

## The sermon

### Intro

Why was Jesus born? If we celebrate Jesus' birth in some form or another, shouldn't we know what we're celebrating?

Why Jesus was born is a matter of truth. Shouldn't we care about what's true?

Jesus came so we could have clarity, certainty. So we wouldn't have to guess who God is. So we could be free from the bondage of manmade religion. So we could worship rightly. As we were designed to do.

### READ PASSAGE

### BIG IDEA: Jesus Came to Speak the Truth

#### Body

#### Point 1: A case that can't be made (18:28-32)

*Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning.*

"they" = the Sanhedrin (Matt 27:1-2). Previously, Judas had betrayed Jesus and the Sanhedrin, composed of chief priests, elders, and scribes, came with swords and clubs (Mark 14:43). Jesus didn't resist and brought to the high priest for trials. When Jesus conceded he was Son of Man of Daniel 7:14, he was charged with blasphemy (Matt 26:63-66).

Now the Sanhedrin has taken Jesus to Pilate's headquarters.

"early morning" = sometime after sunrise but before 9:00am.

*They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.*

The Sanhedrin can't enter Pilate's headquarters because they'd be defiled and unable to eat the Passover meal. According to their tradition, entering a Gentile home with a roof on it would make them unclean.

The horrific irony is they care about ceremonial defilement, but they have no concerns about killing an innocent man. Earlier in John's gospel they wanted to kill Lazarus because (12:9-11) news of Jesus raising him from the dead was causing people to believe in Jesus. These are evil guys.

*So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" – 18:29*

Showing respect for their customs, Pilate comes outside so they don't have to enter a Gentile's home. Pilate's looking for charges and proof.

*They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." – 18:30*

Trust us, he's guilty. This is an evasion. No accusations, no proof provided.

*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." – 18:31*

Do with him whatever you want. But we can't. We want the death penalty, but because we're under Roman rule, we don't have the authority to execute him. Pilate, only you can execute him. Please help us.

*This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. – 18:32*

Jesus had alluded to his crucifixion previously in John 12:32-33.

## Crucifixion

Ankles nailed to the vertical post and wrists nailed to the horizontal beam. Death came by heart attack or blood loss or suffocation.

## Summary

John presents the Sanhedrin as having no case.

### Point 2: Jesus admits he's a king (18:33-36)

*So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"* – 18:33

Pilate re-enters his home. Pilate questions Jesus as to whether or not he's the King of the Jews.

Pilate wants to determine if Jesus is a credible threat to the Roman Empire's interests. Is this guy capable of leading a revolt against Rome?

To get Pilate to sign off on the crucifixion, they framed Jesus as a threat to the Roman Empire.

Luke provides a detail John doesn't mention.

*Then the whole company of them [Sanhedrin] arose and brought him [Jesus] before Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."* – **Luke 23:1-2**

"tribute" = taxes. Pilate, Jesus is trying to stop Caesar from receiving taxes. Please help us!

*Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"* – 18:34

Pilate, who said I'm a king? What have you been told? What's your assessment?

*Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"* – 18:35

"am I a Jew?" = do I care about Jewish concerns? Implied answer no.

Pilate's struggling to find a legitimate charge. Why have they given you to me? Tell me!

*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."* – 18:36

Jesus concedes he is a king. "not from the world" is literally translated "**my kingdom is not from here.**" My kingdom is from another realm. Not an earthly kingdom.

If my kingdom was earthly, I would have never been captured by the Sanhedrin. Matthew 26:52-53 indicates two forms of servants.

*Then Jesus said to him [Peter – John 18:10], "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"* – **Matthew 26:52-53**

Jesus' disciples could have physically resisted the Sanhedrin's soldiers. Jesus' angels could have rescued him and wiped out the Sanhedrin. But Jesus didn't come to rule by military force. In fact, he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (**Mark 10:45**). Which means he came to be delivered by the Jews to the Romans to be crucified.

## Summary

Jesus is a king. But he didn't come to rule by military force. No, Jesus came to serve by giving his life on the cross.

Jesus is saying to Pilate, "No, I didn't come to overthrow Rome. I'm not a threat to your empire. But I am a king from another realm. But I could topple Rome if I wanted to."

### Point 3: Jesus came to speak the truth (18:37)

*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."*

– 18:37

Pilate grasps Jesus has admitted to being a king. Jesus doesn't deny it. You speak correctly Pilate.

Here Jesus tells a Gentile ruler why he was born and why he came to earth: *"to bear witness to the truth."* Meaning to declare, to speak the truth. Truth meaning what is factual, what corresponds to the actual state of affairs.

### What sort of truth?

- 1) True statements about God.
- 2) True statements about human origins.
- 3) True statements about the afterlife.
- 4) True statements about past events.
- 5) True statements about current events.
- 6) True statements about future events.
- 7) True statements about why he came.
- 8) True statements about who and what he is.
- 9) True statements about our sinful condition.
- 10) True statements about accountability to God.
- 11) True statements about rescue from sin.

### Summary/Application

Jesus is a truth-teller. You can't pick and choose what you want to believe and what you don't want to believe. You can't pick and choose what you like and what you don't like. You can't pick and choose what you want to obey and what you don't want to obey.

I envision Jesus this way. No, it doesn't matter how you envision Jesus. All that matters is how Jesus envisions himself. Is our Jesus a figment of our imagination? Is our Jesus the Bible's Jesus? A mixture? Beware of idolatry! Understand truth! Receive truth!

