

the gospel of

# JOHN

all intents and purposes

## John: A Kingdom Not of This World

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### Scripture Reference: John 18:28-40

Good morning, Church. Today we'll be reading out of John chapter 18 verses 28 through 40.

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." 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 by what kind of death he was going to die. So Pilate entered his headquarters again and 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 priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" 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 from the world. Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have 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?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man but Barabbas." Now, Barabbas was a robber. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thank you, Emma, for the reading of God's words. Good to see you guys here. My name is Justin, one of the pastors here, and I'm delighted to share the word with you. I'm excited to continue our series in the book of John this morning, and we come to the section of Jesus' trial

before Pontius Pilate. And if you recall, Jesus had been tried in a fundamentally unjust trial by the Jewish leaders. And now in our passage that, Emma read over us, the chief priests bring Jesus to Pilate now because he's the Roman governor in charge.

Now, let me take a moment just by way of context, to say a few words regarding Pontius Pilate. I would say except for Judas, who betrayed Jesus, there's perhaps no one more notorious in the history of Christianity than this character Pontius Pilate. Historians have noted just how cruel, how stubborn, how evil, how unkind this man was, especially to the Jewish people and how fragile their relationship was because of his lack of support for them, if you will. And from the perspective of church history, Pilate has often been an example of weak-will. He was fearful and he was known for his role in direct connection leading to the crucifixion of the Savior.

Now, the reason why I bring up Pilate is because oftentimes when it comes to Pontius Pilate, our studies can immediately sort of just drift towards a character study of some sort. But what I want us to do to orient our time this morning, has less to do with Pilate himself and more to do with the discussion, with the interesting conversation that he has with Jesus regarding kingship and kingdom. When Jesus responds to Pilate's question in verse 33, he says, "Are you the king of the Jews? Are you the king of the Jews?" Now the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus just simply states, "You have said so."

But in our gospel, in the gospel of John, the writer stretches out more the recording and provides a deeper understanding of the conversation that's happening between Jesus and Pilate. And I think it sheds a great light to this understanding-what does he mean by kingship? What does he mean by kingdom? The question again is, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Now, that's a question that rings in our hearts regarding Jesus in our lives. What I mean by that is the question to you and me this morning is how do you see Jesus in your heart? How do you see Jesus in your life? Is Jesus the king in your life this morning?

I know the question that Pilate is asking more specifically, are you the king, you know, of these people, the Jews. But I think a deeper issue at hand is, is Jesus the king this morning? And does your life reflect that? Because so many people profess Christ and you know, you can say I'm a believer until the cow comes home. But you know, if your life doesn't reflect out there in your homes, and in your workplaces, and your school campuses, and if there's no alignment, you're not a Christian. Just because you go into the garage doesn't make you a car, right? And like that, just because you come into the church on Sunday mornings doesn't make you a believer. So your life has to reflect. All of us, if you are disciple of Christ, you would say Jesus is my king. But if we're really honest with ourselves, we would say, honestly, I don't know. By the choices that we make, by the decisions that we make, is Jesus really my king? Are we really under the kingdom of God or is it really about the unholy trinity of me, myself and I? Because so much of the service that we do even in the church, I mean, how many of you have gone on a mission trip or a service project and we say, this is for the kingdom of God, but in our heart of hearts, we're just doing this to make ourselves good. We're building the kingdom of "Justin," not Jesus. And we're trying to build up our own brand instead. So is Jesus really the king of your life? Is Jesus the king over us? And does that reflect in your life?

John 3:3, John actually speaks about his kingdom. Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And then in John 3:5 Jesus says again, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." So this topic regarding the kingship of God, the kingdom of God, is important in John's gospel. And I think it's incredibly relevant to us because Jesus' kingship is everything. It's everything. And how you respond day to day is profoundly affected by your view of Jesus' kingship.

Colossians one versus 13 and 14, it says, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So we see here, there really are two kingdoms, right? The kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of the world. One that is the domain of his beloved son-that's the kingdom of Christ, or the one that is the domain of darkness-that's the kingdom of the world, that's the kingdom of self.

