

John 18 • Jesus arrested, Peter's denial, Trial before Pilate

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If you're in John chapter 18, let's pray as we get into the Word this morning.

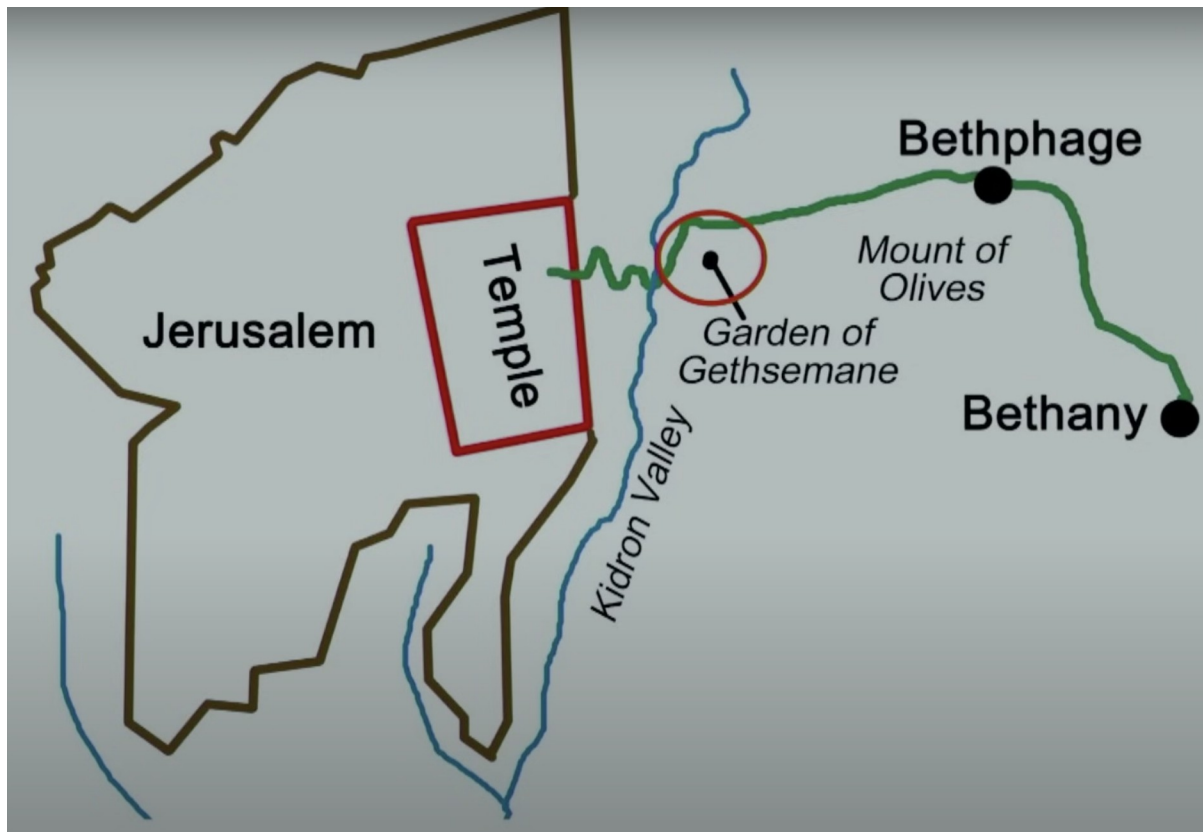
Heavenly Father, we just pause for a moment here to seek your face and to settle our hearts in your presence that you might speak to us today, words of grace and insight from the scripture. Lord, you have packed this Word full of truth and insight and we need to be diligent to dig it out and to open our hearts to it, and we want to be nourished today from your Word.

We want to be encouraged, but Lord, we confess to you today that without the ministry of your Holy Spirit, we're just lost, even in understanding the scriptures. And so Lord, we rely completely on you today to teach us, to instruct us and to fill our hearts with grace and truth.

