



CHRIST
EVANGELICAL
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH (PCA)

Sermon Reflection Guide; John 18:28-36

1. Read verse 28, what sticks out to you about the behavior of the Jewish leaders? What makes their behavior so hypocritical?
2. In what way are followers of Christ tempted to live hypocritical lives in a similar fashion to the Jewish religious leaders? What does outward ceremony but a dead inward heart look like today?
3. After a back and forth between Pilate and the Jewish leaders in verse 31 we learn the real reason why they have brought Jesus to Pilate. What is this reason? Read verse 32, why should this parenthetical statement from John give us great comfort?
4. What difference does it make that God is in control of all things in our lives? What difference does it make in the middle of this contentious election in our country?
5. Pilate questions Jesus and demands to know if he is a king. Jesus responds by telling him that his kingdom is not of this world. What does Jesus mean?
6. Read this quote from James Boice, "When we say that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, what we are really saying is that Christ's kingdom is of heaven and therefore has an even greater claim over us than do the earthly kingdoms we know so well...Over these is Christ, and we flout his kingship not merely at the peril of our fortune and lives but at the peril of our eternal souls." What does this mean for those of us who call ourselves followers of Christ?

Sermon Summary

In our passage this week we have a clear clashing of two kingdoms. One is an earthly kingdom, the kingdom of the Jewish religious leaders and Pontius Pilate and the other is the kingdom of God which Jesus says is “not of this world”.

We read in John 18:28 that Jesus was led from the house of Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. We know from historical records that Pilate was a brutal and ineffective leader in a constant struggle with the Jewish leaders over which he presided. Simply put Pilate and the Jews didn’t like each other but were forced to work together. We are told in the last sentence of verse 28 that the Jews refused to go into Pilate’s home in order to avoid defilement by entering a Gentile home during the week of the Passover meal. This verse is an example of extreme hypocrisy. The Jewish leaders are scrupulous to ensure their outward, ritual purity while they carry out the most heinous sin in human history. Calvin writes, “They do not consider that they carry more pollution within their hearts than they can contract by entering any place however profane...So then it is an intolerable mockery that they expect to please God...though they have disregarded true purity.”

We should stop here and learn from the example of these hypocritical Jewish leaders. This type of hypocrisy is a deadly thing. Followers of Christ should never settle for outward religious observance or mere ceremony. Sadly, this is the state of many who claim to be followers of Christ. They are happy to attend services and participate in the sacraments while their hearts are spiritually dead and far from the Lord. We can see in this passage the deadly thing that is and the mockery it makes of God.

As we continue in the narrative it is helpful to remember two things. First, the Jewish leaders and Pilate do not like each other. Second, Roman troops were used to arrest Jesus, meaning it is likely that Pilate had given that permission and he knew something about Jesus and had been cooperating on some level with the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus. In verse 29 we read that Pilate came out to the Jewish leaders and asked what accusations they brought against Jesus. In verse 30 we read the Jewish leaders’ frustrated reply, “They answered him, ‘If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.’” Caught off guard by Pilate’s request for formal charges, the Jewish leaders respond by essentially saying, ‘Pilate what are you doing? I thought we had a deal?!’ Pilate responds by giving the Jewish leaders permission to judge him and do with him what they choose. In verse 31 they reveal the real reason why they have come to Pilate, “The Jews said to him, ‘It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.’” For Jesus to be whipped or flogged was not enough for them, they wanted Jesus to be crucified, for him to be humiliated and shamed on the cross. They thought that by doing this Jesus and his followers would never be heard from again.

In verse 32 we read a parenthetical comment from John the Gospel writer that again reminds us who is truly in control of this situation. “This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.” In John 3 and John 12, Jesus had previously prophesied that he would die by crucifixion or as Jesus put it, by being “lifted up”. This is a strong reminder that Judas is not in charge, Annas is not in charge, Caiaphas is not in charge, Pilate is not in charge, the Jewish leaders are not in charge, rather God was then and he is today the one in control, he alone is in charge. What a sweet comfort that is to us in all times but especially in times like these as we approach an election that has so many in our country anxious and worried. Followers of Christ can rest assured that God still is on his throne and still in control no matter the outcome.

We read in Luke's account that the Jews brought the charge of insurrection against Jesus before Pilate, saying that he was claiming to be a king. The Jewish leaders intentionally misrepresented Jesus knowing that this charge of insurrection would be intolerable to Pilate. So, Pilate brings Jesus inside with him and asks him in verse 33, "...Are you the King of the Jews?" This question, which is recorded in all four Gospels and answered by Jesus in verse 34, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Put another way, 'Pilate, are you asking me if I am a king like Caesar or are the Jews saying I am their long-awaited Messiah King?' The answer is no to the first and yes to the second. Jesus is beginning to explain to Pilate what kind of King he is and what kind of Kingdom he leads.

In frustration Pilate demands to know what Jesus has done to upset the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus answers in verse 36, "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 explains to Pilate that he is not a worldly rival or a worldly king like Caesar but instead he is the Messiah whose kingdom is not of this world. Jesus is a king, but the kingdom of God is different from the kingdoms of this world. The kingdoms of this world preserve themselves by power, force, violence, politics, corruption and sheer pragmatism. However, Jesus' kingdom is not of this world and it is not from this world. JC Ryle comments, "[Jesus] tells him that he did not come to set up a kingdom which [is to be]...a temporal power, to be supported by armies and maintained by taxes. The only dominion he exercised was over men's hearts, and the only weapons that his subjects employed were spiritual weapons...In the highest sense it was a kingdom "not of this world."

Unlike the kingdoms of this world Jesus' kingdom wins subjects by heart transformation. Jesus is building his kingdom by transforming one person, one family at a time. We should ask ourselves; do we know this king and his kingdom? Is he transforming our life, our relationships, our marriages our affections, our hearts? Jesus' kingdom is remarkably different and remarkably greater than the kingdoms of this world.

This passage provides us with a stark contrast between the kingdoms of this world and God's kingdoms. Pilate and the Jewish religious leaders sinned in so many ways in order to protect their worldly power while Jesus ushered in his kingdom by giving up his power and laying down his life. Paul, speaking of Jesus, drives this point home in Philippians 2:6-8, "...who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Do we know this king, Christ the King? Do you know him as both your Lord and your Savior? James Boice writes on the seriousness of knowing this king, "When we say that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, what we are really saying is that Christ's kingdom is of heaven and therefore has an even greater claim over us than do the earthly kingdoms we know so well...Over these is Christ, and we flout his kingship not merely at the peril of our fortune and lives but at the peril of our eternal souls."