And here in John 18, in this conversation that is happening between Jesus and Pilate, I believe that Pilate is invited to consider the choice between the two. And so are we, I believe. So are we. We too are invited to consider the choice between the two kingdoms. Because this morning we are more than observers of this text. Amen? We are invited to forsake the kingdom of self and to live according to the kingdom of Christ instead. And that's our key idea. We must forsake the kingdom of self and embrace the kingdom of Christ because the kingdom of Christ is so much better. It is gospelicious- yum, yum. So much better. And so if this is so much more delicious, why would you go to that, right?

So our study in today's text is going to orient primarily around verses 36 and 37, with these two points phrased as I would say, "action" terms for us. Number one is forsake the kingdom of self and secondly, embrace the kingdom of Christ. Very easy to remember two points, right? Two points-so you think, man, this is great. Justin is preaching a short one. But underneath each point there's like three points. So I've tricked you guys. There's like eight points in this. So I will get you out of here by five o'clock. The buses will wait for you. Don't worry, you'll be fine. I'm joking.

But the first thing I do want you to consider is the forsaking of the kingdom of self. Forsaking the kingdom of self. If you remember a few weeks ago, we walked through the scenes in which Jesus was on trial before the religious leaders. And each scene we saw how resolute, how committed they were, the Jewish leaders were, in trying to condemn Jesus. They wanted to put to death. They wanted to destroy Jesus. It was an unjust trial and Jesus was innocent. They met in secret. They ignored all due process. They had already found him, Jesus, guilty in the courts of their own hearts. So all that was needed now was for the Roman empire, Rome to make it official because only they had the authority to put anyone to death. And that's why now the religious leaders are bringing Jesus before Pontius Pilate. And it says in verse 31, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

Now, the story picks up for us in verse 33, where Pilate begins his investigation of Jesus. And it begins with this question again, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Here we really need to realize that there's more to this question than it appears. See, in asking this question, Pilate has a certain intent that has already been informed by what has already happened. Remember that the Jewish leaders, they are charging Jesus with entirely, I would say theological reasons. I mean, Jesus claims he's the son of God. That's heretical to them.

The problem, however, is that Pilate has no interest, zero interest in theological matters. He doesn't give a rip about Jewish laws and procedures and all that stuff. And he makes that absolutely clear in verse 31, when he tells the Jewish leaders, take him, judge him according to your laws. Why are you guys bringing him to me? I don't care. But if the religious leaders can spin the charge in such a way that it actually matters to Rome, then they might have a solution, you see? So in verse 30, they reply to Pilate, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."

Now, what does that mean? What are they saying? Well, it doesn't tell us in the gospel of John, but in Luke chapter 23 verse two, it gives us more detail as to what's going on here. They say in that text, they begin to accuse him saying, we found this man Jesus misleading our nation, and furthermore forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ a king. You see what's going on? See what's happening here, Pilate now is under the impression that Jesus, by claiming to be the King of the Jews, it means that now he is a rival power to Caesar. Pilate is led to expect a revolutionary figure, maybe like a Spartacus sort of guy maybe who might lead a group of insurrectionists in an attempt to battle and to overthrow Rome.

But here's the thing, there's a sense in which it is true, Jesus is the King of the Jews, but not in the way that Pilate is led to believe. This is why Jesus is asking this question in verse 33, "Do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me?" See, Jesus, he cannot answer this question unless it's clear to both parties what is meant that Jesus is the King of the Jews. And to cut through the enigma of it all, Pilate in an act of frustration, he responds in verse 35, you know, am I a Jew? Your own nation, your chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? What have you done?

In other words, Pilate, as we saw earlier, he's not interested in Jewish theology and Jewish affairs. He simply wants to know one thing. He wants to know what it is about Jesus that got the Jewish leaders, his own people so hot, so angry, so bothered that they found it necessary to enlist the help of Rome, especially since Rome, and particularly, you know, this guy Pilate was no friend. They were not supportive of the Jewish people. And with this, Jesus begins to finally answer the questions that Pilate is asking. He says in verse 36, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would've been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jewish people, but my kingdom is not from the world.

