matter.

So what do we learn about Jesus?  
What do we learn about the religious authorities?  
What do we learn about the political leaders in the land?

So what do we learn about Jesus?

We find Jesus to be faithful in his affliction.  
He has been flogged, that is whipped with cords  
That were embedded with sharp objects.

He has been flogged and beaten.  
And he is an object of derision.



The soldiers mock him as a royal pretender:  
 They clothe him in a purple robe  
 and crown of thorns.

Jesus doesn't fight back.  
 When questioned he keeps silent.  
 Only when Pilate tells Jesus that he has the power  
 To free him or crucify him,

Jesus asserts his ongoing faith in God's sovereignty:  
 "You would have no power over me  
 If it were not given to you from above."<sup>ii</sup>

As he was before the High Priest, Jesus is before Pilate.  
 Unwavering in faith.

But how about the religious authorities?  
 When Pilate presses them for a good reason  
 To execute Jesus, they tell him:

"We have a law, and according to that law he must die,  
 because he claimed to be the Son of God."<sup>iii</sup>

The religious authorities tell Pilate they are upholding Divine law,  
 Most notably the first commandment:  
 "No other God, only me."<sup>iv</sup>

Jesus, they charge, is a pretender  
 who is claiming divine status.  
 For this act of blasphemy,  
 For this act of idolatry, he must die.

To force Pilate to act, they emphasise Jesus' assertion of kingship.  
 They remind Pilate that anyone who claims to be king  
 Has set themselves against Caesar.

And that anyone who releases such a pretender  
 Would be no friend of the emperor.

When Pilate fires back "Shall I crucify your king?"  
 They respond with this pledge of loyalty:  
 "We have no king but Caesar."<sup>v</sup>

[You may or may not know that Tiberius Caesar  
 Was also declared to be God's son.  
 The inscription on this tribute penny reads:

"Caesar Augustus Tiberius, son of the Divine Augustus".]<sup>vi</sup>

By declaring Caesar,  
 Son of God, their only king,  
 The religious leaders reveal themselves to be the  
 True blasphemers and idolaters.



"In order to execute Jesus,  
 the Jewish authorities make themselves out to be  
 more loyal subjects of Caesar  
 than the hated Roman official Pilate is...

they are not only rejecting Jesus' messianic claims,  
 they are abandoning Israel's messianic hope...  
 and finally disowning the kingship  
 of the Lord himself.<sup>vii</sup>

The religious leaders fail... miserably.  
 They have been called to represent God to the people  
 And the people to God.

In the end, they disown the very God  
 they are supposed to be representing  
 in order to achieve their narrow purposes.

So then how does Pilate fare,  
 Does he do any better?

In both the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John,  
 Pilate is presented more sympathetically  
 than the religious leaders.

Pilate examines Jesus not once but twice.  
 Pilate declares Jesus to be innocent three times.

Three times (two times in today's reading  
 And once in an earlier passage)  
 Pilate states unequivocally:  
 "I find no basis for a charge against him."<sup>viii</sup>

Yet even though Pilate recognises Jesus' innocence  
 He lacks the courage to uphold what is right.

When the religious leaders insinuated  
 That his support for Jesus was seditious,  
 He quickly backs down.  
 Pilate fails... miserably.

Pilate has been appointed to ensure peace and justice.  
 Yet in the end it is clear that he is more interested  
 In being around for another term.

Jesus' trial reveals his own faithfulness.  
 His trial also reveals the failure  
 of the political and religious systems of his day.

Any review of history  
 Shows a sad litany of repeated failures  
 In every part of the world.

So is there any Good News?  
 Are we simply waiting for Jesus to return  
 any history to be rolled up like a scroll?

The Good News is that the faithful one, Jesus,  
 Died not only for our sins  
 but the sins of our political and religious leaders  
 and those systems that they uphold.

More than that Jesus will rise again  
 bringing us eternal life  
 and power of his Spirit to transform  
 religion and politics so that one day  
 they will finally serve

the good purposes for which they were intended.

At the beginning of our service, I asked a couple questions:  
 Do you trust our religious leaders?  
 Do you trust our government?

Now it is one thing to ask a group of mainly white, middle class, people  
 What they think about these questions.  
 We'd certainly get a different answers  
 If we asked the same questions  
 of our aboriginal brothers and sisters...

Our aboriginal brothers and sisters have suffered greatly  
 due to the misshapen goals of our governments  
 and the sinfulness of our religious institutions.

And yet despite all of this  
 the majority these aboriginal brothers and sisters  
 Look to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

They recognise integrity in Jesus, Even when it is lacking in his church, And their government.

The Good News is that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
 We can see Jesus' integrity flowing back  
 Into institutions like the church,  
 And organisations like our governments.

This Friday in a maybe unexpected move,  
 Pope Francis apologised to the Canadian aboriginal delegation  
 That had meet with him this week.

Let me just read just a short excerpt:

"I ask for God's forgiveness  
 and I want to say to you with all my heart,  
 I am very sorry, and I join my brothers,  
 the Canadian bishops,  
 in asking your pardon clearly...



The content of the faith  
 cannot be transmitted in a way contrary to faith itself...

I also feel shame and I'm saying it now ...  
 for the role that the number of Catholics,  
 particularly those with educational responsibilities,  
 have had

and all these things that wounded you  
 [and] the abuse you suffered,  
 and in the lack of respect shown  
 for your identity and culture."...<sup>ix</sup>

This is certainly not the end of a long road of reconciliation.  
 But it is a step forward.

[I will note that I watched Lisa LaFlamme interview Mandy Gull-Masty  
 Grand Chief of Quebec:  
 she was just beaming as she reported on this,  
 She said she was crying with others  
 When the word were expressed.]

And it is a beautiful illustration of the redeeming work  
 That God is not only doing in our lives  
 but in our political and religious institutions. Thanks be to God. Amen.

<sup>i</sup> Contributors to Wikimedia projects. "Emergencies Act - Wikipedia." 28 Mar. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Emergencies\_Act&oldid=1079699219.

<sup>ii</sup> John 19:11 NIV

<sup>iii</sup> John 19:7 NIV

<sup>iv</sup> Exodus 20:3 NIV

<sup>v</sup> See John 19:15

<sup>vi</sup> See Contributors to Wikimedia projects. "Tribute penny - Wikipedia." 14 Dec. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tribute\_penny&oldid=1060338981.

<sup>vii</sup> D. A. Carson *The Gospel According to John* 606

<sup>viii</sup> See John 19 verses 4 and 6

<sup>ix</sup> Grant, Tavia, et al. "Pope Francis apologizes to Indigenous delegation for residential school abuse in Canada." *Globe and Mail*, 1 Apr. 2022, www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-pope-francis-apologizes-to-indigenous-delegation-for-deplorable.