We thank you, Father, we ask your blessing upon our time, we ask you to be with us in a very special way. In the name of Jesus, our Savior and all God's people said, amen.

John 18 begins by saying in verse 1, "*When Jesus had spoken these words, ...*" (ESV) And of course, that refers to what we dealt with last week in chapter 17, where if you have one of those Bibles where the Words of Jesus are in red. Practically, the entire chapter is in red because it is the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus that we studied last week. How beautiful that was.

We're told that after that was concluded, "*...he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.*" Let me put a very crude map up on the screen for you so you can just kind of get a sense of where things are located.



You can see the city of Jerusalem, the temple there on the east side of the city. And then there's this, kind of green line that shows a road, that was the north road to Bethany. And just outside of the city, you would cross the Kidron Brook, which flowed through the Kidron Valley and there is the Garden of Gethsemane. And I circled it there on that very crude map for you and that is where Jesus and His disciples went.

The Garden of Gethsemane is on the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Olives figures very prominently in the Bible and in biblical prophecy. Many things happened on the Mount of Olives.

That is where Jesus was when He ascended into heaven and that is where Jesus will return when He sets foot upon this earth. The Bible tells us that the Lord will descend to the Mount of Olives. (Zechariah 14:4) So this area just outside of the city of Jerusalem is hugely important.

Now, it tells us here in verse 2 that, *“Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.”*³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.” Now what John omits in his narrative, is the fact that Judas conspired with the religious leaders for a sum of money.

This is given to us in one of the other gospel accounts, that being Matthew. Let me put it up on the screen for you, Matthew chapter 26, where it says,

Matthew 26:14-16 (ESV)

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

So we find out from Matthew's account just exactly how that came down. Verse 4, follow with me now, as we keep reading. *"Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"* ⁵ *They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth."* (or literally, Jesus the Nazarene) *Jesus said to them, "I am he."* Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ *When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

⁷ *So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."* ⁸ *Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go."* ⁹ *This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."* Which was part of the prayer that we read last week.

Now this is a very interesting passage or section of John's account. Remember, he's an eyewitness of these events and he gives us this interesting note that only an eyewitness would have seen. And that is that, when Jesus said, *"I am he"* he says, the soldiers *"drew back and fell to the ground."* The New American Standard Bible (NASB) says, *"they went backward and fell to the ground."* In other words, they took a step back and then fell back to the ground.

So this presents this rather interesting picture and I am assuming that you want to know what happened or why they fell to the ground, and so do I. Because I don't know and I don't think anybody does, because the Bible doesn't say. I don't know if there was a couple of big dude angels kind of standing there and as soon as He said, *"I am he,"* He gave these guys a shove, so they felt... Or if it was just the power that was resident in what Jesus said, when He said, *"I am he."*

Because essentially what He is saying, what the Greek literally translates is, "I am." In the Greek, it's "Ego eimi." The word, Ego-, is where we get our word, ego, I, I am. Now you'll remember that is the divine name. That is the name by which God referred to Himself when Moses, talking to the Lord at the burning

bush, said, who do I tell them sent me when I go to Egypt to set your people free? (Exodus 3:13)

And the Lord said, tell them, I AM sent you, I AM that I AM. (Exodus 3:14) That speaks of the eternity of God, but that is the divine name. That is the name by which He is referred and Jesus is literally using the divine name. When He says, who are you seeking? Jesus, the Nazarene, I am. Boom!, they fall backwards. I don't know, maybe it was just the power in that name. We'll find out one day, right.

But I think I know what it means, even if I don't know why it happened, or what exactly happened. The fact that the soldiers fell backward at the very simple declaration, “*I am,*” or “*I am he,*” I think shows pretty conclusively that Jesus had the power and authority to end this whole fiasco if He wanted to.

