

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Sent

PART

5

TITLE

Sent To Tell

SCRIPTURE

John 20:19-23, Acts 1:8



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Well, Merry Christmas to you. I hope you had a great weekend thus far, and I hope that you're going to be encouraged here this morning. If you're a guest welcome or glad you're here. If you're at home watching, we are thrilled that you have joined us as well. If you have in your hand a Bible, if you want to turn with me to John 18, we're going to read from there. We're also be in John 20 just for a few verses, but you can turn to John 18 right now.

As we actually finish the series called Sent, simply looking at the reasons that Jesus told us when he was on the earth or why he was sent to the earth and the last two places in the gospels that he speaks about Christmas, the reason that he came are actually near the end of his time on the earth right before he went to heaven. And that's what these are about. I think it'll be encouraging, even though it doesn't necessarily feel like a Christmas passage. We're going to talk about his trial when he was condemned to die. Let me pray for us.

Father, we love you, and we need you and pray that in the few moments that we have here this morning together that you would encourage our hearts with the reality that there is a kingdom, your kingdom that will last forever and ever and ever. And there is an invitation to join that kingdom by trusting your son Jesus. We thank you that you have given us purpose. We would not be aimless. God, we know that it's terrifying, and we confess to you that it's terrifying to feel like we're going through life without a rudder.

And yet it's even worse to have no destination, to have no idea of even where we're supposed to point our life. We thank you, Father, that these passages they fixed that problem. We thank you that you gave us clarity as to how to live and why we live, why we exist and what we're supposed to do with the remainder of our days. And ask that you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, would convince our hearts. We ask that you would, Father, fill this room with your presence, that we would sense your spirit confirming in our spirit, our hearts, not only that we're your children room, but that this is true.

Would you help our hearts to believe what is credible and lean in toward it? We ask for help. Would you speak through weakness? And I pray this in Christ's name, amen. As we enter a week and maybe even a season of life when it's normal, it's very typical for us to consider our life, to evaluate where we're at in life, to evaluate different parts of our life and to take stock and to prioritize perhaps next steps in our life. Maybe to even make a few goals for the next year. I want to encourage you specifically to prioritize Christ's kingdom in your plans and to prioritize his commission over your life.

And that's what we find here. In John 18, Jesus has been bound in the garden. He's been brought to the Jewish high priest, and they're the Sanhedrin. A court of 70 leaders in Israel have condemned him of blasphemy for calling him the son of God. They can't kill him, and so they want to bring him to the Roman governor so that he would have the authority to do to him what they think needs to be done to him, and that is for him to die. This is what we find when they arrive at his home in verse 29. Pilate, that's his name, went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

And they answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.” And Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show what kind of death he was going to die. Pilate entered his headquarters again and he called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”

Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation? And the chief priest have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” And 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 of this world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king.” And Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. And for this purpose, I was born. For this purpose, I’ve come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” This is a unique place in a passage obviously, for here we find Jesus standing before the Roman governor Pilate three hours before he would have his hands and feet nailed through, crucified. Three hours. What he’s doing in that time, at least part of what he’s doing in that time, is he’s explaining the purpose of Christmas. He’s explaining the purpose for why he was sent to the earth, the reason that he was born. What he tells us is a few things here that I want to show you. First is that Christ was sent to announce a better kingdom.

He wanted to come and tell us that what you see with your eyes, the fragility of nations, the transition that takes place among leaders and how when a leader is transitioned and it creates a state of social chaos, a kingdom that is not going to endure forever and ever and ever. He wanted to come and to tell you to tell me, to tell all of us, that there’s a better kingdom, an eternal kingdom, and he is the king. When the Jews condemn Jesus of blasphemy and they brought him the Pilate, notice what begins in verse 29 and 30. There’s this unique little exchange.

Pilate sees all the people. They see their prisoner. He says, “What I accusation do you bring against him?” And their response is really fascinating. They don’t answer. They simply say, “If he was innocent, we wouldn’t have brought him to you. If he wasn’t doing evil, we wouldn’t be here.” And so Pilate says, “Well, we’ve entrusted to you, we’ve authorized that under the banner of Rome, that you, as Israel, as the Jews, and your own temple, your own Sanhedrin, your own court system, your own law, your own law underneath our law is that you can go ahead and judge him yourself.

