

Good Friday is a time of reflection, reflection on the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus and how it all came to its fullness in the Crucifixion. Pontius Pilate asked Jesus a question during his trial. He said, “**What is truth?**” Tonight we’re going to reflect on that question and on how Jesus answered it.

OPENING PRAYER

READ John 18:33-19:42

Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?”³⁶ 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.”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.”³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

^{19:1} Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.³ They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands.⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.”⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!”⁶ When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”⁷ The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

¹² From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”¹³ So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in

Aramaic Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” ¹⁵ They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

For Pontius Pilate “**What is truth?**” was a serious question. Embroiled in the daily intrigues and political turmoil in his own little corner of the Roman Empire, he gave little thought to the deeper questions of life. When he asked that question, I’m sure it was with a sense of nostalgia.

But if he’d followed Christ’s ministry over the past three years, he would’ve known the answer to his question.

When the doctor tells us that we have a condition—a heart problem, a respiratory infection, what have you—and then he prescribes treatment, if we’re smart, we do as he has told us. For he spoke the truth.

So it was for Jesus, the great physician of the human heart. Throughout his ministry, Jesus visited people in their hearts, and he revealed their deepest needs, and then He ministered to those needs. That’s how Jesus spoke the truth. The people who received Jesus’ teachings as the truth were healed, they were made whole. But alas, there were many more who rejected what Jesus had to say to them.

It’s the funny thing about medical advice. Either we accept or deny it, as in if the doctor tells you that you’re going to die of lung cancer if you keep

smoking, you can either stop smoking or keep lighting up those coffin nails. But what we do with the advice of our doctor has no bearings on the truthfulness of his prognosis.

So there were those who accepted Jesus' truth and were healed, and there were those who rejected Jesus' truth.

Here's a story from Christ's ministry, which you're probably familiar with, which illustrates the point:

John 8:3-11

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."

The woman and the religious authorities all heard the truth on that day. The woman was converted on the spot and became a follower of Jesus. On the verge of being stoned to death she clung to every word that fell from His lips. She repented and she was saved. She loved Jesus, for He had set her on the road to wholeness and peace of mind.

The scribes and the Pharisees also understood Jesus' words. They too were convicted in their hearts, for none of them could say, "I am without sin, so I'll cast the first stone."

They could've accepted Christ's truth like the woman. But they went the other way. They turned inward, their hearts seethed with hatred towards him, and they began to plot his death.

People who don't want to hear THEIR truth can't listen to Jesus. Sure, we like to hear the truth about the most recent political scandal, about our neighbor's gossip, and about a sale at Target. But heaven forbid that OUR truth should be revealed!

Jesus' last words on the Cross were, "**It is finished.**" We read about how he "**bowed His head and gave up His spirit.**" He was dead. His life with man was finished. He had received the cup of suffering His Father had given Him, and He had drunk from it deeply.

The Cross was terrible, but Jesus whole life must've been agonizing. Thirty years plus filled with pain. He was perfect, but He was thrown into the sea of a dark, dirty, ugly, imperfect world. His heart must've been broken into a thousand pieces many times.

But through his work, his good work on the Cross, on that first Good Friday, Jesus brought his truth to bear on the spirit of the human race, removing the curse of sin from our hearts. "**It is finished,**" indeed.

As I think about this, I reflect on the truth in my own life. There are contradictions. There's sin, but too, there's holiness. There's uncertainty, but too, there's clarity. There's darkness, but too, there's light. There's fear, but too, there's confidence.

Are there contradictions in your life too? What's the "truth" Jesus wants to bring to the surface of your conscience? We are a people who can do and say wonderful and beautiful and encouraging things. But we also dispense pain to the people around us.

But, "**It is finished.**" Tonight, we meditate on the price Jesus paid, that all this might be finished. With the Cross and the blood, the suffering and the death.

The burden. "It is finished."

The guilt. "It is finished."

The shame. "It is finished."

When Jesus said to the woman who was about to be stoned, "**I do not condemn you**," she must've felt like she had wings and could fly! Can you imagine?! She knew that she was SO dead. And you can almost hear her saying, "You mean I get a second chance? Is this really true?"

The truth gives us wings,

wings to fly over hell below into heaven above,

heaven above where we meet God in His glory.

Friends in Christ, this evening let us meditate on the truth the Lord is bringing to the surface in our own lives.

Let us allow the truth of Jesus' love fill our hearts to overflowing.

And let us take hold of the opportunity to share this Good News of Jesus work on the Cross with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus.

Friends in Christ, may the Lord bring you to Himself on eagle's wings, lifting you up in the truth of His life in yours, the truth that has set you free.
Amen.