

Two Kingdoms Pt. 2
John 18:33-38a.

We see after the arrest and mock trial of Jesus before the religious leaders, the religious leaders bring Jesus before Pilate to validate that Jesus is worthy of death, and then execute him. Much to their chagrin, Pilate does not rubber stamp their pronouncement, but he takes Jesus into his residence and begins to examine him. And it is a fascinating conversation. Here there is a coming together and also a clash of two kingdoms. One has the power of life and death in the physical sense, but the other has power over life and death of the soul. One can direct men and control them physically, the other has the power to direct the hearts of individuals. And we see these two powers coming together — Pilate who ruled more in a dictatorial manner even though he was under the authority of Rome, and then there is Jesus who we call King of kings, and Lord of lords. There is no one greater than Jesus.

And certainly the religious leaders present Jesus as an insurrectionist and as a rival to Rome, so Pilate asks him a straightforward question whether he is the king of the Jews. And the answer is in verse 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.’**” Jesus indicates that his kingdom is not of this world. And the meaning here is that he is no threat to the earthly power of Rome. We realize that Jesus reigns over all things today, and over all things in the church. Yet the church does not rise up or take up arms against the government of Canada. If Christ’s kingdom was earthly they would fight in an earthly manner. They would defend Jesus and seek to deliver him.

Now this does not mean that Jesus kingdom is not active today or is only active in the heavenly realm. We realize that Jesus is our king. Our King can bring down strongholds and defeat every enemy that wars against our souls. Our King can not only defend us but change us. We are both citizens of heaven and citizens of earth.

Now there are two ways to present a truth or define something. One is through a negative. We say what it is not. And then we can define it positively and say what it is. I can define light as the absence of darkness. I can also define light as illumination, or brightness that reveals. We get an understanding of light through the negative and also through the positive definition. Well, when Jesus defines his kingdom he does the same thing. In verse 36 he has defined it negatively. It is not of this world. When we come to verse 37 we see him define it positively. And we learn so much about our king and our relationship to him. We will look at that positive definition of Jesus’ kingship today.

But let me point out a couple of things as get started. One is that Jesus truly is our king. We live in a day and age where all we have known is democracies. We talk about our rights and our right to choose, and we often even complain about those rights being whittled away. But none of us or most of us have never lived under a true monarchy where it is all about the will of the king and his will is absolute, his decisions are final and binding. It was very terrifying in the ancient world when one monarch would die and another would replace him. You never knew what you were going to get and could change your whole life drastically. Well, Jesus is our king. He has full rule and ownership over us. But here is the difference of Jesus’ rule. No king has ever cared

for his people as Jesus has and does. He knows what is best and highest for us. And so often we live and function as if following Jesus and listening to Jesus through his word or obeying Jesus is optional in our lives. Now, people in the ancient world would do the will of the king out of terror, but we obey and follow out of awe and love. We know that rule is absolute and Jesus truly knows what is best.

And that is the second thing I want us to see in this text, and that is — Jesus our king always calls for a response to his kingship. And the call is gracious and loving and kind, but it also has serious ramifications in our lives whether we respond rightly or wrongly to Jesus, whether we respond to his authority or not. We will look at Pilate's response to Jesus and hopefully glean how we ought to respond to our King and Lord. So the question is, do you recognize Jesus as your king? Are you listening to his voice or another in the decisions and the course of your life? We need to truly see and respond to the gracious rule of our Lord and only Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1. We need to see his kingship defined positively. V.37.

There is so much here in this verse. And as we hear the words of Jesus he both defines his kingdom but also those who are of his kingdom. And we often live as if we are at the helm of our life and we are the king or lord or ruler of the kingdom of self. We decide whether we should love our spouse or forgive that individual or what we should put before our eyes or where we should devote our time. We live so much like independent sovereigns, and the outcome of that life is never good. Some homes are constant battles — children wanting their independence, couples wanting their will done will fight and argue and hurt one another. I have a wonderful plan for my life and we want others to submit to our rule. And it never goes well. But have we considered what the rule of Jesus really looks like and what characterizes those who his kingdom citizens? And it is not that we will have easy lives or trouble free lives, but there is so much peace when we live out who we are in the realm of King Jesus as his followers.

Now it is incredible how often people hear but don't hear. Jesus has just defined his kingdom in negative terms. His kingdom is other-worldly. You think the question would come as far as the nature of his kingship and his realm. But the thing that occupies or captures the attention of Pilate is how it might affect him, and that is that Jesus says he is a king. Because look at what he says here, "**Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?'**" Right after Jesus explains the nature of his kingship Pilate just heard that Jesus has a realm that he rules over and asks the question. And I think at this point in the narrative we think of this as more of a polite and intellectual conversation between two people about kingdoms. But remember Jesus' body and appearance is already been battered and abused. The religious leaders and the temple guards have beaten Jesus, and spit upon him. And it must have been a bit incredulous to Pilate that this Jesus would even claim to be a king because no king has ever appeared like this before. But no king has ever willfully suffered for the welfare of his people like Jesus.