You can take him to your court. Whatever that he’s done with your laws, you have the authority to go ahead and judge him. And so go and do that.” And they said, “Oh, we have. We found him guilty, but we don’t have the authority to kill him. But you do. And that’s why we’re here.” Now, if you’re Pilate and you go indoors and you take Jesus and you have a private audience with Christ and it’s your responsibility to interrogate him as

to what this chaos is all about and what he's done to instigate such chaos, what's your first question to Jesus? My first question is, what did you do?

Why are they so uptight with you? But that's not his first question, is it? No. His first question is what? Are you the king of the Jews? Are you a king? Luke 23. The crowd told Pilate that he had claimed to be the Christ, the king. He's curious. What's interesting is Jesus takes his question and he doesn't immediately answer his question. Instead, he asks a question in return. This is what Jesus always does to us.

This is such a fascinating thing, is that when we come to Christ and when we want to know something about him, when we want to know something about his word, he immediately readdresses question to say, are you sincere in your question, or you playing games? Notice what he asks. He says, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" In other words, he comes to Pilate and he says, "Are you insincerely playing with another man's question, or is your heart absolutely sincere in curiosity and ready to bow if indeed the evidence points to the fact that I am the king?"

Do you have anything that you see that's personally at stake on the basis of my answer? Well, Pilate remembers that he's supposed to be the one leading the interrogation. He says, "Stop this. What did you do?" That's what he said. He goes, "Look, I'm not Jewish. I'm not a Jew. It's your people who brought you. So what did you do?" And now all of a sudden, Jesus, who's leading the interrogation, he wants to answer his first question. He says, "You asked me about my kingdom, if I am a king, so let's talk about that now." This is beautiful. Just so much control, so much poise.

He says, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of the world, my servants would have been fighting," meaning my army. In this world, when there's competing kingdoms, there's always some mechanism of power in order to keep power. They would have been fighting so that I wouldn't be standing in front of you or the Jews. He goes, "But my kingdom is not of the world." Pilate said, "So you are a king." When Jesus was saying my kingdom is not of this world, he was affirming that he has a kingdom, but what he said is this.

He goes, "Guys, look, Pilate, look, my kingdom is unlike any kingdom in the history of the world. It's not susceptible to invasion. It's not made a brick and mortar. It's not built on the back of slaves, and it's not protected by human armies. Now, my kingdom has a foundation and that foundation is built on the character and the sacrifice of its king." Imagine he would say something like, Pilate, you can't see these pillars in this foundation. You can't see the kingdom, but you can see he's king, because he's standing right in front of you. For three years, Jesus has talked about his kingdom.

There are so many references that I thought I would pull him bunch of them, and I thought that would take a long time to talk about everything Jesus talked about, about his kingdom. It's like a pearl, a great prize. It's like a treasure hidden in the field. It's pretty remarkable. In Matthew 8, it says the Jesus' kingdom is the only kingdom in the history of the world that literally has a representative from every tribe, tongue, and language

nation who is a citizen of that kingdom. Totally unique.

Isaiah 9 says that it's the only kingdom whose very pillars are not built on the basis of mechanical strength, but its pillars are based on righteousness and truth and love, justice, peace, because these are the characteristics of the king. Jesus says in Matthew 5 that this is the only kingdom that is populated and that grows one person at a time, one soul at a time. Other kingdoms, they're populated by an army going, overthrowing their army. And therefore, now all these people are a part of our kingdom, Christ's kingdom, one trusting soul at a time.

But the beauty about this kingdom is it can only grow. All who come to him he says, "I will bring to my Father. I will not lose one of them." It can only grow. It may look like it's smaller in our culture, but the kingdom of God can only expand and it only expands one trusting, humble soul at a time who recognizes the poverty in their own spirit, their need for righteousness, their need Jesus Christ, their need for a savior. This is the only kingdom in the history of the world, Daniel 4 says, that will remain forever and ever and ever. Let me encourage you.

As you begin a new year, as you begin a new day, the first day of the rest of your life to build your life on Christ's kingdom. We're all builders. Have you ever thought about this? You are a builder. The tools that you have in front of you are your time, your talents, and your treasures. And every one of us, we take those ingredients and we create something. We build something with them. We do something with them. Let me encourage you to build, take those things and leverage them for his kingdom. And the way we do this... It's really important you understand.