See, he starts to answer the question by acknowledging, yes, he does acknowledge the fact that he is a king, but he defines his kingship in such a way that it's not a threat to Rome. How so? First, his kingship is not of this world. Therefore, Jesus doesn't have the same, you know, value

system that other kingdoms like Rome, other empires like Rome, might have. National sovereignty, political power. These things mean nothing to Jesus. Furthermore, he's not concerned about conquering land or concerned with, you know, political systems of government. Therefore, Rome doesn't need to fear Jesus. And then add to the fact and the reality that we don't see the disciples of Jesus becoming a military force, they don't like take arms against Caesar in order to bring Jesus into power. And consider the very fact that Jesus actually rebuked Peter's attempt to prevent the arrest of Jesus earlier in the chapter. And add to the fact, again, that it's the Jewish leaders themselves who delivered Jesus over to Pilate. All of that testifies to that reality that Jesus is no threat to Pilate, no threat to Rome.

Now, in all of this, we need to keep in mind that Jesus is not saying that his kingdom isn't active. He's not saying his kingdom is not moving or that it has nothing to do with the world. And this may be another message for another day, and it's beyond our scope of time this morning. But we understand that the kingdom of God, it does touch all creation. And friends, there will come a time when every knee shall bow, every tongue will confess that he is the King of all kings and Lord over all lords. Philippians 2: 10 and 11 says that, "So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

But now there are two kingdoms at play here. Two kingdoms at play Pilate, you see, he's concerned that Jesus and his kingship and his kingdom is a competitor to Rome. That this kingdom that Jesus is talking about is a contender against Pilate's kingdom. And that is not acceptable to Pilate and to Rome. But think about this, what characterizes Pilate's kingdom? What characterizes anybody's respective little kingdom as opposed to God's kingdom? And I want to frame it in a way that directly addresses our own hearts and our own respective little kingdoms. And I'd like for us to consider that we all have little kingdoms, whether it's our family, our work, our relationships or whatever.

And the truth of the matter is, in our heart of hearts, in our flesh, in our sinful nature that's within us, there is a desire to be our own king. And we want to build our own kingdom. We want to build our own brand. I've got four kids plus a dog. And so I've got a family of six plus one that's like seven, including the dog. There's seven kingdoms vying for power. You know how crazy and chaotic and warlike our family can get?

Because we all have our little kingdoms and we all want to be our little kings and we're all fighting for, you know, power. You know what I'm talking about. But what happens when our kingdoms take center stage? And furthermore, why should we abandon it? What happens when our kingdoms take center stage? Number one is this. I want you to see a couple of ideas that come from that. Number one, when our kingdoms take center stage number one, our desires become ultimate. Our desires become ultimate.

You take a moment and you consider your own personal kingdoms again, whether those realms are in the home, in the workplace, or relationships. And then you ask yourself this, what does it look like when things are good in your kingdom? And maybe if you're parents, is it when your

children are perfectly obedient, they're tidy and they're neat. Children, is it for you when your parents give you your every want and desire, and when your parents give you absolute freedom? For those of you who are married, as married couples, is it when your spouse meets and even exceeds your every expectation? For those of you who are single, is it when life goes according to plan with a perfect job coming out of college, you're married by 25, you own a home by 30 and you retire at 35? Is that what you want? Now ask yourself, what would it look like though, what would it look like when things go awry, when things go differently, when things don't go according to your plans and your desires. You see how you answer both questions reveals what's most important to you. It reveals your desires and what you want, your idols.

And so it's no surprise when things are good in our respective kingdoms, that we respond and we react with happiness and joy. We're giddy. It's honky dory, it's sunny all the time. But it's also no surprise when things go differently, that things don't go according to our plans and desires in our kingdoms, that we react, we respond by grumbling, complaining, and even anger towards other people, and even raising our fists at God. And while none of these desires are bad in and of themselves, we know they become sinful when those desires become ultimate, so much so, that they become the law of the land.