He didn't have to go through with it. That fact though, that He didn't shut it down is proof that this was something that He was allowing to take place. Jesus allowed them, will allow them to arrest Him. And what that means is, everything that happens between now, the arrest, all the way to the crucifixion happened because He let it happen.

And He referred to it when we looked last week at that High Priestly Prayer, Jesus started off by saying, “*Father, the hour has come.*” (John 17:1) We talked about what that meant, “*the hour has come.*” Earlier in His ministry, whenever they tried to arrest Him or take hold of Him, they weren't able to do it because His hour had not yet come.

And now His hour had come and so they are now able. He let it happen, He let all of it happen and that's exactly what Jesus had said earlier, way back in John chapter 10. Let me put it on the screen for you, John 10, beginning of verse 17. It says,

John 10:17:18a (ESV)

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

For this reason (this is Jesus talking) the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

Who took Jesus's life from Him? No one, He laid it down of His own accord. That's exactly what He said and this all goes to show that what takes place at this point in time, this arrest, and everything that follows, happens because He let it happen.

It was according to God's plan that Jesus would come and lay down His life. His life was not taken, He laid it down willingly for you and me, willingly. He knew what He was doing and He wanted to do it from the standpoint of how it would save you and me from our sin. For the joy set before Him, He endured the scorn and the humiliation and the incredible pain that would take place.

Verse 10, let's keep reading. *“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (and then John tells us) (The servant's name was Malchus.)”* Lot of interesting information there that we really don't need. I mean, it's interesting, isn't it? I mean, we didn't really need to know it was the right ear. We didn't really even need to know the guy's name was Malchus. We didn't even really need to know who he was from the standpoint of he was the servant of the high priest.

All we know, is that Peter thought, now's the time for violence and now's the time to protect my Lord. They're going to arrest Him, at least it looks like it, so, shoop, out comes the sword and Peter starts swinging it. But Peter really doesn't know how to swing a sword because he's been a fisherman all his life and who knows if he's even held a sword before this point. But he just starts swinging and all he manages to accomplish is to take off an ear. I'm sure he wasn't aiming for an ear.

I can't imagine, you know, kind of going, okay, hold still or something like that. But I'm sure he was trying to kill the guy. I'm sure he was..., or he was just swinging the sword to protect the Lord, but he gets in here. In fact, it's Luke who goes on to tell us that Jesus, after saying, *“Put your sword into its sheath; (which is verse 11) shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”*

Jesus then reached out and touched Malchus and healed the ear miraculously. (Luke 22:51) Wouldn't that have been something to see? Pretty amazing stuff. But remember, this is Peter, we're going to hear more from Peter in this chapter. I can relate to Peter. Peter is one of the people we like to kind of laugh at sometimes in the Bible, because he seems to always say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing at just the right time. And I can relate to that because that's kind

of sounds like my Christian life to a large degree. We're going to see how the Lord cures him later on from being such a Peter.

Verse 12 goes on and it says, *“So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.”* So, they didn't take Jesus immediately to the home of the high priest, the current high priest. They took Him into the home of a man named Annas who was the father in law of the high priest. Well, why would you take Him there? Well Annas used to be the high priest.

Now remember something, at this time in Israel's history, the high priesthood had gotten completely off from what God intended it to be and how the high priesthood position was meant to be passed along and now it was a political position. High priests were at times appointed by the Romans, it was just a mess and it wasn't a good thing anymore. But Annas is the man they took Jesus to first, because there are many who believe that it was Annas who was really kind of the power behind the leadership of Israel at that time. So He was taken there and before we find out what happened in the home of Annas.

John turns our attention back to Peter and it says in verse 15, if you look with me in your Bible. *“Simon Peter followed Jesus, ...”* Now pause there for just a moment, lest you get the wrong idea and get this picture in your mind of Peter walking right there alongside Jesus and the soldiers and I'm coming along with you, Lord, because I don't know where they're taking you, but I'm going to follow and I'm going to be there. That's not what's happening.