How do you build your life upon the kingdom of Christ? You do it one decision at a time. This is how it happens. It's by trusting Christ word at a pivotal moment, meaning I could go this way or I could go this way. I want to show you how this works even in the life of Pilate, this Roman governor. You keep reading and when you get to chapter 19, we're told that Pilate runs back... I said runs. He walks back out to the people and he says, "I find no guilt in him." And they say, "Are you kidding me? He's claimed to be the son of God." He goes, "I'll be right back."

He goes back in. He goes, "Where are you from?" Jesus doesn't answer. Do you know what Pilate does? Pilate begins to lecture him. He goes, "Do you not recognize the significance of this situation? Clearly you don't. You're standing in front of somebody who has the authority to kill you." And Jesus says, he's like, "I think I'll talk now." He says, "You would have no authority at all if it wasn't given you from the kingdom of heaven over which I am the king." It says the Pilate tries to release him. He goes back out and he tries to release him.

And then all the people, all the Jewish leaders, they begin to tighten the grip. It's the last thing, and it creates a pivot. It creates a moment of choice for Pilate. And they say to him these words, they say, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar." What that means is if you release this man, we're going to go over your

head and we're going to tell you that this man who is an insurrectionist, who says we don't have to pay taxes to Caesar, we don't have to worship Caesar, that we're going to tell him that you let him go.

In other words, what's happening in the life of Pilate in John 19 is he has a choice and that is, am I going to acknowledge the Christ who is standing in front of me, the only savior of the world, including my own, am I going to set free the only innocent man who's ever walked the face of the earth, the only righteous man who's ever lived on the earth, or am I going to keep my authority and power and privilege as a governor? Pilate chose poorly. Each one of us, maybe today you don't feel that pivotal moment in your life.

Maybe there's not that choice that's in front of you where you feel it, you see it in your life today. But it's coming. And when it comes, you have a moment to make that decision. The way that you build your life upon the kingdom of Christ is in the moment of decision you acknowledge what Christ has said about that situation and you give preference to him, even if you're going to be mocked for it, even if you're going to be made fun of, ostracized, even if it seems like it doesn't make sense, even if it seems like that there's more reward for doing the opposite.

In that moment, what you're doing is saying, "I believe that the kingdom of Christ will endure forever, and therefore it is the one I must build upon." And that means that these short-term pains is going to produce a long-term gain. This is the way to live. I would come again as I do, I guess, every Sunday and say, have you trusted Christ? You hear his voice. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." And that becomes a pivot point. He came. He died on the cross for your sin. He rose from the dead.

There's the decision to make. But then I would also ask those of you who say, "I've made that as decision," are you trusting him today? Are you trusting him with your sexuality? Are you trusting him with your marriage, with your parenting, with your money, your job? Are you trusting him to where you see a line and obey what Jesus said a long time ago, or I'm going to keep my privilege. I'm going to keep my honor. I'm going to keep whatever I'm going to keep. There's a point. There's a tension. I would plea with you, for your own joy, choose Christ.

Trust him. His kingdom is forever. The second thing he says about Christmas, of why he came was that Christ was sent to bear witness to the truth. God did not want us guessing about who he is or how to live in his world. He knows that we have all kinds of questions. He sent Christ. And what does Jesus say in verse 37? He says, "For this purpose I was born." This is why I was born. This is the purpose that I've come into the world. This is it. It's to bear witness to the truth. And you just look through just the gospels themselves.

Of course, in the gospels, he actually explains all of the Old Testament and how it all points to him. He endorses and authorizes and then gives teaching that will be explained in the rest of the New Testament. But just the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, what we find is that Jesus is giving coherent and clear

teaching and instruction to every honest question that humanity has asked. Where did I come from? Where am I going? What am I supposed to do with my life? What is the origin of evil? What's the presence of evil? What happens when I die?

Why was I made like this? How do I relate to people? What am I supposed to do with my time, my responsibilities? He gave credible and coherent instruction on every one of these things. And Jesus' confidence in this passage to me is absolutely stunning. He says these words, "Everyone who is of the truth, everyone who's on a quest for truth, real truth, everyone who is of the truth. Listen to my voice." Pilate, the first person who didn't believe in... Well, first person recorded in the scripture who says... He says, "What is truth?"

Meaning could there possibly even be a standard of right and wrong that is true for all time? But do you see what Jesus says here? Like some of us, we've shared the gospel or we imagine sharing the gospel with somebody or sharing the truth with someone and it makes us really nervous because we think, what if they ask a question that we don't know? Sometimes when we hear really good questions, we're like, "That's a really good question. How would I answer that? I wouldn't know how to answer that." It makes this anxious.