And here's the thing, we forget that we are not the only people in this world who have personal kingdoms, that there are other, you know, competing kingdoms. And as long as we are in this world, more often than not, what makes our kingdoms good can often make another's bad and vice versa. And that leads us to our next idea that characterizes a worldly kingdom. Number two is this, people become objects to use. Instead of loving people and serving people, we look at them as a way to use them for our benefit. And what I mean by this, either people become a hindrance to my kingdom, or they become a means to my kingdom.

Consider again the example of parenting. A parent's desire for obedient children just might be a hindrance to a child's desire for the parent to give in to their every desire and want. And likewise, a child's desire for absolute freedom just might be a hindrance for the parent's desire for tidiness or cleanliness in the home. In a world with multiple kingdoms, with multiple kings who insist in their own ways, people become objects to use and nothing more. Think about all the conflicts in your life with other people. Do you realize that more often than not, it really does boil down to this one thought of you saying, I will be king. It is my kingdom come and my will be done. How many times is it really boiling down, even the conflict in the marriage is you saying, it's my kingdom come, my will be done. I will be king, instead of looking to love and serve each other. But we often chuck it up to the other people and we say, if so and so hadn't done this, if so and so could have done that instead. But isn't that simply us imposing our kingdom will upon them? Isn't that another way of us saying, I will be king, it is my kingdom come and my will be done. You see, Jesus' kingship is everything. And whenever we choose the kingdom of self, we cause damage and brokenness or hurt more than we care to admit, not just to those around us, but to our very selves and to our own souls.

Coming back to our text, as this initial interrogation with Pilate is coming to a close in verses 38 to 40, we find that in spite of the lack of evidence of guilt, and again because the hearts of the Jewish leaders are so, so hardened and so, so stubborn and so committed to the murder of Jesus, that when given a choice, when given a choice to release an innocent Jesus or a insurrectionist by the name of Barabbas, lo and behold, they choose Barabbas.

So we're introduced to this guy Barabbas, and he's an interesting guy. I have four kids. We prayed very much for their names. And my second son, his name is Barnabas because we liked the guy in the Bible-Barnabas the encourager. He's a really nice guy. Sacrificed, sold his belongings. His name means "the encourager." So I lived in Florida for a while, went away, got married, and then we had our first, Tabitha and they met Tabitha. And then I said, hey, I want to come visit Florida and you've never met my son, Barnabas, my son. And they were like, yeah, I can't wait to meet you. My friends were so excited. We go there. And one of my friends said, oh my gosh, it's so good to see you. So this is your son. So this, this is Barabbas! And I was like, what? Why would I call him Barabbas? You know? And I told him, no, this is Barnabas, not Barabbas, very two different guys, Barnabas, good guy, encourager, godly man. Barabbas, everything opposite. And I wanted to punch him, you know? And so, you know, Barnabas is a great son, he's an encourager, he really is. He lives after his name.

But the point is Barabbas, Barnabas, very different guys, you know. But he's more than a robber because in Luke 23, Mark 15, as well as Matthew 27, it tells us Barabbas was not just a robber, but he was a murderer. He was a notorious prisoner. He was a bad dude. He's no Barnabas. He truly was a rebel, an insurrectionist, an insurgent. See all this to show us again, the incredible mind-blowing irony that a man who is a known rebel, a political threat to Rome and a criminal, a murderer, a robber who went against Jewish laws, he was released instead of a man who was clearly not a threat against Rome, who clearly didn't break any Jewish laws. And I think all of this is to show us again the hardened hearts of these people who wanted Jesus dead and saying, I will be king. It's my kingdom come and my will be done.

We also see Pilate's heart in all of this. It shows that he was more interested in his own agenda. Although he knew that Jesus was innocent, we read later on in chapter 19 that he gave Jesus over to be crucified because he heard these words in chapter 19, verse 12, if you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. And everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. Jesus, the sinless one was crucified because Pilate had determined, I will be king. It is my kingdom come and my will be done even at the expense of the Son of God.

