

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 19:6-16

**Key Words:** Political Leaders

(\*This account is also found in Matthew 27:1-31, Mark 15:1-20; Luke 23:1-37)

Our series title for 18:1-19:15 is, *"No matter how things appear, Jesus is still King!"* It's about the value of believing this when friends fail us (18:1-12), when religious leaders fail us (18:13-27); and when political leaders fail us (18:28-19:15). Each week, we're also considering something vital Jesus said about following Him in John 16:33, *"I've said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Today, we continue to explore our third...

**BIG IDEA: Jesus is still King when political leaders fail us.**

Israel's chief priests were not appeased nor amused after Pilate abused and paraded Jesus before them like a clown in a thorny crown and a purple robe. *Verses 6-8* tell us, *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God."* Some people say that Jesus never claimed to be divine, yet that's clearly what Israel's leaders heard Him saying. John 5:18 says, *"This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."* *When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. Pilate's* conscience was conflicted. Had he flogged a god? Why wouldn't the religious leaders accept anything less than murder? Why weren't his typical political tricks working? Why was his wife having nightmares about Jesus as Matthew 27:19 tells us? *Pilate* was losing all sense of control as his social, political, and religious radars were simultaneously going off. To be clear, as Rome's governor over Israel, he had real **authority**. If he thought he could get away with it, he could've ordered his soldiers to beat, lock up, or even kill these *chief priests*. His decision to set Jesus free should've ended the debate. But that's not how the story went down, is it?

In *verses 9-11 Pilate entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?"* He knew Jesus was from Galilee, so this wasn't a question of geography. *Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate said, "You won't speak to me? Don't you know I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You'd have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above..."* I'll call this **Principle #1: The Doctrine of Concurrence**. That may sound boring

or unfamiliar, but it's a way to process how God can be sovereign over (fully in control, govern) all things while letting people make choices that matter. Here's a great paragraph on the subject from a [Ligonier Devotional](#), "*Concurrence says two or more parties can act in the same event and produce a given outcome without all parties having the same intent. Job's life illustrates concurrence. Job 1 {reveals} three major players in Job's suffering. Satan instigated the suffering by issuing a challenge to the Lord regarding Job's piety. God allowed Satan to bring suffering into Job's life. The Chaldeans and Sabeans attacked Job's family and stole his livestock. But the intent of each party in producing... Job's suffering was different. Satan intended to discredit Job, and...God. The Chaldeans and Sabeans intended to enrich themselves. Our Lord's intent was to vindicate Job's faith. Each player was necessarily involved in Job's suffering, but at different levels and with different motivations. There was a concurrence among them that Job should suffer, but each had a different {intent}. God's ...was good. The other players intended evil. Concurrence helps explain how God can ordain evil and not be guilty of sin. He has a holy intent in all He ordains. Evil is evil, but the Lord never has an evil intent, and He never does evil Himself. He works through the evil intents of others to fulfill His good intent.*" Proverbs 19:21 puts it this way, "*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*" As God's kingdom moves on this world, we discover all sorts of divine paradoxes such as how salvation is both personal and corporate, how Jesus was fully God and fully human, how people who sin can be secure in Christ, how God's power is displayed through our weakness, and how we're enriched by giving. His kingdom flips the script on this world!

Look again at *verse 11, Jesus answered him, "You'd 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."* This will be **Principle #2: There are degrees of sin**. It's unclear if *the greater sin* belonged to Judas, Caiaphas, or the entire Jewish council *who delivered Him to Pilate*, but Jesus clearly said *Pilate* was *guilty* of a *lesser sin*. While this concept is still mysterious to me, [God's Law](#) didn't treat every *sin* the same. In fact, there were different sacrifices for unintentional *sins* and *sins* done ignorantly. Yet, while [different sins have different consequences](#), James 2:10 says, "*The one who keeps all the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.*" To avoid being separated from God eternally, everyone needs the [righteousness of Jesus credited to us](#) by grace through faith (cf. Romans 3:23, 4:1-5). Only His life, death, and resurrection alone can absolve us of every sin! We are again talking about divine paradoxes, right? Anyway, Jesus was simply saying that *Pilate* knew less

about God than the temple mafia (i.e., he was still figuring Jesus out, but the temple mafia understood His claims). Jesus said something similar after healing a man who had been born blind in John 9...the more revelation we have (the more God opens our eyes to who He is), ***the greater sin*** it is to reject Him (see also Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:35-48). What does this say to a world that views sermons as content to be downloaded and consumed? Jesus said to learn about God is to become accountable! His Word demands more than clicking “Like” or saying, “*That was a good message!*” It demands and deserves repentance, faith, and obedience. On that note, let’s segue into...

