

## **That You May Believe in the Cross, Part 2**

John 18:12-40

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 11, 2018

We are back in the Gospel of John this week. This is a book we started way back in the month of June. And we've been at it for about half a year now. And if you're just joining us, we should be finishing this in December, by the end of the year. Which means we've gone pretty quickly because John is one of the longest books in the New Testament. And to finish it in that amount of time is moving pretty fast. This morning we're in one of the last chapters - it's chapter 18. If you want to turn over there to John chapter 18, which Dwayne and just read to us, I want to introduce chapter 18 this way.

In one of his books, James Montgomery Boice, the late pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, told the story of a Hindu teacher named Raul who announced to his followers that he was going to walk on water. Just like that he said he was going to do a miracle, something the world had never seen before. He was going to walk on water. And as you can imagine, the announcement brought a great deal of attention with it. On the day of the miracle, thousands gathered at a pool in Bombay, India to watch him do this. And when he appeared, a hush fell over the crowd. Everyone got real quiet. And as he stepped to the edge of the pool, the holy man glanced toward heaven, he said a prayer and splash, fell right into the water. Face first. And as he emerged, soaking wet and fuming, he looked at the crowd gathered around the pool, and he said through clenched teeth, "One of you is a non-believer."

I mention that to say, isn't it great to know our salvation isn't like that? Isn't it great to know it doesn't all depend on us? We can't mess it up like that. We can't blow it? One wrong move and splash, that's it. One mistake and the whole thing is done. Our salvation doesn't depend on us, it depends on the Lord. It's not based on what we do, it's based on what Christ has done in us.

I remember counselling a young man in Indiana who said that he thought he could be good enough to go to heaven. He thought he could get there through works. And there was a deacon sitting on the couch right next to the young man and he asked him, he said, "How many works are you talking about?" He said, "How many do you have to do?" Well, the answer is all of them, right? If you want to go to heaven through your good works, you have to do all of them. You can't leave any of them out, which is why Christ came. Nobody can be sinless and that's what Jesus did. He was sinless in our place.

It's been said that when Olympic athletes are tested for drugs, they fail if they have any trace in their system. They fail if their blood is tainted in any way. It's the same way when you donate blood to the hospital. You don't donate blood to the hospital and they don't say, "Well, you have a little bit of HIV in your system, but that's okay because you're a good person." They reject it. And it's the same way with God. He will not accept your sin, which is why Christ has come on the cross. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." I told you last week if somebody asked you, "When were you saved?" You could say, "2,000 years ago at the cross." Because God did everything there. And that brings us to the Gospel of John chapter 18. Because

in John 18, John tells us what happened at the cross. He tells us what happened right before Jesus died for us.

If you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "That You May Believe" series, because John says that he wrote this book so that you may believe. John 20:30-31 at the end of the book says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." John says, "That's why I wrote this book. That's why it's in the Bible, so that you may believe and be saved."

The story of the Gospel of John is an interesting one because history tells us John wrote this as an old man. He wrote it in his latter years, maybe in his 80's or 90's or 70's or something like that. And it's interesting that he would write about this subject. You would think at the end of your life, you would write about something else, right? Something deeper, something more important. John's at the end of his life says, "There is nothing more important than this. There's nothing deeper. You need to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved." You could see him with a cane in his lap and a Bible in his hand saying this in the nursing home. That's the stage he was at, at this point in his life.

And to do this and to explain this subject of belief, John mentioned several events in Jesus' life such as walking on water for real. Jesus really did walk on water. He didn't splash. He walked on water during a storm too, by the way. He didn't walk on some quiet water on the Bombay India. The book talks about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Then it tells us some of the things the Lord said, things like, "I am the good shepherd" and "I am the resurrection and the life." All that occurs in the first half of the Gospel of John in chapters 1 through 12. And then in the last half, what we're looking at now, from chapter 13 onward, John talks about one thing, one main event, and that is the cross. This Gospel is not divided up evenly. It's lopsided, and what I mean is the first half covers 33 years. It covers three decades of Jesus' life, and the second half covers one day, one 24-hour period of time. It's a little more than that in chapters 20 and 21. But in chapters 13 through 19, it's one day; one night and one morning. Because John says, "If you're going to believe anything about Jesus, you need to believe this. If you're going to trust in anything to be saved, you need to trust in the cross." We sang about that this morning.