So what drives your way of living? Because how we live is reflective of one of two kingdoms. Again, verse 37, Jesus says, everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Why should we listen to his voice? Why should we listen to Jesus? In other words, why abandon the kingdom of self and embrace the kingdom of Christ? And the reason why is because it is so much better to live under the kingship and lordship of Christ, to be in his kingdom. And that's my second consideration for you. Embrace the kingdom of Christ. Embrace the kingdom of Christ. Picking up on the topic of Kingdom, Pilate, what he does now is he proceeds to ask Jesus the question again. Verse 37, Aha! so you are a king. You are a king. But in order to clarify, to distance

himself from any misconception that Pilate might have, Jesus, he responds by saying, you say that I am a king. And in so doing, he begins to explain with greater clarity what kind of king he is and what kind of kingship he has with these words. He says, for this purpose, I was born and 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.

Now, what does he mean by truth? What does Jesus mean by truth? When we think of truth, when we think of truth, you know, we think of it as an opposite to something that is false, right? Opposite of falsehood. It's an accurate perspective of reality. It's a factual representation of maybe an event that happened. But to our culture in our society, y'all know, truth can be a very complicated thing. It can mean a lot of different things in our day. And if you were to ask a question in the world today, what is truth in the world? You get a whole variety of answers. It's kind of like when Oprah Winfrey asked Meghan Markle, so tell us what is your truth, implying that there are many different truths out there. What is your truth? And that sounds about right, doesn't it?

Because we live in a post-modern world, and Seattle many people would say is the epicenter of post-modernity. Truth is now all about your experience. Truth is what you feel is right. So what's right for you, what's true for you isn't right and true for me. It is no longer absolute. It is relative and that's the world that we live in. But the Bible has a very different understanding of truth. The New Testament idea of truth is influenced by the Old Testament idea of it. And truth in the Old Testament has this real personal connection to God. Which is why it's important for us to speak honestly and factually because things like faithfulness or trustworthiness, these ideas that speak of God himself-so for example, when we say that God is faithful, we are saying that God is true. When we say that God is reliable, we are saying that God is true. You know?

So with that in mind, when we come to John, in the gospel of John, it becomes significant then that as John opens up his gospel in chapter one, it begins with this idea that Jesus is the final great very revelation of God himself. So if you ever wanted to know who God is and what he cares about, you can look to the person of Jesus himself, how he lived and what he taught and how he was. In particular, in John 1:17 and 18, it says this, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the father's side, he has made him known." So what that means is that truth then is not relative. It's not a feeling. Truth is more than the opposite of falsehood. Truth is a person. Truth is more than a concept. It is the Christ. It is the Christ. Jesus says he is the truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. He's not one of many ways, one of many truths and one of many lives. He is the way, he is the only truth. No one can come to the Father except through me. So when he came to bear witness to the truth, he's saying that his life, his very self displays the very heart of God.

Now, I've said so much, you're like probably bored out of your mind. You're thinking, okay, what does that all mean, Justin? What does that all matter? It matters because if God defines truth and God defines reality, and if Jesus is the one who manifests and displays God, then our lives need to conform to his value structures and to his very life and to his very personhood.



And it's to this point that Jesus says at the end of verse 37, everyone who is of the truth, they listen to my voice. Now, when we hear these words, we can be led to believe that Jesus here is giving Pilate an ultimatum of sorts, like a veiled threat. He's saying, Pilate, you better listen to me or else. Better choose what is right. Don't choose what is wrong. No, I really think what he's saying in these words-everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice-I believe it's an implicit invitation to Pilate to consider a way of living that is far better than anything he is used to. Consider that.

Do you realize that you and I were made for God's kingdom? And because of that, living under and for his kingdom is a far better alternative than anything you are used to. The Bible tells us that God created us in his original intent in such a way that we find our greatest joy in being oriented towards him, when he is at the center of our universe. But tragically in our sinfulness, we saw his kingdom not for our joy and our good, but rather for our enslavement. And so what? We rebel against God. We determine that it's better to be king rather than to be under the kingship of the infinitely wise and loving sovereign King. We want to be our own king. We want to do our own thing. And we determine that it's better to roam free in the land of thorns and thistles rather than to be within the boundaries of his garden overflowing with every good fruit in which we would never lack or want. We act like fish. We determine that the boundaries of water are too stifling. Ah, we don't like this. And so we jump out onto dry land because we believe that there's freedom. Freedom! But only to find ourself gasping for air and suffering outside the realm in which we were created to thrive and to be happy in.

