



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 13, 2024
Lenten Midweek 5
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 1 CW
Passion History: [Reading 4](#)
Sermon Text: [John 18:33-40](#)

Pastor James Enderle

God on Trial: Truth

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

What is **truth**? That's a question that Pilate asked. It's a question that we can consider and are asked many times. You kids, if you have a little chocolate on your face after your parents told you "Don't eat the dessert," you might say "I didn't do it." What will they say? "Tell me the **truth**!" Would you do it? Sometimes the **truth** is hard to find. Or, if you are at odds with a friend because of something that they did and they don't want to tell you what they did, you might be crying out "Just tell me the **truth**! Speak the **truth**!" The **truth** is sometimes hard to find and sometimes hard to be shared. The **truth** is something difficult in our lives at times.

As we come to the courtroom as we look at **God on trial**, the **truth** is something very important in the courtroom. Think about witnesses as they go on trial. What do they promise? They swear to tell the **truth**, the whole **truth**, and nothing but the **truth**. Even the jury is supposed to come back and render a true verdict. Think about the courtroom and trials and the whole point is to get to the **truth**, to find out what really happened, to see all the evidence and come to the true conclusion.

When we see Jesus on trial, it shouldn't surprise us that the idea of **truth** comes up. But we see these two men. We see Jesus and Pontius Pilate. You could say as they are discussing this idea of **truth**, they've come from very different backgrounds. Jesus was born in this small town of Bethlehem, raised in this town of Nazareth that people would say "Nothing good could come from Nazareth." Pilate was probably born in Italy. He was most likely a soldier and worked his way up into the government. Now he is this governor. He is ruling the people here in Jerusalem. He had been used to bureaucracy and what soldiers go through and how **truth** can be used, maybe to get soldiers to do

things, how people in government can sway people maybe by twisting the **truth**. So his questions on **truth** are because he probably had a lot of questions on what the **truth** was.

But here, as Jesus is now on trial, Pilate had probably heard about Jesus. His name, as He had gotten people to follow Him and He performed supposed miracles as people were probably saying "This guy, He fed 5,000 people! He was teaching and fed these people! He has raised people from the dead," and he has probably heard rumors. Finally he is there but the events leading up to that week probably really started getting his attention. As He came in on Palm Sunday, what did the people cry? "Hosanna! Save us, Son of David!" If you knew any of the religious history, Son of David would mean He was kingly, a descendant of King David, and that was this idea of a king. This would start to concern Pilate.

As the preparations for the Passover were approaching, the Jewish leader brings Jesus before Pilate. We see the conversation that happens as there are these thousands of people in Jerusalem waiting for the Passover and Pilate is trying to figure out what is going on and is trying to make sure that this uprising doesn't happen, a rebellion, and that it doesn't get back to Rome that he can't control the people. He comes and talks to Jesus. He says **"Are you the king of the Jews?"** Pilate wants to know if He is really a threat. Is He this king that is leading the people and trying to set Himself up against Caesar? What do you think that Pilate wanted Him to answer? He probably wanted a simple yes or no. But what does He say? He says **"Is that your own idea...or did others talk to you about me?"** Jesus most likely wanted to talk to him about what it meant that He was the king of the Jews; to strike up this conversation with Pilate about "Do you know what this means" because he says, "Is this what you think, or have other people told you? What have you heard it means that I am the king of the Jews?" But we kind of see him sidestep the question.

He says **"Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"** He says "You are the one who is on trial. You are the one that they are accusing of crimes. To that Jesus answered that His kingdom is not of this world. He kind of answers the question but says something very different. **"If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."** Oh, so now some of Pilate's question is answered. **"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.** He has kind of answered his question.

But then we see what Jesus answered. **"You say that I am a king.** (Pilate just said this.) **In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."** "You care about the truth if I am a king. Let's not focus just on the fact that I am a king, but let's talk about why I am really here—the **truth**." So what does Pilate respond? **"What is truth?"**

Think about that. Throughout Pilate's history of bureaucracy and politics and soldiers, he probably struggled with the **truth**, the manipulation, how people abused it and he had no idea what to answer. So when he is thinking about this (what is **truth**), is he thinking of this huge, philosophical question? He is probably not. He is saying, "What is the **truth** about you, your religious leaders? Your people handed you over and you say you're a king and you're on the side of **truth**, but you are the one here arrested." So what happens after this?