I told you last time, if I was writing a Gospel, I would tell you what Jesus did as a two-year-old boy, so that I could use that with my children. I could say, "Listen, Jesus never punched His brother in the face. You see it says it right here." Right? Or when I have teenagers, I could say, "Jesus didn't have long hair and He did not ride a motorcycle at 16-years-old. See it says ..." John doesn't do that. He writes about the cross. He writes about the last day of Jesus' life because that's what saves us.

To do this, he breaks the story up into stages. And in the first stage is about the Lord's arrest, which we talked about last week. If you were here with us last week, we talked about the arrest of Jesus. If you look in chapter 18:3, talking about the arrest it says, "Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, brought them to arrest Jesus

with lanterns and torches and weapons.” The term “cohort” in Greek is *speira*, which refers to a detachment of 600 men - 600 armed men or soldiers, Roman soldiers. And it also says that the officers or guards of the chief priests and Pharisees were there, bringing the number way up because if the Romans brought 600 men, the Jews would have brought close to that amount to balance it out. So, there could have been a thousand men here to arrest Jesus; a thousand men to arrest one.

As a result of that, verse 6, if you look on down, says that Jesus threw all of them to the ground. Chapter 18:6 says, “So when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.” You don't arrest God on your feet, do you? You don't arrest Him standing up, you do it on the ground. You do it on your knees. And that's what they did. Not willingly, Jesus in His sovereignty threw them on the ground. And when they got up ... you would think that when they got up, they would say, “I'm done with this.” Right? “I've had enough, I got the picture, I'll go arrest somebody else. There's lots of people in Jerusalem right now, I'll find somebody else.” It shows the hardness of man's heart because verse 12 says they proceeded with the arrest. This is a little bit of insanity. Would you agree? This is kind of crazy to go through with this.

He also heals a slave's ear right in front of them. Remember Peter cut off the slave's ear? He heals it. And then they arrest Him. Verse 12 tells us a little bit about that. If you look on down in verse 12, getting into the arrest or the trial it says, “So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and lead Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” John doesn't say it here, but this was the beginning of Jesus' trial. And this was the beginning of the legal proceedings against Him. The Jews had to have some legal grounds for killing a man. They couldn't just kill Him. They weren't supposed to anyway. They had to run it through a trial and so, this is what this is describing. They prod Jesus in and passed a verdict.

And before we get to that, it might help to talk about how illegal this trial was. As I was studying this, I tried to put this throughout the course of the passage, but I couldn't. So, let me just talk about this on the front end. It might help to mention how many laws they broke in arresting Him or trying Him. For one thing, the Jews were not supposed to accept the testimony of a man who had been bribed. That makes sense, doesn't it? Do you know any court in the world that would accept the testimony of a man who had been bribed? Matthew 26:15 says, “Judas asked Jesus' enemies, ‘What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?’ And they weighed out 30 pieces of silver to him.” That should have disqualified him from having any part in this. That should have banned him from making the arrest. So, this was illegal from the beginning. It was an illegal arrest even before you got to the trial.

But once you get to the trial, they were not supposed to try a man at night and in private, for obvious reasons. Trials were supposed to be done publicly so people could hold the judges accountable, and they were supposed to occur in the daytime. The Talmud says that no session of the court could take place before the morning sacrifice or after the evening sunset. So, they broke the law there as well.

You were also supposed to give the accused several days to put this case together. You couldn't arrest a man and try him on the same day. That was illegal.

You were not supposed to (this was a biggie) hit a man who's on trial. There were heavy fines for doing that. You could pay as much as a year's worth of wages for striking a man in court in Israel at this time. And they hit Him over and over and over again. In fact, if you read the account with Pilate, after the Jews bring Jesus to Pilate, Pilate is completely sarcastic. And probably because Jesus was beaten to a pulp when they brought Him to him. And Pilate's probably saying, "Why are you bringing Him to me after you've done this?"