Did you know Jesus has never felt that? He's never felt any anxiety about any honest question about who he is, what he's done, what life is about, what the Bible says, is the Bible credible. He's never felt any anxiety, and the reason is, for this point, he knows. He knows that every honest quest for truth ends at his doorstep. He says, "If you really want to know the truth, you really want to know the truth, it'll set you free." He says, "You will listen to my voice. You'll find..." You walk down a road. No, that wasn't it. No, that wasn't it.

That wasn't it. This is where Jesus speaks. That's where you end. Jesus said, "You want the truth, you're going to hear from me." It's a beautiful, beautiful confidence that he has. Let me encourage you with this. Let's sincerely pursue God's truth, sincerely pursue God's truth. One of the things I love about Providence and loved the whole time I've been here, almost 25 years in February, is that historically this congregation is loved the Bible. I think it's a really good thing that if I came up here and I tried to teach from something other than the Bible, you would be offended.

I would probably get some emails, right, if we just didn't teach the Bible anymore. And that's a really good thing. I am so glad that you love the Bible. But let me tell you something. One of the things that is true about our congregation is that sometimes we treat the Bible like a hobby or a game. Let me tell you what I mean. When Jesus says and he asked the question, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you," what he's saying is this is that many people, they treat the truth like it's a game. Providence, I want you to know the stakes are simply too high.

They're too weighty for us, as a people of God, to bat around the scriptures and our small groups or our personal to time, or when we gather together in a big group without the determination to obey, to gather around and say, "Hey, let's read Ephesians 5:3. Let there not be a hint of sexual immorality among you." The

way to approach that text is not first to say, “What’s a hint? What’s immorality?” It’s here is my yes on the table. Whatever this means is what I’m going to do. I’m determined. Now, let’s talk about what it means.

As a congregation, we talk frequently about Matthew 28, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Let’s do a Greek study on make disciples. Let’s do a Greek study on nations. Does go really mean go, or is it as you go? Here’s a better question. If he wanted you to go, would you go get a passport tomorrow? To approach these kinds of passages, God’s truth, creator’s truth to creation, and to treat it as though it is not an imperative thing for us to be determined to say I’m in, whatever it is that you want is to play a game with the truth, just like Pilate.

Jesus comes and he says, “Are you just playing around with insincere questions about word structure and word meanings, or do you really have a sincere desire to know the truth and let the truth set you free?” As we consider these things, we will continue to gather. And when we gather in big groups and small groups, we’re going to open up this book. Let’s be very, very careful not to treat that time like a hobby. We are hearing the word of God when we open the Bible, and we should be careful to pay attention to it.

And then for those of you who have not yet trusted Christ, maybe your skepticism is on a level. Maybe it’s an early skepticism where you’re just like, I’m studying. I’m learning. I’m so open. I just don’t quite know enough to really put my trust. And then there’s other people and their skepticism is, I’ve predetermined that I don’t think I’m going to believe, and so I’m going to continue to ask questions over and over and over and over and over again in order to justify the suspension of my judgment.

I’m absolutely convinced that there are some people who are skeptical of Christianity and of the Bible. And the reason they continue to formulate more questions and ask other people’s questions just like Pilate is because they formed an identity around being a skeptic of Christianity. And therefore, when one question gets answered rationally, we have to ask another one because who would I be if I’m not a skeptic? Let me encourage you, if you don’t yet believe in Christ to not be like Thomas. Sometime read John 20.

When you read the story of Thomas, it just crushes me every time I read his words. Jesus comes and he shows himself to his disciples, but Thomas wasn’t there. And so they tell Thomas, “Guess what? We saw him. We even got to put our fingers in the holes in his hand and his sides. We saw him. We felt.” And he says, “Unless I place my finger in the hole,” and he says, “I won’t believe not. I can’t believe. I won’t. I’m making a determination. I am making a personal demand of the creator of the universe to give me the evidence that I think I need.”

Jesus comes to him later and he says, “All right, you want to touch? Go ahead.” Then he says, “Blessed are those who believe without having to touch.” They simply hear and their heart allows them to believe. There is credible evidence. Next week, we’re going to start a series that’s called What’s So Special About The Bible? Just look through January, what is the credible evidence that when we open up the Bible, that we’re actually

hearing from God himself? What I want to encourage for those of you who are skeptical, wherever you land on that scale of skepticism, I...