Even consider what was shared early in our resolution and desire that I will be king. It is my kingdom come and my will be done. We've not only found ourselves in conflict with one another, using one another and bringing suffering to one another, but we find ourselves in conflict with the one true God who created us. But here's the thing, friends, Jesus has come to rescue us from ourselves. Jesus has come to rescue Pilate from himself, and in this invitation to embrace his kingdom, he gives us a far better way.

And let me offer a few thoughts and then I'll close. First, he offers a better king. A better king. When we're children, I think when we're young, the common aspiration in life is to be like a great leader. I did. At one point, I'm sure everybody did. I wanted to be the president of the United States of America. I wanted to be the president of a great organization. I wanted to be the leader. I mean, for a lot of young, aspiring ministers, I want to be the senior pastor of a great and thriving big church. But you know, as I get older and older, I found that I desire those positions less and less. I mean, have you seen pictures of presidents before and after their term? You understand why. I mean, they look haggard. Man, they've aged so much, you know. And I think it really illustrates this reality that being a king or being a leader is frankly exhausting. I mean, I've tricked you. You think I'm 45, I'm actually 25 and I used to have hair. But you know, because the last 15 years I was a lead pastor of churches and I don't envy Eddie's position at all because there's so much weight, so much burden and expectation. I mean, it's hard being a leader. We have to pray for Eddie. He's 35, he may look like 65 in a few weeks.

So, you know, no matter how much power we have, no matter how much money we have or how much influence and all the things we wanted, we simply cannot control the world. And parents, we might try to teach our children to be obedient and to be neat, but we cannot control their hearts and their maturity levels. Children might whine and cry to get their parents to give in to their desires, but they cannot change their parents' decisions. Married folks, we might think we know who we've married, but we cannot anticipate how that person might change over the years. And singles, you might plan your life to the "T", but you cannot prepare for all the curve balls that life might throw your way. And neither are we able to because we simply do not have the moral perfection or infinite wisdom to do so perfectly.

But the beauty of Jesus' kingship is that we have the Savior who does. He is a savior who is infinite in wisdom, love and sovereignty. And we've seen that as far back as John 18 verse six and verse 32. We see that later when Jesus says to Pilate in chapter 19 verse 11, you have no authority over me at all unless it has been given to you from above. You see, unlike us, Jesus is never out of control. He's always in control. But everything happens and occurs only because he allows it to, because there is purpose to it all, and because his love for us sees to it. And if he has demonstrated, think about it, if he's demonstrated such perfect wisdom and restraint and control and composure in what is, I would say, the most trying circumstance of history, when he's standing trial, when he's facing the cross, when he is about to go to Golgatha, when he's about to see all of that and yet this is the way he's reacting-it's with such dignity and composure and control-then why do we act as if we might be a better king over our own hearts? I might know what is good for my life, but friends Jesus knows what is best. And we have a king who in his love, wisdom and sovereignty, ordains better than we could ever dream of.

And that's not to minimize friends, some of the hardships and difficulties and the challenges and the brokenness that you are going through, some of you in this room. But listen, it's important for us to see that we have a better king. And he is so much a better king than you are. That crown don't look good on you, folk. You know, he's not only our great high priest, but we have a great and marvelous king who loves us, and is for us, and not against us. And to the degree that that truth penetrates your heart, your life is transformed from the inside out. He's so much better at managing our lives than we are. And when we are able to surrender the control over our lives to him, it means that we can now finally rest confidently because we have a king who rules and leads in love and in perfection.