You couldn't hear the testimony of a false witness, and they did that. You couldn't have the judge and the prosecutor be the same person, and they did that. You couldn't try a man during the Passover Feast - they did that. You were not supposed to rend your garments and play on people's emotions in a trial. And what does the high priest do at the end of the trial? Right? He tears His robes. So, this trial was just a mockery. It wasn't a trial. It was a lynching. It was a kangaroo court. One commentator said there was really no trial at all. It was over before it began. They had determined Jesus was guilty before they asked Him a single question.

And we might add to this, that there were actually six trials of Jesus, as you can see in your bulletins. If you see the handout in your bulletins, you can see that there were six times Jesus appeared before a judge at this trial. There were three times with the Jews, three times with the Romans. So, that means there were three religious trials and three civic trials that He went through. It began in the middle of the night after His arrest and it ended on noon the following day.

If you want to skip ahead a little bit and look in chapter 19:14-15, just so you can kind of wrap your mind around the timing of this. It says in verses 14 through 15, "Now it was the day of the preparation for the Passover; and it was about the sixth hour. And he [Pilate] said to the Jews, 'Behold, your King!' And so they cried out, 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!'" The sixth hour would be the sixth hour after sunrise. That's when Jesus was crucified. That's when the trial was over. 12:00, high noon. So, this was a very long affair. We don't know exactly when they arrested Him. But if it was sometime around midnight, this was a 12-hour ordeal.

So, we can't get into everything here. There's just not enough time to do that. But let's look at what the Apostle John says. John looks at the beginning and the end of this trial. That's the approach he takes. He starts at the very beginning of it and he comes back to the very end with the people shouting, "Crucify Him!" So that's what we're going to look at this morning. And if you're taking notes in John 18:12-40, we're going to see three main characters in this trial. So, if you're taking notes, that's what we're talking about today; three main characters in this trial. We're going to look at this from three different perspectives that John gives us. John comes at this from different angles so you can see what was going on in different people's minds. He talks about the leader in Israel. He talks about one of the disciples and then he talks about a Gentile, a Roman. That's how he looks at this trial.

The first one is the character of Annas. That's the first main character in this trial. The character of Annas. A-N-N-A-S, is how you spell that name. He was the father-in-law of the high priest. He was the family member of the man in charge. It took several groups to try a man in Israel. But there were two main ones - the Sanhedrin and the high priest. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish ruling council. It was made up of 71 men. That way they wouldn't get in a deadlock. They had an

odd number of people (71), so they could vote and not be stuck. Then one man, the high priest. Those were the two ones. Annas was the father-in-law of this high priest.

And if you look in verse 12, again, we just read that, but I want to unpack this a little bit. Verse 12 of chapter 18 says,

So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

(Caiaphas said that back in John chapter 9.) Just to kind of unpack this, I just told you, Judas brought an army of a thousand men to arrest Jesus. He brought a small mob. And verse 12 says they arrested Jesus and bound Him. They did that with ropes or chords - it was common practice at the time. But they did it because Matthew 26:48 ... if you want to know how devilishly Judas was ... in Matthew 26:48 Judas said, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one, you need to seize Him." That word "seize," it means "to hold onto something so it doesn't get away". In other words, Judas told Jesus' enemies, "You had better hold onto Him because He's going to get away. He's going to try to escape." And so, they bound Him. Tied His hands behind His back, and they led Him to Annas first who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest.

The high priest was a leader of all religious offices in Israel. He was in charge of everything. The temple, synagogue sacrifices, all that fell under the high priest control. He held the reins on everything. So, they brought Him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of the high priest. He was actually more than that because verse 19, if you look on down, it calls Annas "the high priest", which means he used to hold that office. In fact, five of his sons and one of his grandsons were high priests as well. So, this was a very important man in Israel. Some say he was the one who brought in all the ... you remember Jesus cleanses the temple of all the riff raff and money changers? Some say Annas was the guy that brought all that in, in his high priesthood. So, you can imagine how much Jesus offended him personally.