***Principle #3: Choose Jesus above all.*** Verse 12 says *from then on Pilate sought* (kept trying) *to release him, but the Jews cried, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."* You can read more about this in our sermon notes, but they were basically threatening to complain to the Roman Senate as they had done before. One more bad report could’ve ended his career and his life since his [support in Rome](#) had been dwindling. So, *Pilate* made his choice in *verses 13-14, hearing these words, he brought Jesus out and sat on the judgment seat* (picture a judge ascending the bench to render a verdict) *at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha* (“platform/high place”). According to John, *it was the day of Preparation of the Passover...about the sixth hour*. We could preach an entire sermon series on this statement and debates about the timing of the crucifixion, so I’ve [included a link](#) for you to study. As we keep reading, we find that instead of rendering a verdict, *Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"* Technically, the verdict came in *verses 15-16* as *the chief priests cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said, "Shall I crucify your King?" They answered, "We have no king but Caesar."* So, *he delivered him over to them to be crucified*. How horrific...these experts in Israel’s history and Scripture showed less remorse than the pagan governor! They had quoted the prophets like Isaiah (26:13; 33:22) who said, “*O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance...The LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.*” Their entire job was to keep Israel’s eyes on God’s promises to send His Son (the Messiah or Christ) to rule over all nations. Yet here they are pledging allegiance to ***Caesar*** in view of their holy temple! How could they ever return to “*business as usual*” after all this? The obvious lesson is...don’t be like ***Pilate*** and don’t be like Israel’s religious leaders. ***Choose Jesus above all!*** Choose the King of King and Lord of Lords above all earthly empires. The truth was standing right before ***Pilate***. Jesus had just confirmed centuries of prophecies in Israel with

signs and wonders (cf. Mark 16:20). Sadly, instead of humbly repenting and aligning their will with His, they rejected Jesus because He didn't reinforce their idols, preferences, and political ideologies.

**Let's pray:** Father, your word says, *"Your wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known of you is plain...your invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world. So, we are without excuse"* (cf. Romans 1:18ff). By your Spirit, help us to recognize the massive amounts of evidence you've revealed and to choose differently than the people in this story. Help us to trust what we know about you whenever your infinite glory is too transcendent and wonderful for our tiny minds to grasp. Amen.

**Let's sing:** "There is a Fountain"

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

**Quotes related to this passage:**

- **Pilate's fear and exasperation:** "We have a law ... because he claimed to be the Son of God (7). Thus, the real basis of their accusation is laid bare. The 'law' is probably Leviticus 24:16, 'Anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death' (cf. Jn. 10:30f.) ...no doubt himself a superstitious pagan, this reference to Jesus' divine claims is alarming. He was probably also affected by a message from his wife... (Mt. 27:19). Is this some other-worldly visitor he has on his hands who will perhaps return to haunt Pilate with his strange powers? ...Just as previously with his Jewish interrogators, he refuses to reply (Mk. 14:60–61). Pilate's fear quickly turns to exasperation and annoyance." Professor NT Wright
- **Pilate's superstition:** "Now why does he panic over this statement about Jesus being the Son of God, claiming to be the Son of God? Because every Roman believed in a panoply of gods. Greek gods, Roman gods dominated the Mediterranean world, and they all knew all the stories of the gods who came down into the life of men. They all knew that the gods had offspring and that the offspring of the gods came down as men in human form, and that's how he would understand Son of God...What he's realizing is that this man who is very hard to define, 'I know He's from Galilee. I know He's not a military king. The word out is that He's a miracle worker. Now, He's called the Son of God. Maybe He is one of the gods or a child of the gods who's come down to earth to confront me.'" Pastor John MacArthur
- **God's sovereignty over human authority:** "Pilate has little interest in the death of Jesus; but now at this moment he is confronted with a choice. Does his real power derive from Caesar or God? Pilate chooses the former. In other words, 19:11 understands that God is indeed at work within the work of the state (Rom. 13:1), but this is not said in order to provide an endorsement of God-given rights for the governor; it is to check the governor, to make him alert to the limitations of the excessive power he thinks he already owns. He too is accountable to God and subject to God's work in the world." Professor Gary Burge