In fact, we have to look up Luke's account of this passage to find out what's really kind of going on. Let me show you on the screen, it says,

Luke 22:54 (ESV)

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance.

Remember people, it's dark still. This is before the first light of dawn and so Peter and all the other apostles, when Jesus was arrested, they all scattered, they all scattered into the shadows. Jesus was alone when they bound Him and began to take Him away, but a couple of them kind of started following close or at least at a distance in the shadows, Peter is one of those disciples.

In fact, we're told as we keep reading on. In verse 15 again says, *“Simon Peter followed (him) Jesus and so did another disciple.”* Now this other disciple goes

unnamed, but many people believe that this is in fact John, the author of this account. And he goes on and says, *“Since that disciple (and we believe he's speaking of himself) was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.”*

Now, obviously that would have caused the servant girl to take notice of Peter, right? Because she's the one who's keeping watch of the door and it says in verse 17, *“The servant girl at the door said to Peter, “You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.””* Denial number 1 and you know why we're counting. Because Jesus had told Peter a few hours earlier, what is recorded in John 13, up on the screen,

John 13:37-38 (ESV)

Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”

This is why we're counting, because Jesus said, you will deny me 3 times. Now, what did Peter say right before Jesus said this? He said, I'm not going to leave you, I'm not going to abandon you, I'll stand with you. I will go to my death with you and notice what Jesus said. *“Will you lay down your life for me?”* Will you? Because He knew better, Peter didn't know better. He will know better before this night is over.

We go on, verse 18. *“Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.”*

Now we go into the home of Annas and it says, *“¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.””*

Now Jesus isn't being a smart aleck when He says these words, because remember the former high priest, Annas is questioning Jesus about His teaching. And Jesus is simply saying, I taught in public. I taught in the synagogues, I even taught in the temple courts, so there were a lot of people there who heard me. If you're questioning what I taught, that perhaps I taught

something that was unbiblical or wrong, then all you have to do is bring in witnesses.

Why is He suggesting that? Because that was the approved judicial process for the Jews. Whenever you're questioning a witness about some potential wrongdoing that he has committed, you bring in witnesses. That's the way God established the judicial system for Israel. You can go back in the Old Testament, read about it in the Book of Leviticus. They were to bring 2 or 3 witnesses to let every matter be established.

So Jesus is simply challenging them to use the judicial process that had been given to them by God in such situations, okay. And we're going to find out as we kind of go on here, that they're not interested in following the judicial guidelines because as we keep reading, it says in verse 22. *"When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?'"*

Notice Jesus's response. ²³ *Jesus answered him, 'If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?'"* Now, Jesus, when He says, *"if what I said is wrong,"* He's not talking about what He just said to Annas. Again, He's referring to His teachings that they're questioning him about and He's saying, if you think that I taught something incorrect, then why don't you bear witness about what those things are. Bring in some witnesses.

But if I didn't say anything wrong, if I didn't misspeak or teach wrong things, then why did you just strike me? Because all I did was challenge you to do what God told you to do in His Word. Well, they didn't care and without any further conversation that we hear of, it says in verse 24, *"Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest."* Again, his son in law, who is the current high priest. All right, so we go on here.

Meanwhile, we return to Peter and it says in verse 25, *"Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, 'You also are not one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.'" Denial number 2.*

²⁶ *One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with (Jesus, with that guy) him?'"* And it says in verse 27, *"Peter again denied it, (number 3) and at once a rooster crowed."*

Matthew gives us some further interesting insights to this drama. Check this out on the screen from Matthew 26, he says,

Matthew 26:74-75 (ESV)

Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Then he (Peter) began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately (Matthew says) the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Have you ever wept bitterly? It's hard on your body, it's a convulsive sort of weeping and it's actually hard to breathe when you weep that way. But this was the most important weeping, probably of Peter's life, I'm willing to bet. Because, we've seen all through this gospel and frankly, other gospel accounts that Peter's the guy who's always ready to speak up, even if it's inappropriate or out and out wrong.

