

*Read also Isaiah 53:7-12*

During this season of Lent we have been talking about Jesus' Kingdom. We talked His devotion as the Good Shepherd; His unlimited power as He raised Lazarus. We respond in two ways – by believing and by giving back. We learned there are always detractors who say, "Don't believe; don't give." But the believers received and honored Jesus this day, which we call Palm Sunday.

Jesus entered Jerusalem that day for one purpose, to fulfill His mission. He came into the city as King; but what a vastly different king from the kings of the world. Jesus enters Jerusalem to face a trial a trial of which we are all to be a part. Isaiah predicted its horror and humiliation in a passage written some 700 years earlier.

We join Jesus as He is taken to Pilate after having been condemned by the Jews, who stand outside Pilate's courtroom saying, "We want Jesus dead." There are always detractors.

Pilate has little respect for them. He would not "rubber stamp" the Jews' claims against Jesus but proceeded with his own investigation. That opens him to an unanticipated conversation with Jesus. He begins his interrogation.

Question One

Pilate: *Are you the King of the Jews?*

Jesus: *Do you ask this on your own or did others tell you about me?*

Jesus makes this trial personal. Everything in the life of Jesus is about reaching out to the person before Him with God's truth. One on one – just like Jesus confronts you and me. He doesn't follow the course of prisoner-being-interrogated. He turns the tables when he asked Pilate:

*Are you seeking on your own? Do you really want to know? What would you do with this knowledge?*

He's giving Pilate an opportunity to truly investigate. Reach into your Bible memory bank and you will see that Jesus always does that.

If Jesus is with someone, He'll confront them with the truth.

- When Nicodemus came saying "we know you are from God," Jesus replied – "You must be born from above; of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:3).
- The Samaritan woman – "You draw water over and over. Ask me and I will give you thirst quenching water gushing up into eternal life" (Jn. 4:23).
- The crowd of 5,000 – "You are looking for me because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures forever, which I will give you" (Jn. 6:26-27).

Do you hear it? Jesus says seek what really matters in life.

So Jesus is not a detainee as he stands before Pilate. No, He's a Master. Jesus speaks as king, not subject. Scripture tells us the kings of nations rage against God's anointed but to no avail (Ps 2).

Jesus simply turns the tables and examines Pilate about the most important question in life – *Are you seeking?*

Pilate retorts: *I am not a Jew*

That is, Pilate says, *what's it to me? Why would I be interested? Your own nation and religious people turned you over to me.*

Pilate's investigation is strictly to see if Jesus has broken a Roman law. But perhaps curiosity wells up, a desire to know who Jesus is as Jesus draws him out.

So Pilate goes on with the interrogation.

#### Question Two

Pilate: *What have you done?*

Jesus: *My kingdom is not from this world...*

*(READ Jn. 18:36) If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.*

With that declaration Pilate realizes he has an entirely different situation here; this is no ordinary political challenger. With no army and no followers fighting to defend him, Jesus' kingdom is unlike the political powers of this world. The Governor realizes instantly Jesus constitutes no threat to Rome.

Now, Jesus' kingdom is not like the powers of the world, but Jesus doesn't say His kingdom is not powerful or active in the world. In fact, Jesus ushers God's powerful kingdom right into everyday life:

- rescuing people from bondage,
- healing illnesses,
- overcoming tragedy,
- bringing the blessing of God.

Jesus constantly says, "The kingdom of God is at hand." Do you see it? It's a kingdom superimposed on ordinary life, accessed when you believe. You and I see its power right here in our midst, in your life and mine.

Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was no threat to Rome and he could have dismissed Him, he continues the questioning.

#### Question Three

Pilate: *So you are a king?*

Jesus: *You say that I am a king* (meaning yes, that is right)

Jesus said, "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." Jesus means Himself. JESUS is the truth to which He refers. Jesus says,

“I am here as the saving agent of God.”

“I am on a mission from God.”

“This is my whole role.”

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

He adds, “People who recognize that truth listen to me.”

Jesus reveals this truth of a greater kingdom than can be found on earth. Jesus says, *seek the truth. Live for the truth.*

But Pilate says: *What is truth?*

He’s very contemporary. He lives on in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Today’s world asks, “Is there truth we can count on? That’s the most prevalent question of postmodernism, a world which deconstructs truth and orders life simply around daily experience, rejecting any kind of ultimate truth. It’s this idea of skepticism, that you can’t know anything for sure.

Jesus said, “There is a truth. You can know it. I’m revealing God’s truth from heaven. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Do you hear the invitation? Jesus offers the truth that extends beyond this life; there is more to life than the here and now.

Did you notice the decision Jesus confronted Pilate with? Jesus said, “You can be a part of that kingdom. You can know the truth and the Truth will set you free.”

But Pilate turns him down. He does not want to take ownership of the truth. He sticks with his own rule; his own power and authority.

Not wanting to lose his position, Pilate refuses to take a stand for the truth. Pilate tries to work it two ways. He declares Jesus innocent, but tries to get the Jews to withdraw their demand for the death penalty. READ John 18:38b-40

Then Pilate has Jesus flogged, hoping that will be enough. Soldiers put a crown of thorns on him and a purple robe. They strike Him on the face. Jesus is mocked and humiliated just as Isaiah wrote about the Messiah: *He was unjustly condemned; led like a lamb to the slaughter; life cut short in midstream, no one cared (53:7-8).*

Pilate questions the Jews once again but they insisted Jesus be crucified because he calls Himself the Son of God. Now deeply fearful, Pilate questions Jesus once again.

Fourth Questioning:

Pilate: *Where are you from?*

Jesus gave no answer.

Pilate: *Why don’t you talk to me? Don’t you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?*

Jesus: *You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above...*

Isaiah said, “His life was made an offering for sin. He was struck down for the rebellion of God’s people so that we can live again” (Isa. 53:10).

Pilate took him out to the Jews and said, “Behold the man.”

And there stood the King of Kings; the man who had healed the blind and raised the dead; the one who walked across the Sea of Galilee to teach His people; the Savior who fed thousands of people with five loaves and two fishes; the one to whom we pray for help and hope; the one who made it possible for a four-year-old boy to survive a third-story fall; who resurrects your faith when circumstances are discouraging and enlivens your heart, giving you hope.

Behold the man who brings life when we turn to Him.

Behold the man to whom you and I owe everything, because He gave His all – for us.

BEHOLD the MAN. THE KING.

Will you give Him everything in return? For God says,  
“When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11).

Isaiah concludes, “God gives Him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death, and bore the sins of many as He interceded for us” (Isa. 53:12)

BEHOLD THE MAN.

AMEN