- **The mystery of God's providence:** It's tough to wrap our minds around how humans make choices that have real consequences, while God is ultimately sovereign (in control) over all. We may struggle to grasp how both statements can be true, but they are! **Pilate** was on edge because he could sense this--he was a powerful leader who found himself powerless to “*do the right thing*”, which we presume would've been to **free** Jesus. God used various people to keep **Pilate** in check. This story is also a chilling reminder that God sometimes allows evil to prevail for season. If He let these things happen to His sinless Son, we can't expect a trouble-free life no matter how good we think we are. While God has the power to stop our enemies and evil schemes, the unsettling truth is that He doesn't always. Hence, we need faith to endure!
- **Remaining faithful:** God desires to protect His people. His sovereignty over evil means even the worst possible outcome can't stop His ultimate purposes from prevailing. Such a disturbing mystery leads some to walk away and others to bow in humble reverence. In this worst-case scenario, Jesus proved God is worthy of our trust no matter how bad things appear. A holy God always deserves the benefit of the doubt. Faith survives when we let what we know about God prevail over stuff we can't know or haven't come to understand. We can find hope in passages like Psalm 76:10 which says, “*God turns human wrath to His praise*”; Deuteronomy 29:29 which says, “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”; and Job 13:15 which says, “*Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I'll argue my ways to his face.*”
- **The greater sin:** “The ‘greater sin’ of 19:11b is difficult. The most obvious candidate who ‘handed over’ (Gk. *paradidomi*) Jesus to prosecution is Judas, the ‘betrayers’ (which uses this same Gk. verb), but he has disappeared from the story since the arrest (18:5). In 18:30 the Jewish leadership corporately ‘hand over’ Jesus and the responsibility may rest here. But Jesus seems to point to a person (‘the one who handed me over to you’), and the best solution is to see this in the high priest Caiaphas. He was the catalyst for Jesus’ arrest and formulated a rationale for Jesus’ death (11:49–53)...In Mark, following the condemnation of Jesus, Pilate is ‘amazed’ about these events (Mark 15:5). In Matthew, Pilate has ‘great amazement’ (Matt. 27:14), receives a warning message from his wife (27:19), and washes his hands of all responsibility (27:24–25). In Luke, Pilate states three times that Jesus is innocent (Luke 23:4, 14, 22). When we come to John, Pilate not only affirms Jesus’ innocence, but he shows a determined effort to free Jesus (18:38–40; 19:12a) and only agrees to the crucifixion when his loyalty to Rome is questioned (19:12b).” Professor Gary Burge
- **Friend of Caesar:** “*The phrase...may possibly be an allusion to an honorific imperial title awarded by the Emperor to senators and selected individuals. Roman sources inform us that Pilate had gained Tiberias’ favor and become a ‘Friend of Caesar’ through the good graces of one Sejanus, a highly placed imperial official*” (Pastor Bruce Milne).
- **Israel's prior complaints against Pilate:** “He was placed there by Caesar, Tiberius Caesar, to rule. He was there about ten years. It had been trouble all the time. He had conducted himself in foolish ways. He had brought in shields with Caesar's image on it, and the Jews were infuriated by that because they saw them as idols and they wanted them removed; he wouldn't do it. The word went back to Caesar and he got a message from Caesar, “Put the idols away. Don't irritate the people; don't cause a riot.” He did it again when he brought in flags, banners that had images of Caesar. He thought he was paying respect to Caesar; he was irritating the Jews. Again the word came to him when the riots started, “Don't do that. Don't continue to



irritate those people.” He had done these foolish things and they had grown to hate him, he had grown to hate them. Now he has this prisoner from the Jews who desire him to ask no questions just execute the Man. He knows he’s trapped again. Another riot and he’s done. Another riot and he loses his job, his position.” Pastor John MacArthur

- **The trump card:** “But the one constraint on Pilate is what people think of him back in Rome. Roman governors down the years were regularly prosecuted for maladministration. Provinces and cities would take their case to Rome, insisting on justice against the man who had been ruling them in Rome’s name. There were famous instances of ex-governors paying heavy penalties. Under the empire, if the emperor decided someone was a nuisance, or surplus to requirements, he was quite capable of sending a message advising the man to commit suicide, to save his soldiers the bother of killing him themselves...The threat of what Caesar might think is the secret weapon the chief priests have been keeping up their sleeves all this time. They didn’t know whether they would have to use it, but when they realize that Pilate is wavering, and then has decided to let Jesus go, they bring it out...Pilate had been afraid when he heard the chief priests say that Jesus had ‘made himself the son of God’ (verse 7). He was even more afraid when they pulled out this trump card. From here on he has lost the argument.” Professor NT Wright
- **Pilate’s judgement seat:** Professor Gary Burge wrote, “From this point, things proceed swiftly (19:13–16). Pilate returns to the porch outside with Jesus, where he occupies the governor’s judgment seat (or tribune; Gk. bema; Acts 25:6, 17; cf. Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10) and prepares to render a decision (John 19:16). In a footnote John tells us that this was known as ‘the stone pavement’ (Gk. lithostrothos) and adds the Hebrew (i.e., Aramaic) note that it was called the ‘Gabbatha’ (which likely means “platform” or “high place”). But the important feature of the note is that as governor, Pilate is now positioned to speak with the voice of his office.” Pastor Bruce Milne adds, “{this} official symbol of the Roman judiciary, is brought out on to the terrace outside Pilate’s residence {who} takes his seat as the official representative of the Roman power. The crowd hushes for the verdict. Matthew adds the vivid detail of Pilate calling for water and washing his hands before the crowd in protestation that he is innocent of responsibility for Jesus’ death.”
- **The ultimate betrayal:** “‘We have no king but Caesar!’ is a devastating thing to hear, coming from the lips of the official representatives of Judaism. The scriptures, songs and revolutionary slogans of Judaism had spoken for a thousand years of its God as the true king, of the coming Messiah as God’s true king, and of pagan rulers as a sham, a pretense, a bunch of trumped-up idolaters. What would Isaiah have said to the chief priests? How would they feel, next time they heard the psalms sung in the Temple? These questions haven’t gone away...Who is the world’s true lord? What authority have governments, and how does that relate to the authority of God? Sometimes, when people don’t want Jesus as Lord, they find themselves driven, like the chief priests, into some form of pagan empire. Either way, the choice becomes stark. Are we with Pilate – nervously allowing himself to be maneuvered into dangerous compromise? Are we with the chief priests – pressing home a political advantage without realizing that we are pushing ourselves backwards towards complete capitulation? Or are we with Jesus – silent in the middle, continuing to reflect the love of God into his muddled and tragic world?” Professor NT Wright