And isn't Jesus even emblematic of the people of his kingdom also? Kingdoms are made up of not only kings and emperors but people like Pilate. People of renown and power and people who are. But listen to a description of the people of God in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28, "**For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of**

noble birth. **But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.**” You think of kingdom citizens and they in and of themselves in their earthly positions and states do not speak of the grandeur of the kingdom. But that is the whole point, Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He came for those who are not worthy to be his followers and citizens of his realm. Salvation is all of grace. And we need to marvel that we are kingdom citizens.

Now look at the response of Jesus here, **“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.’** Let’s stop right there. Now when he says, “You say that I am a king.” He is not saying you are saying that I am a king. Those are your words and not mine, but it is strong statement here that what Pilate has just asked and articulated, the conclusion that he has come to is absolutely correct. Jesus is a king, in fact the king of kings. There is no greater king. Because look at the glory of this king and remember the Old Testament pointed to the coming of the great and glorious king whose rule would have no end. He says, **“For this purpose I was born.”** In other words Jesus is an earthly king in the sense that he is taken from humanity. He is in the line of David. He is the long awaited Messiah that no doubt Pilate heard about and the Jews longed for. He also says, **“and for this purpose I came into the world.”** Now think of that statement because Jesus is claiming to be even greater than the man right before him. He might have all the regalia of royalty, but appearances might be deceiving because the One before Pilate has prior existence. He came into the world. He didn’t have a start. He is eternal in nature. This is none other than a statement of deity. He is man and God. He is the God-man.

And look at the nature of his kingdom and reign, Jesus says I came for this purpose, **“to bear witness to the truth.”** Jesus came to testify of the truth. To bear witness or testify is to speak or proclaim, and that was his whole life. It was a testimony of the truth, and his whole kingdom is founded on truth. Listen to what Matthew 4:23 records about Jesus’ ministry, **“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.”** Notice he is proclaiming the gospel, the good news, the truth about the kingdom, and even giving them a taste of that kingdom. The kingdom is based on the truth about who God is and who we are, about the nature and cost of sin, about the need of redemption and trusting in the King who came to give his life as a ransom for sin. Every Sunday as we gather together is about the proclamation of truth. It is about the truths of Jesus rule and kingdom. And think of what Jesus is saying by claiming to be king here, and then giving the nature of his coming. He is the truth. It is more than just intellectual passing on of facts about life. But truth is found in Christ. He is the truth. He is life.

And the implications of that are so dramatic because look at what he says at the end of this verse, **“Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”** Think of it because Pilate was a man of authority. He would give a command and that command would be carried out. We will see that when he gives a command to crucify Jesus. And Jesus here defines who are the citizens of his kingdom. And notice the word

“Everyone.” That word means to define that everyone who is of the truth, in other words accepts the truth, trusts the truth and follows the truth is characterized by this. And remember the truth here in the context of this verse is the one who came to testify of the truth. The truth here is a person and his name is Jesus. The meaning of “listens” is not just that we have heard the words of Jesus but we follow the words of Jesus. We obey the words of Jesus. Listen to the contrast earlier as Jesus defines who are his sheep and who are not his sheep in John 10:26-27, **“but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”** What don’t they believe? They do not believe the truth — the truth of Jesus. But the sheep who are of Jesus’ flock here “my voice” the voice of King Jesus — the voice of the living truth, and then they follow him. All true believers follow Jesus. Who is Jesus? Jesus says in John 14:6, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** He is the truth.

And so as we look at our lives. Do we hear the voice of the Shepherd King? Are our lives marked by following our Lord, Master, and Saviour? This is the mark of all those who are truly his. The amazing thing about Jesus’ followers is they are so different from the followers or citizens of the world. The citizens of the world have to follow their tyrannical rulers, but the citizens of heaven delight in following the One who truly cares for my soul. There is such a desire to magnify our King. And that leads us to our second point.

2. The presentation of the truth of King Jesus always calls for a response. V.38a.

Now think of a couple of things about truth. One is that there can only be one truth. Contradictory truths is a misstatement. Two things that are opposed to one another cannot be true. All people go to heaven. Some do, but some have to go to a place of purgatory to burn off their remaining sin, and only those who trust in the perfect life and substitutionary death of Christ cannot all be true. They can be all wrong because there is many different things that are wrong, but there can only be one truth. So think of what Jesus is doing here. He is challenging Pilate with the truth of who he is which exposes Pilate for who he is and all and every wrong assumption that Pilate has about truth. What is implicit in the text and the teaching about Jesus’ realm and kingship is to believe on him.

