

Sermon on John 18:33-37
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Last Sunday of End Time: Christ the King (B)
November 25, 2018

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

(John 18:33-37)

"The King of No Lies"

- Will this cut rate insurance really save me 15% or more on my bill--or is it just a catchy tagline to try to get me to switch to their policy?
- Will this tax increase really fix the streets / schools / crime - or it just a ploy to get more money into the hands of different people?
- Will this candidate really do what they say--or are they just pandering to the majority to get votes while hiding their more radical views until after the election?
- Does this person really love me as they say they do--or are they just using me to get something for themselves?

We are paranoid people. Especially when we are being offered something that seems like a good deal. Because experience tells us that sometimes deals aren't quite what they're cracked up to be. Experience tells us that people sometimes lie to us to get us to do what they want. And maybe honesty compels us to admit that sometimes we've done it ourselves. No wonder we're so paranoid about the claims of others! Everybody has a slant, it seems. Everybody has an agenda, a bias, an understated goal that they are trying to work for without actually telling us what it is.

And then we hear Jesus come and say that he is a different kind of King. He says, "I am the King who is based on truth." **"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."**

A different sort of king. A King of no lies! Can it really be? Can this be someone that we can trust? Let's think about his words to us today.

I. Jesus shows that he is the King of truth

Think about this conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. The leaders of the Jews had brought Jesus to this Roman governor, demanding his execution for serious crimes, including that he claimed to be a King. (Jesus had testified before them that he was the Messiah--the King of Kings, and the Son of David). So Pontius Pilate, skeptical of all this, did his cross-examination. He simply asked Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

But think about what Pontius Pilate's goals were here. His goal was to keep the peace--because of he didn't, Caesar Tiberius in Rome would not be pleased. His goal was to carry out justice--but not for justice's own sake but again, so that he would not start a riot that would imperil his own position. His goal was to serve Caesar, not because he probably thought that Caesar was the ideal king and ruler but because Caesar was the one who had given him this important office and Caesar was the one who could take it away.

In short, Pontius Pilate, as the rest of his story makes clear, was really primarily interested in helping himself. He wanted power for its own sake, for his own sake, because like all human beings he liked being in control, he liked getting his own way and all the luxurious perks that an office like his could provide him.

But what about Jesus?

Why was he there? As he pointed out to the Pilate, he wasn't interested in earthly power. "*If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews.*" We might also add: based on the number of miracles he had done--calming the storms, walking on water--it would have been an incredibly simple matter for Jesus to free himself of his enemies' clutches at any point during the proceedings!

So why was he there? He tells us: "For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." Jesus couldn't lie. He came to speak the truth, to establish the truth, to proclaim it in such a way that it would create a whole new kind of kingdom that was comprised of people who knew and held to this truth. He is "the King of No Lies".

What is the truth that was so vital that Jesus would give up his life for it? It's the truth of God and man and sin. It's the true story of how this world is the way it is--the result of humanity's rebellion against God. It's the truth that sin and sinners deserve death but that God was determined to bring them life. It's the truth that God was so incredibly gracious that he would forgive people forever and ever--but only if someone would first come and suffer for the sins in the place of the sinners. It's the truth that Jesus would die for, and by his suffering and dying he made it true. And he rose from the dead to prove that it was true.

Innocent people sometimes suffer. But usually they don't suffer by choice. If they do, it's only for the sake of something that they truly believe in. But Jesus' truth was about himself! He claimed to be a different kind of king. His death proves that he meant it. His resurrection proves that he was right!

II. Jesus calls us to embrace the truth

And now he calls to you and me, just as he did to Pontius Pilate, with his invitation and his warning all rolled into one: ***"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."***

We live in a world of lies and liars. Into that world has come the truth--the truth of a new King and a better Kingdom that will last forever. Will you listen to the truth or join in the lies?

Do you want to keep living in the lie? Do you want to keep only caring about yourself like Pontius Pilate and all the rest of this world does? Do you want to keep trying to hide your sins and lie about them to others, to God and even to your own self--refusing to ever acknowledge that you have done wrong? Do you want to live in the delusion that your earthly life is going to last forever? Do you want to live in the fantasy land of those who don't think there is a God, or at least not one who cares what they do? Do you want to live in the false hope that you're so much better and smarter than other people that you can face eternity on your own merits?

The lies are everywhere. They're so hard to avoid. But Jesus calls you to the truth. He calls you to hear his Word where you'll find a message that's different from the world. The world recognizes this and that's why it screams in rage and hostility against God's truth louder and louder with each passing year! Don't let those voices intimidate you. You already know those voices in the world are full of self-serving lies--we've established that, remember? The reason why God's Word is so different is because it's true! There's no other philosophy, no other religion, no other movement that says what Jesus does: that he is the eternal Son of God, the King, the Savior, the only hope for humanity; and that this world will soon end because he is coming to judge the living and the dead.

Friends, let's live in that truth! Be ever so glad and thankful that God has revealed his truth to you because you would not have figured it out on your own. Be glad that God has opened your eyes to see that he does love you, that your sins are washed away, that you are an heir of heaven for Jesus' sake.

And then trust that Jesus knows what he's doing when he guides your life with his commandments. Remember, he can never lie to you! If he tells you that a certain path is wrong and sinful he would never tell you that to harm you! Following his ways, his truth will always be better for you than the lies of sin. Let him lead you in the righteous paths! Let him teach you about the kind of life he wants you to have. He can never lie to you and he will never harm you! And this is how you can show that you are "on the side of truth"--because you listen to him.

Conclusion

You probably know how Pontius Pilate responded to this invitation from Jesus. He scoffed, "What is truth?" and then went out to the crowds and declared Jesus was not worthy of any punishment from the Roman court. He recognized that Jesus was not a threat to Caesar; he failed to believe that he had any better kingdom to offer at all. And in the end he cowardly acquiesced to the crowd's demands for Jesus' blood.

Pilate said, "What is truth?" because he had given up on finding truth. In our cynical age many people agree with Pontius Pilate. They recognize the world is full of scams and lies but they despair of ever finding something that is true.

But thanks be to God that truth did come into the world! It's there for you to read and learn. It's there for you to be saved by it. And you have been, thanks to the Holy Spirit of truth.

May Jesus preserve you in his Truth so that you always follow him, the King of Truth--genuinely living for him, truly believing in him, always rejoicing that he came to bring you into the true kingdom that continues into everlasting glory! Amen.