- **The failure of the Jewish leaders:** “Their final words on this stage appear at 19:15, where they hoist up their patriotic flag higher than the highest temple rampart, putting Caesar above God. What can we make of these men? This is more than a story about the miscarriage of justice. It is more than a disturbing parable of an innocent man dying without justice. This is a story of religious corruption, of spiritual leaders who slaughter the sheep and ruin the flock (cf. Ezek. 34). This is the story of priests who have bent the knee before Rome, not the temple; who have viewed God’s people as a power base, a social construct, a force among other political forces, an agent of change in the politics of change, and themselves as worthy brokers with the pagan power-broker from the Roman Senate. In their secret conspiracy to eliminate one man, a man who could upset their carefully built equilibrium, they sacrifice their souls. In the end, they are in the world as much as Pilate is; yet, disturbingly, they do not show any of Pilate’s reserve or regret.” Professor Gary Burge
- **Our accountability:** Do you realize that we become more accountable to God as we listen to sermons, as we attend Bible studies, or read our Bible cover to cover? While God desires for us to be life-long learners, He also demands we become more than consumers. There are passages in Hebrews and in James, for example, that say there’s a time for us to transition from student to teacher or from being served to serving others. While some of us get this, some long-time churchgoers miss it. Regardless of our level of learning or stage of life, we’re accountable to believe and apply whatever God has revealed to us. Some of us know who God is, what He stands for, what He rightfully demands, what He calls sin, and ways He wants us to serve, but we continue living in active disobedience. Maybe we blame friends who’ve let us down or are simply worn down by injustices, corrupt religious people, and self-seeking politicians. We can make endless excuses, but Jesus proved it’s possible for people to honor God if we’ll let faith rule our hearts. So, by faith, let’s commit ourselves to agreeing with all God says is true, giving Him the benefit of the doubt with our questions, repenting of our sins, and serving Him the best we can with our level of understanding, our giftedness, our season of life, etc.

#### Quotes related to the larger context:

- **Full life:** John said he wrote this letter to help us find “*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” Chapters 1-12 contain 3 years of real-life stories where people met Jesus during His public ministry. Chapters 13-21 slow way down as Jesus began to reveal His (God’s) heart to His disciples in the week leading up to the cross and resurrection.
- **Book Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “zōē”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it’s “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate

Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be ‘the life’ of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”

**Other Articles/Songs/Videos:** Please ask us about many other resources.

- [The Pour Over Podcast](#): “Stay informed while remaining focused on Christ with The Pour Over. New episodes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.”

**Direction for discussion leaders:**

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the discussion around 30mins. Go for a single, not a home run.
3. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

**Let’s prepare for our sermon from John 19:6-16.**

- What stands out to you in this passage? What seems odd, or confusing, or causes you to ask questions?

**Let’s apply our sermon from John 19:6-16.**

- In an earthly sense, Pilate’s authority was given by the emperor above him but in a greater sense, his authority was given by God above. Does this mean leaders have blanket approval from God or require God’s people to accept their bad decisions? What does this say about human accountability before God, and how does it keep us from merely writing off a leader or a boss as “bad”? (cf. Romans 13:1-7; Romans 14; Hebrews 13:17; 1Peter 2:13-25).
- What are some ways people misuse God’s Word to support their idols and worldviews? What are some areas of sin in your life where God has been clear and you’re refusing to repent, trust, and obey Him? Who might you confess this to, so they can help you find mercy and freedom?

**Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>