To be honest, there's a measure of sympathy because there's a season in my own life, in particular, when I was in high school, that I was very skeptical, very skeptical, of the reality and the truth of what I'd been told. What I want to encourage you to consider as we gather next week is let me ask you to remember that we are the creatures in a state of vulnerability and not the creator. That he is not in jeopardy, but we are. Let me also encourage you to release your personal demands as though we would be treading water in the ocean and a rescue boat would come.

And we say, "Well, I don't like that boat. I want a different one." Let's come with sincere intentions to believe if indeed the evidence proves to be credible. With the last little passage I want to read, the last thing that Jesus says on the earth about Christmas, why he came, in John 20:19 it says, "And on the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands in his side.

And then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive any sins of any, they are forgiven them. And if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'" The third thing I want you to see is that Christ was sent to send us with the truth.

"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you," he says. 12 hours after the greatest historical event in the history, the resurrection of the Son of God conquering the grave, his disciples are locked in a room terrified. Suddenly, Jesus appears and he says, "Peace be with you. Peace. I just conquered the grave. Be at peace." And he knows the paralysis that takes place when we are aimless. He gives us a mission, a commission, and he says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you." What that means is that the commission that he gives us is simply a ministry of continuation.

It doesn't mean that we have to die for sin. It means that we have to tell people that he died for sin. It doesn't mean that we set people free. It means we point people to Jesus who set people free. It doesn't mean that we reveal God. It means that we reveal them to Christ who revealed God to them. It's a continuation of what he has done. And he knows that the mission needs power. That we can't do it in our own strength. That we don't have the charisma or the ability to articulate the gospel clear enough to melt ice of unbelief over someone's heart.

Do you see what he does? Just like the creation account where God breathes over Adam and Eve and gives them life, it says that he breathed over his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Now, to be totally

honest with you, this is a little bit confusing. And the reason it is, is because you keep reading the scriptures in the account, then we get to Acts 1 and there it says this, "I want you to stay in the city. I want you to pray." And he goes, "And you will be filled with power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

Very least what's happening here in John is Jesus is preparing them. He's giving them a foretaste of the full power that would come upon them and that has come upon us when the Holy Spirit comes to live within our heart when we trust Christ as savior. And then he says to them something that is a little puzzling, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. And if you withhold forgiveness of any, it is withheld." Now, what does that mean? Does that mean that we're just authorized to walk around and say, "You're forgiven and you're not forgiven?"

Is that what that means? Fortunately, there's four gospel accounts and the other three, they give clarity as to what John recorded here. For in Luke's account, the very same place in the story, Luke records these words, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations." In other words, I believe what Jesus is doing here is he's saying this, when you go and share the gospel and someone believes, I will forgive them of their sin. And as my ambassador, you are authorized to tell them that they are forgiven. And if you share the gospel and someone refuses to believe, I will not forgive them.

And you, as my ambassadors, are authorized to tell them that they are still in spiritual peril. This is not an optional commission. If you are a believer in Christ, then he says, "I have sent to you." Many of us who live in Raleigh, we've lived here all our lives, we think, "I'm not a missionary." Well, yes, you are. You are a sent one. That's what a missionary is. You're sent. So am I. Let's be careful to share God's truth with others. Let's consider where people are at. Let's build relationships with people who may not know Christ. Let's pray for people who are far from him.

Let's seek to share the gospel and to serve them at the point of need. And then the fact is, is that it may be scary. It may be difficult. It may be painful, but we are sent. Let's be faithful. Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for your love for us. Thank you that you care for us deeply. And we pray now, God, as we consider these things that you would take them as they are. You would take these truths and these scriptures and you would burden our heart with what is true. What we have heard.

I ask, Father, that you would help those who are considering trust in Christ to even do that now, to admit that they're a sinner and to believe in Christ, to confess in his Lord of all, to be forgiven. And I pray for those who aren't ready, who still have so many questions and doubts and uncertainties, God, would you help them to distinguish between the things that need to be answered and the things that we simply want to be answered. Would you help people believe? God, we pray, I pray for those who know you and love you and believe.

I ask, Father, this week, when it comes time for us to have one of those pivotal moments that you would help us to have the courage to build our life upon the kingdom of Christ. We love you. We're so grateful. We thank

you for the privilege now to sing and pray that you would be glorified as we do. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen. Would you stand? Let's sing one last song.



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