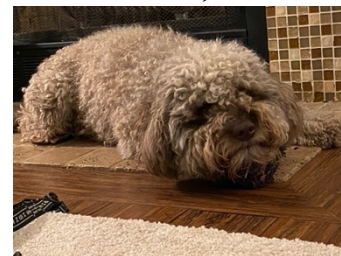


Read John 18:28-40. Pray. I want to start this morning by sharing something that happened in our family this last week that I think can be seen as a metaphor for this stage of Jesus’ life and all that’s going on here, because there’s a lot, and it’s compressed into a short amount of time. John 13-18 and beyond is all in one night; the first 12 chapters cover Jesus’ 3 years of public ministry. So, these chapters are packed, and there’s a lot to keep track of...

On Tuesday evening Gwen and I were talking about our daughter’s High School dance team schedule. Their state competition is on the horizon, which means headed over to Yakima to the Sun Dome for a Thursday evening to Friday afternoon event. And we realized that Blake is out of town next week, the other two boys are coming with us, Hailey’s at college, Brooke is the dancer...and we needed someone to take care of our dog while we are gone. My parents are out of town.



Gwen’s mom is far enough away it seemed silly for her to come for 24 hours. But the challenge is that **Waverly** is not always real friendly toward people outside of our family. She’s super-deceptive. She’s as cute as could be, but she’s a full-on alarm dog, and a bit of a guard dog.

So, we spent several minutes talking about who might be able to take care of her while we’re gone for this brief, 24-hour trip. There weren’t many options because of our dog’s temperament. We even contemplated if we could bring the dog with us and leave her in a kennel in the car...or might the hotel allow her? But we decided hotels don’t allow dogs precisely because of dogs like ours. 😊 Finally, we reached out to someone who we thought could do it.

Turns out it didn’t work for her. While waiting for her response, however, we remembered that not only was Brooke’s event coming up, but Elliott also has a state basketball tournament on the weekend before and we need someone to watch her then, too. In fact, at that moment we realized we had mentally gotten Brooke’s a week early; Elliott’s is next weekend, and then Brooke’s the following Thursday to Friday. So, I’d asked the person for the wrong dates! And now we realized that we need someone to dog sit for both events,

because we weren't available. We finally decided that our niece might be able to watch Waverly for us. So, I texted my sister in Renton to see if her daughter Abby might be able to do either or both of them for us.

While waiting for my sister to respond, and us continuing to stew over all of this, brainstorming contingency plans left and right, I asked Gwen, "Hey, won't Blake actually be back from his trip to Paris visiting Hailey by the time we get to Brooke's event, now that we remember it's a week later than we initially were talking about?" She said, "Yes." I said, "So we don't need Abby to dog sit for that one, because Blake could be here with her, right?" And she said, "Oh! You're right!" It was a major relief. Then a few minutes later I said, "Wait. If Brooke's dance thing is in two weeks, and Elliott's Spokane basketball tournament is the *first* event, could Brooke stay home and watch the dog?" And Gwen was like, "Yes! In fact, she *can't* go with us to Spokane because she has dance practices that weekend she needs to attend to be ready for the competition." Our dog-sitting problems were solved!

So, we spent an hour brainstorming ideas on who could watch our dog (which really was a question of whose life might we be willing to sacrifice to watch our dog)...even considered that Gwen or I might need to stay home each weekend if we couldn't find someone...when it turns out that all along our own kids were going to be there and could do it. It was a circus. And you all trust me to be pastoring this church? 😊 I sent my sister one final text message that read, "Oh my goodness. Actually, we don't need Abby for either one. We have too many kids and lost track of who's going with us and who is staying home!" 😊

And when I get to this stage of Jesus' life, I have that same feeling of tracking too much stuff at once. It really started a couple Sundays ago where you've got Judas Iscariot showing up with some Roman soldiers and Jewish religious leaders to arrest Jesus; they bring him to Annas who's a former Jewish High Priest but still has a lot of influence and respect; there's Caiaphas, Annas's son-in-law and the current high priest who gets mentioned here but we don't get any actual dialog from him; then there's Pilate who's the Roman governor over Judea, a region that includes Jerusalem.