I mean, Peter was the man who was willing to pull Jesus aside and actually rebuke Him, just because Jesus was talking about going to Jerusalem and dying there. And Peter pulled Him aside and he said enough, enough of this talk about you going to Jerusalem and we're not going to let that happen. I want you to knock that off right now. Can you imagine? Can you imagine speaking to Jesus that way? And that earned Peter a rebuke of his own.

That's when Jesus said to Peter, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" You have in thoughts or in mind, rather, the thoughts, not of God, but the thoughts of man. (Matthew 16:23) But Peter had the guts to speak up and again, we even read, or we saw on the screen, how Peter was the one who said, I..., these guys here might abandon you, but I won't abandon you, I'm Peter remember. You named me that, the rock, I am as steady as a rock and I'm not going anywhere and I am ready to die with you tonight. And remember what Jesus said, are you ready? Are you ready to die with me?

What do we see throughout the course of the gospels? We see that Peter had this inflated idea of who he was. Peter saw himself in a very favorable light, he saw himself as the strong man, he saw himself as the rock, like he believed his own advertising. He was the first one to speak up and say, I'm here, I'll stand, no matter what, I'm the strong one of the bunch and what he found out is that he

was the weakest of the bunch. And when he was made to see who he really was, he went out and wept bitterly. But as I said, that was one of the most important weepings of his life because you see, once you realize who you really are, you are then ready to become who God has created you to be.

Because we do not serve God in our own strength, we serve God in our weakness. As Paul learned by having that thorn in the flesh given to him, even though he cried out to God, Lord, take this from me. The Lord said no, that one's going to stay Paul. And Paul came to understand, as he explained in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, that it is really for my best that this thorn be allowed, because when I am weak, then I'm strong and thus is the paradox of the Christian life.

You want to serve the Lord? You really want to do cool things for God? Die to self, become and understand who you really are and who you really are was spoken most beautifully by the words of Jesus when He said, apart from me, you can do nothing, right? (John 15:5) And we have to come to terms with that, each one of us has believers.

Now, Peter had heard Jesus say that. Apart from me, you can do nothing, he didn't believe it, he just didn't believe it. He heard it, but he didn't believe it. You've heard it, do you believe it? If you really want to be strong, understand your absolute weakness before the Lord and then cry out to Him for the strength that only He can give.

That's the secret of the Christian life in case you were wondering. We must become weak so that we might be strong and sometimes like Peter, God shows us just how weak we are in living color and it's pretty disappointing, pretty disappointing.

As we come now to verse 28, we're going to see the John included really nothing of what happened or what was said at the home of Caiaphas, because he says in verse 28. *"Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. ..."* And by the governor, he's referring to what was also called, the procurator or Pontius Pilate, alright? He was the governor, a Roman governor put there by Rome to keep Roman law.

And John says, *"²⁸...It was early morning. (by this time, and it says,) They themselves (speaking of the religious leaders) did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover."* Let me tell you what's going on here.

The Jews, remember it's Passover time, it's a high holy feast of the Jews and they knew, or they believed, that if they entered the home of a Gentile, they would be made unclean and unable to participate in the Passover celebration. Therefore, when they went to take Jesus to Pilate, they sent word in the house to Pilate, but they said, he needs to come out and talk to us out here, outside. And so what's going on here? You got to be careful not to miss the irony.

These religious leaders are trying to remain ceremonially acceptable to God, and they are delivering God to the Romans that He might be killed, that's the irony. We want to be acceptable to God so we can't go in your house, but we got this guy here and we want you to kill Him. Who is He? He's the Son of God. That's irony, yeah.

