

“If you love the truth, you’ll believe me.”

John 18:28-40

Christmas is going to feel a bit different this year at church. Usually I preach about, you know, “Christmas stuff.” This year, though, we have been going through the book of John, looking at the claims of Jesus. Keep in mind the Gospel of John does not record any of the Christmas story. If all you knew about Jesus came from the Gospel of John you would not know about wise men, shepherds, the star, stable, an over-stuffed inn or the birth in Bethlehem.

So, now Christmas stories at church this year. Sorry. In fact, it will feel more like Easter, than Christmas. Today we look at Jesus’ trial, then later, His crucifixion, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances.

“Happy Easter!” But, when you think about it ... Christmas is all about Easter ... Christmas sets the stage for the Easter Passion Play. Look at what the angel told Joseph ... Matthew 1:20, the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Born at Christmas, saved people from sin at Easter. Christmas and Easter is the “peanut butter and jelly” of our faith! They go together.

The Truth About Jesus

John 18:28, Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn’t go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn’t be allowed to celebrate the Passover.

- They thought what was outside of them would defile them ... the Roman palace, their guards, and customs. Actually, they were defiled already because of what was inside of them, their pride, deluded schemes, and sense of self-righteousness.

John 18:29, So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, “What is your charge against this man?”

- Let me ask you, what is your charge against Jesus? What do you have against Him ... what about Him disturbs you ... what is it about Jesus that keeps you from following Him?

John 18:30, “We wouldn’t have handed him over to you if he weren’t a criminal!” they retorted.”

- “We got this figured out, you just need to rubber stamp what we’ve already decided!” Is that correct?
- This is exactly how some people pray!

John 18:31-32, “Then take him away and judge him by your own law,” Pilate told them. “Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone,” the Jewish leaders replied. ³² (This fulfilled Jesus’ prediction about the way he would die.)

- The fulfillment of prophecy indicates that God had a purposeful plan to save the world, and that Jesus was no accident!
- There are two ways people live their lives, usually:
 - Haphazard, accidental fatalism.
 - Intentional, purpose-driven passion.
- John 12:32-33, “And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” ³³ He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

John 18:33-33, Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. “Are you the king of the Jews?” he asked him. ³⁴ Jesus replied, “Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?”

- Everyone must come to their own opinion about Jesus, don’t they. Pilate had to decide, for himself, what to do with Jesus.
- Do you think Jesus was the king of the Jews?

John 18:35, “Am I a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?”

- What has He done?
- Matthew 11:2-6, John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, ³ “Are you

the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?" ⁴ Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—

- ⁵ the blind see,
- the lame walk,
- the lepers are cured,
- the deaf hear,
- the dead are raised to life,
- and the Good News is being preached to the poor.

⁶ And tell him, 'God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.'"

- The Jewish leaders knew all of this ... and rejected Him anyway. Today, we scratch our heads when people reject Jesus ... why would they do that? The next verse contains the answer.

John 18:36, Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

- People reject Jesus cause he's not "from here." He's so different. His Kingdom isn't an earthly kingdom, and since most people can't see beyond the end of their nose, Jesus is rejected.
- You can count on one thing when you adopt the Jesus way as your way ... He's gonna' upset your apple cart! For the better, of course, most of our apples are rotten at the core, but they're pretty on the outside and we want to hold on to them.
- Jesus was NOT a threat to Pilate. Not at all. Jesus wasn't here to change the world's political system, but to change the hearts of those who have tried the world's way, and have judged it wanting.

John 18:37, Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

- Are you a truth-lover? Do you see in the words of Jesus a sure-fire test to see if you *really* love the truth? "All who love the truth **recognize that what I say is true.**"
- Let me ask you something ... do you have to fully understand something and personally agree with it for it to be true?

- ILLY: Layering in photoshop. Show a side by side of the words “truth” and “me” ... left side truth on top layer, right side me on top. Say, “in photoshop I can pick which word gets pushed to the top, partially obscuring the other word. I can either set myself ahead of truth, or I can set truth to the top layer.”

John 18:38-40, “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, “He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹ But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this ‘King of the Jews’?” ⁴⁰ But they shouted back, “No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

- What is truth? The prisoner release is a crystal clear picture of how people get truth completely mixed up ... do you want me to release your king, Jesus ... or, a bloodthirsty murderer?
- Now, remember, Jesus had said His kingdom wasn’t political in nature, he was no threat to Pilate. Barabbas on the other hand, was a seditionist, a revolutionary eager to overturn Pilate’s political apple cart. The choice was “do you want a kingdom NOT of this world” or “do you want the same old politics, same old violence, same old solutions?”
- New and really revolutionary (Jesus)? Or same old stuff (Barabbas)?
- And they chose, demanded, and celebrated the release of Barabbas. So, of course, they had no way to recognize the answer to “what is truth?” even though the answer was living and breathing right in front of their eyes.

MAIN POINT: The world needs revolutionary change, one heart at a time. Truth transforms. If you love truth, you are following Jesus and you’re a part of that revolution.

A closing prayer ... “Dear God, create within us a revolutionary faith and help us look beyond what we can see with earthly eyes. Connect our Christmas to Easter this year as you continue to advance the Good News of Jesus, saving people from their sin. In Jesus’ name, amen.”