Then you've got the people who've brought Jesus to him, which at this point seems to mostly or completely be Jewish religious leaders – at least, it's their united voice that we get throughout this portion of Scripture. Also, it's not just the number of people and the foreign setting that makes this section difficult to track, but also the interaction between them: powerplays and the tug of war between them all and conversations about what they can do and what they can't do, and who has authority to do what ...and it just all gets to be a lot to keep track of – like managing a family of 7 plus a dog. And of course, I haven't even mentioned that: At the center of it all stands Jesus. I mean, he's the whole reason any of this stuff even happens, and I haven't even mentioned him until just now.

Like us stressing over who was going to watch the dog and getting so caught up in it that we didn't even realize the bases were already covered: everyone around Jesus is all in a tizzy, stressed out, demanding things, questioning things, trying to sort everything out, asserting power, trying to control the situation...while **Jesus, the one who's life actually hangs in the balance, remains calm.** He's the only one who *isn't* caught up in a power struggle or questioning what can and can't be done or should and shouldn't be done. It's like there's a hurricane blowing, and he's the calm center of the storm, while everyone else is swirling around, wreaking havoc.

So, things continue from last week in verse 28 where they brought Jesus to Caiaphas, the High Priest. From there, they take him to Pilate, as we see in the first verses of today's passage. From 25-36 A.D., he was the governor of Judea, the region around Jerusalem, and his allegiance is ultimately to Caesar. And the crowd of Jews, probably mostly religious leaders, puts the pressure on Pilate to condemn Jesus; in fact, they want him crucified. They might have done it themselves, but neither they nor their religious leaders have the authority to do that. They need the Roman government to do that. That's what verses 28-32 were about.

Then, comes this interesting dialog between Pilate and Jesus. Between the two of them, they speak 13 complete sentences. (Greek didn't use punctuation at that time, so you have to figure out from context and word

structure what kind of punctuation to use and where.) At least five of them are questions, and many English translations have a 6th:

1. **“Are you the King of the Jews?” – Pilate, v. 33**
2. **“Is that your idea, or did others talk to you about me?” – Jesus, v. 34**
3. **“Am I a Jew?” – Pilate, v. 35**
4. **“What is it you have done?” – Pilate, v. 35**
5. **“So, you are a king?” – Pilate (Some translations don’t have this as a question.) v. 37**
6. **“What is truth?” – Pilate, v. 38**

In the verses that follow, which we’ll get to next week, their conversation continues, and there are 3 more questions asked, all by Pilate, with two statements from Jesus. All told, it’s at 8 or 9 questions among 16 total sentences, with all but one of the questions asked by Pilate. And, given the situation, that’s probably what you’d expect. He’s trying to do his due diligence to understand how to handle this situation. Who is Jesus? What has he done? Is he guilty of something or not; and if he is, what is it?

Out of this conversation, there are a couple things that are particularly noteworthy. **First, Jesus is a king (v. 36, 37).** Jesus says in verse 36 that his kingdom is not of this world...that it is from another place. And after Pilate responds, Jesus affirms again that he is a king. That, in a nutshell, is what he’s guilty of. There is an inherent conflict between King Jesus and the King of Rome, more commonly called the Emperor. Pilate works for the Emperor; he represents the Emperor’s interests. And when Jesus says that he is a king, that’s a conflict, because he’s in the boundaries of the Roman empire.

But **Jesus’ kingdom, as he himself says, is not of this world.** It’s about a different place. But he stands before Pilate, so there’s a conflict. It’s a conflict between Jesus’ eternal kingdom and the kingdoms of this earth – Pilate’s, the Emperor’s, or anyone else’s for that matter. It really doesn’t matter. There is a conflict between King Jesus/his Kingdom and the things of this world that would seek to rule over us. This doesn’t mean we disobey the laws of the land. We touched on that briefly last week; we give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.

But it does mean that we keep everything in perspective, recognizing that Jesus' eternal kingdom is the place of our true and final citizenship. He is the final authority in our lives, the one we bow down to. I think of Matthew 28:18-20, where the resurrected Jesus says, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the end of the age”** (Jesus, Mt. 28:18-20). It's a favorite few verses of a lot of Christians.