Verse 29, look with me in your Bible. *“So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?””* I want you to hear what they respond by saying. ³⁰ *They answered him, (hey listen) “If this man were not doing evil, we would (we have brought him here?) not have (and) delivered him over to you.””* Which is another way of saying, He hasn't done anything to break Roman law and that's what Pilate was there to keep.

But this was a religious matter and that was something Pilate didn't care about keeping. In fact, the Romans allowed the Jews to take care of their own laws as it related to religious things and the Sanhedrin was the body of Jews that was kind of like the final court, if you will.

And so, Pilate just said, go and deal with this man according to your own laws, I'm here to keep Roman justice and obviously this man hasn't done anything against Roman law, so this is not my issue. Look what it goes on to say here, ³¹ *Pilate (says) said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.””*

Here's the deal. Although the Jews allowed the Romans to keep their own justice as it related to religious matters, there was one limitation they placed on them, they could not execute someone. In other words, they took capital punishment away from them and said, you can do anything you want except kill the person. That's something we retain the right to do, right?

So if someone, they feel, Jews, is worthy of capital punishment, they got to bring him to the Romans and convince the Romans that he has violated Roman law, alright? But they're obviously playing their hand here and they're revealing why they brought Jesus to Pilate. We want Him dead and that's what it says in

verse 32 in your Bible when it says, *“This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.”*

And the reason we know that, is because we know that if a Roman put a non Roman to death, it was by crucifixion. But did you know that it was against the law for a Roman citizen to be crucified? It was against the law because it was considered to be too cruel because someone could hang on a cross for 3 to 4 days before finally dying.

If you were a Roman citizen and you had done something deserving death, they would give you a much more humane death. They would just cut off your head and that was considered humane because it's like whoosh!, and it's over. But crucifixion, as I said, could last for days and it was excruciating and most victims of crucifixion would go out of their minds from the pain. It was a terrible way to die, but Jesus talked about the fact that He would die by crucifixion.

So anyway, we go on here and in verse 33, it says, *“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”* ³⁴ *Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”* ³⁵ *Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?”*” So, at this point, Pilate assumes He's done some kind of a crime.

And ³⁶ *Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”* ³⁷ *Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?”* *Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. (take note of that and then Jesus says,) Everyone who is of the truth (and that means everyone who is willing to hear and embrace the truth) listens to my voice.”* ³⁸ *Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”*”

We've spent time in the past talking about this whole idea by our Lord, this statement that He came, *“to bear witness to the truth,”* right? Jesus said, for this whole reason, I was brought or came into the world to bear witness to the truth. To bear witness means to give testimony like you would in front of a jury or a court. I've come to give testimony to the truth and whoever is willing to listen and to hear and embrace that truth, they will hear my voice, right?

That's what Jesus is saying and this is a very natural thing for Jesus to say as it relates to the truth because He is the truth, He is the embodiment of truth. Do you remember He said this in John chapter 14, let me put it on the screen. It says,

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (and He said) No one comes to the Father except through me."

Now, Jesus said something that you and I cannot say. You and I cannot say, I am the truth. We can say, I tell the truth, I know the truth, I've heard the truth, but I cannot say, I am the truth and neither can you, but Jesus did. I literally am the truth, you want to know the truth? Get to know me.

Now how blind can humans be about the truth? Pretty blind. Here's Pilate, he's looking at the truth, he has the truth right in front of him and he asks the question, what is truth? Isn't that incredible? Well, it's really not all that incredible when you realize that the Bible tells us that the God of this age has blinded the eyes of those who are perishing so they cannot see the truth. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

They cannot see it and when you think about it, you look at the world in which we live today and you think to yourself, wow, it's a battle for the truth, isn't it? I mean, the world wants to believe a lie and they love coming up with lies and deceptions and embracing them. And we're living in that sort of a world today that is literally perpetuated by Satan. How do we know that?

Let me show you what else Jesus said in John 8:44. He says, speaking of the devil,

John 8:44 (ESV)

"...there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

And we've said many times, that when the Bible calls someone the father of something, it means they are the originator of that thing. Jesus called Satan, the originator of lies, they start with him, okay.

