

SCRIPTURE READING FOR APRIL 3, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

John 18:28-19:16a
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

²⁸ The Jewish leaders led Jesus from CAIAPHAS to the ROMAN GOVERNOR's palace. It was early in the morning. So that they could eat the Passover, the Jewish leaders wouldn't enter the palace; entering the palace would have made them ritually impure.

²⁹ So PILATE went out to them and asked, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

³⁰ They answered, "If he had done nothing wrong, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."

³¹ Pilate responded, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to YOUR LAW."

The Jewish leaders replied, "THE LAW doesn't allow us to kill anyone." (³² *This was so that Jesus' word might be fulfilled when he indicated how he was going to die.*)

³³ Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?"

³⁵ Pilate responded, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

³⁶ Jesus replied, "My kingdom doesn't originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn't have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn't from here."

³⁷ "So you are a king?" Pilate said.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I WAS BORN AND CAME INTO THE WORLD FOR THIS REASON: TO TESTIFY TO THE **truth**. Whoever accepts the **truth** listens to my voice."

³⁸ "What is **truth**?" Pilate asked.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The gospel of John one of the four stories of the good news of Jesus (Gospel means good news) which tells his life, actions, words, and mission. It's believed that John's account is the last one written as his retelling of the story reflects considerable theological reflection and uses metaphors and poetic language. In this year's proposed readings, we're focusing on the passion story (of the crucifixion) of Jesus in John. Each text we'll consider focuses on a particular person. Here we see Pilate – the Roman governor of Palestine – who is a conversation partner with Jesus about his vision and teaching.

CAIAPHAS | ROMAN GOVERNOR [PILATE] :: The religious leaders had some power but the Roman governor (representative of the emperor) had the most power. While usually situated in the Roman coastal town of Caesarea, the governor would usually reside in Jerusalem (the Jewish capital city) during high holy days to better control the people who might revolt during their national holiday: Passover.

wouldn't enter the palace | ritually impure :: To touch anything Gentile (non-Jewish), and enter into a Gentile home would render an observant Jew ritually impure and thus unable to participate in the Passover holiday and feast. What's not mentioned is that this ritual impurity could be easily overcome with a ritual bath as prescribed by the Rabbis.

YOUR LAW :: There was a difference between Jewish and Roman Law. The Romans would conquer foreign lands, and let them observe some of their local customs, but make them subservient to Rome. In a sense, it was a sort of pseudo-autonomy granted to conquered peoples to make them even more subservient and easy to control by manipulation.

king :: Jesus is implicitly accused of rebellion and sedition, claiming to be a king, the rightful king, as opposed to the Emperor. The punishment for this was public execution on a cross. But in the gospel Jesus never calls himself King, rather other people do. Such as in John 1:49 "Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are God's Son. You are the king of Israel." and

After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, “*I find no grounds for any charge against him.*”³⁹ You have a **CUSTOM** that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?”

⁴⁰ They shouted, “Not this man! Give us Barabbas!”
(*Barabbas was an outlaw.*)

19 Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped.² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe.³ Over and over they went up to him and said, “Greetings, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.

⁴ Pilate came out of the palace again and said to the Jewish leaders, “Look! I’m bringing him out to you to let you know that *I find no grounds for a charge against him.*”⁵ When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “**HERE’S THE MAN.**”

⁶ When the chief priests and their deputies saw him, they shouted out, “Crucify, crucify!”

Pilate told them, “You take him and crucify him. *I don’t find any grounds for a charge against him.*”

⁷ The Jewish leaders replied, “We have a Law, and according to this Law he ought to die because he made himself out to be God’s Son.”

⁸ When Pilate heard this word, he was even more afraid.⁹ He went back into the residence and spoke to Jesus, “Where are you from?” Jesus didn’t answer.¹⁰ So Pilate said, “You won’t speak to me? Don’t you know that I have authority to release you and also to crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus replied, “You would have no authority over me if it had not been given to you from above. That’s why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”¹² From that moment on, *Pilate wanted to release Jesus.*

However, the Jewish leaders cried out, saying, “If you release this man, you aren’t a friend of the emperor! Anyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes the emperor!”

¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus out and seated him on the judge’s bench at the place called Stone

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

in John 6:15 “¹⁴ When the people saw that he had done a miraculous sign [of feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and fish], they said, ‘This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world.’”¹⁵ Jesus understood that they were about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.”

kingdom :: (*basilea* in Greek) means a kingdom that is both geographic and temporal, of this world and not, It can be translated as kingdom, reign, rule, and also commonwealth.

In John 3:3-8: Jesus speaks of his kingdom with Nicodemus saying, “I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it’s not possible to see God’s kingdom.”

⁴ Nicodemus asked, “How is it possible for an adult to be born? It’s impossible to enter the mother’s womb for a second time and be born, isn’t it?”

⁵ Jesus answered, “I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom.

⁶ Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.

AND CAME INTO THE WORLD FOR THIS REASON:
TO TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH :: this points back to the prologue of John (chapter 1 that talks of Jesus as the Word and the Light and John the Baptizer comes to testify to him).

truth :: the person of Jesus – and a relationship with him – is portrayed as the truth in John’s gospel.

See John 1:16-18

“¹⁶ From [the] fullness [of the Word and light] we have all received grace upon grace;
¹⁷ as the Law was given through Moses, so grace and **truth** came into being through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God.

God the only Son,
who is at the Father’s side,
has made God known.”

Pavement (*in Aramaic, Gabbatha*).¹⁴ It was about noon on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Here’s your king.”

¹⁵ The Jewish leaders cried out, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

Pilate responded, “What? Do you want me to crucify your king?”

“We have no king except the emperor,” the chief priests answered.¹⁶ Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- The story is presented with Pilate, who represents the true political king (emperor) intrigued by the truth spoken of by this supposed spiritual king. How do you respond to Jesus’ words that his kingdom is not of this world. What does that mean to you?; for us?
- How is Pilate’s story similar to your own?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

And in John 14:5-7 –

⁵ Thomas asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way, the **truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him.”

I find no grounds for any charge against him :: Pilate says three times that he thinks Jesus is innocent, and doesn’t deserve death. Yet in Mark’s gospel account Pilate, as much as the Jewish religious leaders think Jesus deserves to be publicly executed for sedition and inciting a rebellion.

HERE’S THE MAN :: (in Latin, **ECCE HOMO**) – this is perhaps Pilate’s biggest claim to fame, a phrase used and reused throughout philosophical treaties and art to talk of the suffering of Jesus and in the past 200 years to the portrayal of suffering and the degradation of humans through violence and war.

Crucify :: It’s not clear if the Jewish leaders were able to legally execute people. The traditional way to do so was by stoning – specifically for the crime of blasphemy (which here they accuse Jesus of in verse 19:7) Leviticus 24:15-16 stipulates this:

“¹⁵ Tell the Israelites: Anyone who curses God will be liable to punishment. ¹⁶ And anyone who blasphemes the Lord’s name must be executed. The whole community will stone that person. Immigrant and citizen alike: whenever someone blasphemes the Lord’s name, that person will be executed.”

Crucifixion was the form of public execution in Roman law reserved for the worst criminals, specifically those who tried to overthrow the government through sedition and rebellion. So the crowd petitions Pilate to use the power that is his alone to execute Jesus. What is curious is that historical sources tell us that Pilate was quite a sadistic and violent man who hated being in Palestine. So it’s not historically logical for him to resist wanting to crucify a non-Roman. This seems to point to the anti-Semitism of John who tries to lay the blame for the death of Jesus solely on the shoulders of the Jewish religious leaders – and even the Jewish people.

If you release this man, you aren’t a friend of the emperor! :: the Jewish leaders seem to be holding Pilate hostage, forcing him by coercion to execute Jesus – otherwise they’ll denounce him as a seditious revolutionary. He, although totally in charge, comes across as weak and easily controlled by public opinion.