But notice two things: First, Jesus has *all authority* in heaven and on earth. In other words, he's the one that rules over it all; he's got final say. Secondly, he teaches us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and “teaching them to *obey everything* I have commanded you.” It's not just teaching *what* he's commanded; it's teaching them to *obey*. This means we Christ-followers are to obey Jesus. We do so because he has authority; because he is King of kings and Lord of lords. Yes, there's grace and forgiveness when we fall short, but the expectation is for obedience. So, Jesus is king, and that's the key thing that Pilate learns by asking Jesus these questions.

The second thing that comes out of their conversation I want to highlight is this: **2. Truth matters to Jesus and his followers.** The end of verse 37, Jesus says, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Now, truth doesn't only matter to Jesus and his followers. Truth matters to all people. Societies are built on the belief that truth matters. Marriages are built on this; companies are built on this; schools are built on this. (“Trust” goes hand-in-hand with it, too.) But with Jesus, truth matters at a deeper level. Jesus even says earlier in John's gospel that He *is* the truth. He also teaches that the truth will set you free. This goes hand in hand with his kingship. Dallas Willard, the great Christian theologian and philosopher who taught at USC for many years put it like this in a lecture on the Kingdom of God he once gave:

“The whole passage from John 8 is this, **‘Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you**

free” (John 8:31-32). It’s amazing how people will just start at the end and come back and chop off what they want. We have an elevator at USC [where I teach philosophy] in the humanities building that just says ‘The truth will make you free.’ Apparently you don’t even have to know [the truth]. It just works, right? Jesus really said, ‘If you continue in my word.’ That means ‘If you put in practice what I do, if you walk in it.’”¹ You see, his kingship, and our obedience to him as king, go hand in hand with the truth and our being set free. It’s not just any truth that matters: Jesus in particular matters.

That’s essentially what he says here at the end of verse 37: “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” In other words, it’s not just any old truth that sets you free: It’s the truth of Jesus Christ. He is the truth. And his disciples are on the side of that truth, and they listen to him as he says here in verse 37. In other words, because Jesus is the truth, because he is what sets us free, we acknowledge him as Lord of all. He’s the King who reigns on the throne in eternity, and he reigns in our hearts; he reigns in our lives. We pray that his kingdom would come and his will be done here on earth as it is in heaven – starting with ourselves and spreading through us to the world around us.

So, if that’s you: If you’ve confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior, as king of your heart, king of eternity, the one who holds your destiny in the palms of his nail-pierced hands, then let’s live like he really is our King. **Let’s obey his teaching and teach others to obey it because it is truth; live like he’s really Lord, like He’s the one whose kingdom really matters, like he is the truth.** I’m not saying it’s easy. There’s a lot that seeks to sit on the throne in our lives. It’s easy to be caught up in the kingdoms of this earth. There’s a lot that competes for our allegiance and claims is the most important thing that we need to bow down to with our time and our finances and our energy. But when we stay centered on Jesus and focused on his word, and obey him; when you keep him as king, and cling to Him and his truth, and listen to him, then the king is glorified in our living; it’s a natural result of living for him. The king is lifted up. The king is held in his proper place. And so, when we live that way, we demonstrate that we really *are* on His side. That Jesus matters. That truth and his kingship are important. That he’s the one we pledge our allegiance to and the one who we live for, because He is the one true king.

If Jesus isn't your king, then you've got an imposter king in your life.

Whatever it is that's in that spot: it's not the truth. It's not built to last. It can't save you, it can't deliver you, it can't heal you, it can't pay the price to bring you into eternity. Jesus is the only one who can do that. So, be like Pilate and ask questions of Jesus; He will answer. Dig into the Bible, be in church and come with your questions. Questions are ok! We may not answer all of them in one Sunday, but ultimately Jesus will answer your questions. I believe his truth will shine through and set you free. Or ask his disciples – meet with someone, join a Bible study...it's ok to have questions there. Asking others is what Jesus told his antagonists to do in last week's passage: "Ask those who listened to me – they know what I said" (John 18:21). So, ask someone who follows Jesus about their faith, about Jesus. (And if you're a follower of Jesus, be prepared to talk about Jesus!) And ultimately, you'll get to the truth of who Jesus is. That's important, because truth matters. Jesus matters. And in the end, what we see is that he invites each of us to call him King of kings and Lord of lords, and to start living out that truth in our lives each and every day. Let's pray...Amen.

¹ <https://thepastorsworkshop.com>