Now, we also know from the Bible that the whole world is under the influence of the evil one, so what should we expect to see in the world? Lies, and the farther a culture gets away from God and His Word, the more we reject God, the more we reject His Word, what do you expect that culture to embrace? Lies, to the point where today in the world, you know, you can get in trouble if you actually say things like, a man can't menstruate, or a man can't bear a baby, or can't become pregnant.

You'll get in trouble, you'll get canceled by the culture if you say what is true, why? Because it flies in the face of what they want to believe, which is a lie, right? This is what's going on in the world, it's not rocket science. These are just the lies of the devil and it becomes more pervasive the more we reject God. And the rest of us who've opened our hearts to the Lord, we're sitting around going, what in the world is going on? What's happening in the world? They've gone crazy, they've literally gone insane believing things that are ridiculous. It is just the most amazing thing. But you know, what keeps us from going off the deep end, when we look at this world, is remembering how blind we were before we came to know Jesus Christ.

And like the blind man said, whom Jesus healed, I was blind but now I see, He opened my eyes. (John 9:25) And that's what gives us any modicum of grace and understanding about the world in which we live. And we know that we need to pray for people that their eyes might be opened to see the truth and to embrace the truth, because the truth has a wonderful effect.

And Jesus told us about it. He said, you will know the truth and the truth will, what? Set you free, set you free. (John 8:32) So I suppose the converse is also true, lies and deceptions blind you, right. And the world that we live in is bound up and imprisoned by lies and that's why we pray. That's why we pray for people, that they might be set free. So that's the battle of our culture.

We're in the middle of verse 38, in case you're wondering, let's keep going. It says, *"After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, 'I find no guilt in him.'"* Which is a way of saying, He hasn't done anything against Roman law.

But we also know that Pilate kind of wanted to throw a bone to the Jews, so to speak and so it says in verse 39, *"But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"* ⁴⁰ *They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!"* (and of course, we haven't even heard about Barabbas up to this point, but we're told that) *Now Barabbas was a robber."*

Your Bible may say a thief or even an insurrectionist, because he had taken part in some sort of a rebellion, apparently against Rome, which was not an uncommon sort of a thing.

But when we get into chapter 19 next time, we're going to see how this scene intensifies to the point where Pilate, who understands that Jesus has not done anything contrary to Roman law still, he has to do something about Him and he will eventually turn Him over to be crucified even though Jesus has not broken any laws. And we will get into that next week so the drama continues, right?

So let's stand together and we're going to close in prayer. For those of you who need prayer yourself before you head out the door, we will be available up front here to pray with you. If there's anything going on in your life that just, you just need to bring to the throne of grace, we'll have some people up front here that are available to pray with you. So let's pray.

Father, we come to you and first of all, just thank you for the reminders that we've received today in the Word and the truth that's been laid out. And the reality of that truth and the implications of that truth that continually set us free.

And we see Father God, that we are living in a world that is bound by lies and deception, but you have opened our eyes to the truth. The truth that we are sinners, the truth, that we need a savior, the truth, that Jesus is that Savior. And I pray my Father, God, for anybody here in this room today who just is coming to terms with those truths and wants and desires to open their heart to you and to the truth, that Jesus is the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

I just pray my father God, that today, even as I'm closing here in prayer that they would just open their hearts to you and say, Lord, I believe, I believe that you're my Savior and I confess my sin and I trust you, Lord, to forgive me, to cleanse me, to wash me and to change my life. Open my eyes that I may see, change my life, that I may be a different person, that I may be renewed and be the person that I was created to be.

Lord, deliver me from all the lies of this world and bring me into the truth that only you can declare. We thank you for your Word, we thank you for your love. We thank you for the beautiful sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf and we praise you that you are the God who sees. We pray all of these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you, have a good rest of your Sunday.