We don't hear them go on and talk about **truth**, but it seems like Pilate asks this question and kind of walks out or wants nothing to do with what the real answer was. No one really understood what that **truth** was except Christ. The **truth** was that He came to testify about the **truth** of who He was and what He came to do. That Holy Week was what it was all about. Though He was God, He came to be man, to be beaten, to be punished unjustly, to wear this crown of thorns, to be mocked and then to be put on a cross. Consider the emotional pain and the sadness. Jesus came to testify about the **truth** of how fallen this world was and how we needed a Savior, someone to pay for our sins because we are lost on our own. So Jesus came for the **truth** to say God loves us. Jesus wanted everyone to know of the love of His Father, the love that He had for them, and He was pleading. He knew this had to happen; that He had to come and pay for the sins of the world, the **truth** that our sins deserved punishment and that we need a Savior. We needed God to come and fix the problem; to die for us; to suffer for us. Imagine Jesus as He comes to testify about the **truth** and He just wants people to know the **truth**.

Think about how we struggle a little bit with the **truth** today and how we could really want someone to know the **truth**, to see the **truth**. Think about when you were younger in college, or maybe you have a friend who is dating someone and you think "I just know that person is not right for them. I wish they would see the **truth**!" And you are just hoping they see the **truth** of that and that they aren't right. Or maybe you know someone is struggling with an addiction and they just don't see the pain that it is causing them or someone else and you're thinking "I just hope, I wish, I pray I can help them see the **truth** so they could see what this is doing to them." Or think of the slogans in our world today that are misleading people. Think about politics. Both sides are saying "If this person gets elected, it will be the end of democracy." The other side says the same thing. "If that person gets elected, it will be the end of democracy." What is the **truth**? Everyone is searching for the **truth** but there are so many lies and different ways of interpreting that **truth** so we struggle to say what is the **truth** and how do we find it. As much as we have that compassion and want people to see the **truth**, we know that there is one place to find real **truth**.

We don't know where that conversation went, but you could think that Jesus probably wanted to pour out the **truth** to him, to have a question not about just there and who He was but about eternity and about salvation and forgiveness, but did Pilate want that?

Think about in our confusing times where people maybe don't want more; to go down that deep conversation and really discuss the **truth** in spiritual terms. People just want surface level and maybe to avoid the **truth** sometimes and just look for what feels good or the easy answer. So what is **truth**?

The **truth** is that it's not just a formula or a theory or a way of thinking. It is Jesus. Jesus is the way, the **truth** and the life. [\(John 14:6\)](#) He is God. Through the Word, through what He does, He shows us His love for us. The deceptions of this world are severe and the devil continues to lead you and me astray and says "God doesn't love you. He doesn't have the **truth** for you. Do not believe Him." But we need to know the **truth**; that God loves you no matter what you are facing. As much as the temptations and fear that the devil may give you, God loves you. He loves you so much to send His Son for you. That's what Jesus says to Pilate. That is the reason He came, to testify to the **truth**, to come and to be our Savior.

We see that He goes uncomplaining forth, testifying to the **truth** no matter what people say about Him. Then He goes to the cross and suffers and forgives those who crucify Him. Knowing what He is facing, He says "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" [\(See passages\)](#) He paid for our sins. Then He rose again to testify to the **truth** that our sins are forgiven and that we have eternal life through Christ. No fear of death. No fear of sin. No fear of the devil and his temptations. All are defeated through Christ. That is the **truth** and that is life for you and me. He says He goes to prepare a place for you and for me. [\(John 14:2-3\)](#) So we have no fear in this life and the biggest struggles we face.

Maybe you have people in your life that are struggling to know the **truth**. Maybe there are times when you struggle with the unknown and the **truth** of what is going on in your life and wonder "Why is this happening? Does God love us? What good is there?" We look at Christ and we look at His suffering and we know that in the midst of the most difficult things, God is working His good thing. God is working salvation for you and me and so in the midst of our struggles, we cling to the **truth** that God still loves us. God loves us most of all in Christ. That is the **truth**. He is ruling now and forever. The world might try to deceive you and say that He has no power or He doesn't know what He is doing, but know the **truth**. Your King is reigning and your God loves you. We get to share this **truth** with other Christians who need that encouragement, and we get to share that **truth** with so many who are searching for answers. We get the opportunity to share what they really need—the **truth** that Jesus loves them and has forgiven them.

So what is the **truth**? Jesus is the **truth**, your Lord and your Savior. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.