And his rule is not threatened by any other opposing power. He has no contender. His power doesn't falter due to limitations. His love doesn't waiver with time. His purposes do not change due to unforeseen circumstances. Dear friends, we have a better king in Jesus so that we can rest, and we can entrust ourselves to this greater kingship. And then secondly, and this is where I'll close, is we have a better joy. A better joy. He offers better joys. Earlier I asked these questions, what makes things good? What makes things tough in your personal kingdom? The implicit question to that is, what makes you joyful? What makes you happy? You see, so often our joy, is it not, dependent on our desires coming to pass. And more often than not, it's those exact desires that also make our lives miserable. So parents feel as if our homes are out of

control, it's chaotic when our children are not obedient or tidy. Children feel miserable when parents don't give into their desires or give freedom. Married couples, we feel as if we are trapped with roommates at best or enemies at worst when you should be lovers. And singles feel as if life is just one crude joke and one letdown after another.

But when we live as those who are under the kingship of Jesus, it all changes. You don't have to live as if our joy and our peace and our security and our identity is threatened. And again, that's not to say that we don't feel the brokenness and the pain of things not working out for us, but it's just that-nothing more in the grand scheme of eternity. Because in Jesus's kingship, his sovereignty, don't you see, directs our lives. His power makes it come to pass. And his love shapes the intent of it all.

And what this means is that we don't have to live as if our joy now depends on our circumstances. Our joy is not dependent on our ideal situation, on the perfect environment. No. Because our joy is now dependent on a life giving relationship with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And we have a much deeper and abiding joy that's found in him, right? It means that parents can feel secure in our identity in Christ when our children are not behaving in the way we want them to, because we know that Jesus' thoughts of us is not dependent on the results of our parenting. Amen to that! Children, you can be at peace when your parents don't give you what you want because you know that this is a better plan that Jesus has for you than your own. And married couples, you can know that you are still loved even when your spouse seems unresponsive and cold because you know that his love towards you abides in every season, including the one that you're currently. And singles, you can be content even if life isn't where you'd hope it to be, because you know Jesus has you exactly where he wants you to be.

And beyond that, consider how every joy that we could ever hope for in the kingdom of self is also temporary. The peace we get from well behaving, obedient, children only lasts as long as the child is obedient. The joy that children feel when parents give to them freedom only lasts as long as the parent allows those freedoms. The honeymoon lasts only as the honeymoon lasts, whenever that trip ends. And the contentment we feel in life lasts only until life throws us another curve ball. But the joy we receive in Christ is so much deeper. It's because we believe Christ is in the business of pruning, pruning us, making us more like him so that we can trust that every day that we walk with him forsaking our kingdoms of self, and by embracing his kingship and kingdom over us, we are only becoming more and more Christlike in our joy and also in the midst of our sufferings and hardships.

We can be like Christ when we find ourselves standing in a place of injustice, showing composure and confidence and testifying through the truth and the reality of God's identity and God's grace. As we consider Pilate, as we think about him now, he would sadly end up rejecting Jesus's invitation. Pilate actually scoffs at Jesus in verse 38, "What is truth?" And then he walks away before Jesus can answer, as we will see in the coming weeks, leading up to Good Friday and Easter. I can't wait for that. Oh my gosh, it's going to be so awesome here at Doxa as we see Jesus suffer and die and then rise again. He is who he says he is. We will witness that. He is more than a thorn in the side of the Jewish leaders. He is the one who sits on the right hand of

the throne of God, vindicated in glory. And he's more than an innocent man unjustly, condemned to die. No, he is the lamb who takes away the sin of the world and he is the King of all kings. And he has no contender. He who is truth, who came for this purpose to live the life that we could never live; to die the death that we surely deserve, holds out this invitation to all of us, imploring us to die to ourselves, to let go of our damning pride, and to forsake our little kingdoms, and to embrace his kingship over us that we are called to give up and surrender and to say if we had a thousand lives, we will give all of them to Jesus. Because it is far better to be under his kingdom than to be under the world's kingdom. And to be in his kingdom, it is so good. It is "gospelicious."

Let's pray. Indeed, Lord, help us to taste and see Jesus how good you are-that this redeeming love, this redemptive story at work in our lives, there's none like it. Oh God, we pray that you would do a powerful work in us. Help us, Lord God, to surrender ourselves joyfully to the kingdom that is your kingship, to give ourselves joyfully to you instead and to live our lives for you. We pray that your Holy Spirit would do that work. Convict us and challenge us today. We thank you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.