But here the second thing about the truth of Jesus: it always calls for a response. If Jesus is the truth and the life then we are called to submit to that truth, to rank ourselves under that truth, which is not just ranking ourselves under some command or some principle, but to rank ourselves under King of Truth, none other than Jesus. And this is not just a challenge for unbelievers but for the people of God. Because there is a constant struggle in our hearts of who will reign and rule. Will it be Jesus or will it be self? Will I love my wife as Jesus loved the church, or will I think of all kinds of reasons who I should disobey King Jesus? Will I love and encourage my husband, or will I have an always complaining and condemning attitude and words? Ya, I know what King Jesus says, but . . . Will I look at those videos and images online or will I listen to King Jesus? All of us are listening to some voice or authority. It is either Jesus or it is self. Who truly is the king and ruler of your life?

Because through all of the beatings and abuse of Jesus, Jesus tenderly and volitionally gives Pilate an opportunity to repent and trust him. His sin and depravity were so evident but here is the epitome of truth. Now look at his response, here in verse 38, **“Pilate said to him, ‘What is truth?’”** Incredible response. And many expositors have tried to understand what Pilate meant. And there are two popular responses that often people seem to gravitate toward. One is that most rulers were educated in some way or in some how. And many were educated in the various Greek philosophies that tried to explain life and how to live life and function. And it is amazing because if you study these Greek philosophies you will find that they exist today. There was the Epicureans who said this is all there is. There is no after life, and therefore you should get all out of the here and now. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die would be the idea. And certainly you look at our pleasure centred society and it is all about packing it in, as many experiences as possible, there is no sacrifices that should be made, if anything is difficult throw it off because life is short, get as much joy as you can. Our me-centred society eats that philosophy up.

Another was stoicism which was a blind fatalism. Whatever will be will be. There is nothing you can do about it so why try. Everything is predetermined and therefore if you were meant to fail just fail. No effort and no blame in life. And we see that alive in well. Everyone is just a victim of their upbringing or state. They cannot help themselves. The last popular philosophy was know as sophism. The word is taken from the Greek word for “wisdom.” And it just meant that truth fluctuated. Your truth is different than my truth because your life and circumstances are different. There are no absolute truth. Sometimes it is right to kill, leave your family and to steal. Sometimes it is wrong. But truth fluctuates. And certainly in a society that has lost all moral sense you can see that. And many think Pilate is a sophist with this statement, “what is truth?” There is no absolute truth so he declares Jesus right away. And isn’t that the way of life. People always, and even God’s people many times have an excuse for our evil and wicked behaviour. It really is not wicked or sinful, you just have to understand my context and circumstances.

And many of these philosophies might give some understanding of why Pilate says what he says, but I want us to think through this, because this is the end of this conversation and going to talk to the Jews outside of his residence was abrupt and terminated the conversation he had with him. And you think of the wickedness of this man, and you think of all those who hear the gospel message, and there is no desire to hear the truth. There is no desire to investigate the life of Jesus. He ends his whole interrogation and discussion with this man who he knows because he claims to be the truth is why the Sanhedrin hate him. Jesus threatens their rule, but he also threatens Pilate’s rule. If Jesus is the truth, and if it is him and him alone that life is to be found. If those who are of his realm not only believe in him but come and follow him, then his whole life would change. It would be on a whole new trajectory and on a glorious and grand path. But for those who love this present world that isn’t good news. They do not want to hear about Jesus. They do not want to be challenged about truth because the truth of Jesus will expose their errors and their sin and their need of him.

Now the challenge as we close is two-fold. One have you recognized the kingship of Jesus in your life? Have you recognized that he is the truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father except through him? And you might say, well there are so

many others options, how do I know that Jesus is the truth? Isn't that kind of arrogant to say you know the truth? I think once you see the truth it is arrogant and selfish not to announce that truth. And I think it is arrogant like Pilate to just dismiss Jesus. If Jesus claims are true then there is no other way you can come to the Father except through him. Here is the incredible thing, if you come and see who Jesus is, if you really investigate to see the King of kings his truth will really set you free, it will liberate you from being a citizen of this world to a citizen of his kingdom, and nothing is ever better.

The second challenge is for us as believers. We realize and confess that Jesus is king, but because of pressures or whatever in our lives we can be dismissive of the king and his demands. We need to seek to really look at our hearts and follow the king of kings. There is no greater calling in our lives than to make much of the king, and how we do that is through following him, listening to him regardless of our circumstances. Let's seek to make much of our king.