We're Christlike when we speak the truth.

***"Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."***

This is a truth claim. What Jesus means is everyone who belongs to the truth (= everyone who belongs to me), pays attention to my words and obeys them. You can tell a person is a true disciple (belongs to the truth) because they care about Jesus' words. We, his disciples, care about Jesus' words because we believe Jesus' words are true. We believe Jesus' words correspond to reality.

Jesus is inviting Pilate to respond. The man on trial is urging his judge to obey him. Pilate, are you of the truth? Are you listening? How are you going to respond to me Pilate?

#### **Point 4: Jesus rejected in favor of a murderer (18:38-40)**

*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." – 18:38*

Pilate responds dismissively, ends the conversation, and goes back outside.

But Pilate hasn't found any reason to charge Jesus. Jesus poses no threat to the Roman Empire. Jesus shouldn't be crucified.

*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?" – 18:39*

Here Pilate is addressing the Jewish crowds, not just the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:6-8).

Apparently there was a custom where Pilate would release one prisoner at the Passover. He gives the crowd opportunity to release Jesus.

*They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. – 18:40*

There was another option. Barabbas wasn't a common robber. Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19 note that Barabbas was imprisoned for murder and his involvement in an insurrection (rebellious uprising). Mark 15:11 notes that the crowd wanted Barabbas released because they were "stirred up" by the chief priests.

More irony. The Sanhedrin appeals to Pilate to crucify Jesus because he's a threat to the Roman Empire. Then they encourage the crowds to release a man who actually engaged in insurrection against the Roman Empire. Pilate wasn't dumb. He knew what was going on.

#### **Summary**

Pilate finds no guilt in Jesus. But the crowds want Jesus crucified so bad they want a murderer released. Morals are out the window.

Pilate responds to Jesus' words with I don't care. The Sanhedrin responds to Jesus' words with kill him. Unbelief takes multiple forms. Neither is of the truth.

#### **Point 5: Truth matters**

Mainstream culture, much like 2,000 years ago, has little interest in truth. Yes, we have investigative reporters who will go to great lengths to uncover the truth, but for the most part, our culture goes with feelings over truth when it comes to religion. Follow your heart. You do you. Be true to yourself.

Generally people aren't concerned with whether or not the resurrection is real. They're not doing an investigative, rational analysis. They're not wrestling with things like, "If the resurrection is real, then what Jesus said about my sin and eternal life is of utmost consequence. I need to investigate the resurrection." No, they're thinking more like I don't like what the Bible says about gender roles. I don't think I'm a bad person. I don't want to waste my Sundays on church when I could be at the lake. A God who punishes people for being themselves isn't worth following. The issue for many today isn't what's true? The issue is, what do I like?

Since people aren't looking for the truth, we feel pressure to "sell" the gospel and make it attractive.

Ever struggled with convincing people the gospel matters?

### Method

If many today don't care about truth, how do we think about these matters?

1. The gospel is always relevant because it's 100% true.

A person's response to the gospel has consequences because the gospel is a true depiction of reality. Maybe we need to push back to ultimate realities?

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* – **Genesis 1:1**

*Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.* – **Psalms 115:3**

Help people to see the flaws in their thinking. In judging God, they're acting like they created the world. Like everything belongs to them. In judging God, they're acting like God is bound to do whatever they want. Like God who created all things isn't free to do what he wants.

Christian, it's never a question of what do I want to believe? It's always a matter of what does God's word mean? What is true? What do the words say? I want to believe in God as he actually is.

2. The gospel is always relevant because of our brokenness.

Help people to see their sin. Chemotherapy is relevant to a cancer patient because they find themselves in a dreadful condition. Likewise, the gospel is relevant to sinners because we find ourselves having broken God's law and, therefore, guilty of sin. Additionally, we find ourselves struggling with fear of man and jealousy and anger and selfishness and a myriad of other internal attitudes because of our sinful nature.

### Final thoughts

Jesus spoke the truth and demonstrated his deity and the Sanhedrin didn't care. Was Jesus a failure? No, people reject Christ with the clearest of evidence.

Should we feel the pressure to frame the gospel in a good way? To an extent, I'd say yes. It isn't my job to make someone approve of the gospel. But it is my job to attempt to help them see why the gospel's good news. The gospel is good news because of our sinful condition. It's good to be rescued from sin!

Should we feel the pressure to prove the gospel? If someone is really investigating truth claims, go ahead. Prove the resurrection. Prove intelligent design. Prove from prophecy that God tells the future in the Bible.

What if they don't care about truth? You could be blunt. Do you even care what's true?

Tell them the truth anyways. The gospel has a way of awakening indifferent hearts. **And the gospel is always relevant because it's true!** Tell them "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*" (**John 3:16**). Tell them "*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (**Mark 10:45**).

When speaking to people unfamiliar with Christianity, Paul put it like this.

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."* – **Acts 17:30-31**

**Non-Christian**

If you understand these truths and you're saying I believe these things and I want to be right with God, but how?

1. Confess your sins to God.
2. Ask for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death on the cross.
3. Trust that God forgives all who come to him through Jesus.
4. Keep coming back every week. Keep learning and do life with God's people.

God saves us for community.

5. Keep turning from sin by following Jesus. Learn from him.

If you believe, let us know.