I'm going to skip over a few verses here because it deals with Peter. We'll get back to him in a minute. But if you look down in verse 19, this is how the trial begins. It says,

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20 And Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. 21 Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." 22 When He said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Him, saying, "Is this way You answer the high priest?"

I want you notice a few things about this. But one is that it says that the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. In other words, Annas asked Him, "How many disciples do You have? Where are they hiding? What are they up to?" If you remember, He had just come into Jerusalem to the sound of, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Then He cleanses the temple and the high priest wanted to know, "Are You starting a

revolt?" To answer that, Jesus says, "I've spoken openly to everybody. I've taught in the synagogues and in the temple." And in verse 22 it says, "As a result of that, they struck Him." Some of your translations say they hit Him or gave Him a blow. The word means "to hit someone in the face". The temple guards actually carried clubs. So, they might have hit Him with clubs. They might have struck Him with their fists. But either way, I want you to notice (this is important), the first time He opens His mouth, they do what? They hit Him. The first time. The first trial. Not the second trial, third trial, not right before the crucifixion - the first time He opens His mouth to say one word, they hit Him.

As a matter of fact, if you remember the story, as the trial goes on, Jesus just doesn't say anything anymore, right? Remember that? Why? Because of this. This is the first time anybody hit Jesus Christ. This is the first time anybody' struck the Lord. And I want to tell you it'll be one of the last, because after the cross, nobody's going to ever hit Him again, amen? Nobody's going to touch Him.

It leads me to ask, it's almost superficial to ask this, but there's so much talk of justice and fairness today. It leads me to ask, have you ever experienced anything like this? Anything unjust? This was the most unfair thing in history, the Son of God being treated like this. This was the most illegal thing ever done, but have you ever experienced any injustice?

We live in a very peaceful place. Canada is a very nonviolent country. So, I'm guessing none of you have been struck with a club in the face before. So, I'm not talking about that. But maybe some examples of unfairness: the police pull you over for speeding. You're going 35 in a 30 kilometer per hour zone. Am I saying that right? 35 in a 30, and what do you say? You say, "That's not fair." Right? Actually, that is fair. You were speeding. But that's the kind of thing we call unfair. The economy takes a dip and you lose your job, right? You become unemployed. You say, "That's not fair." We have all kinds of examples of this.

Several years ago, a major newspaper published a list of all the unfair things that happened to us, and they're much funnier than this, not as serious. But one of them was taking the trash out in the rain. That's not fair, is it? Especially in British Columbia where you don't have any other option, it's just always raining. And then you've got to put your trash into three or four different trash cans. I spend 45 minutes each night trying to figure out which trash it goes in and then picking up stuff off the ground that I spilled while I was ... I know we're trying to help the environment, but half my trash goes on the environment when I'm ... Another unfair thing they mentioned was your children waking up 30 minutes before your alarm clock goes off. That's not fair. Some of you experienced that this morning, amen?

Those are silly examples of this, but this is a serious one. They all pale in comparison. This is a Man who had never done anything wrong, ever. He had never sinned before. He had never broken a law in His mind. How many laws you break in your mind? He'd never even done that. And here He is being treated like this. And the amazing thing about it, is that He volunteered for the job. He wanted to do it.

Earlier that night, if you remember, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done." He told Peter in chapter

18:11, if you look up, this was the last thing Jesus said to Peter. It's one of His passing words before He died. In verse 11, Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath, the cup which the Father has given Me shall I not drink it?" Jesus said, "Peter, I'm going to go through with this," because the Old Testament said that blood had to be spilled for sin. That was God's will. If you want to pay for sin, you spill blood.

I told you last time, you remember how many lambs were killed every Passover Feast? Like 256,000 in one year. It was a big blood bath, because they were paying for sin. Leviticus 17:11 says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I've given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of life that makes atonement." You want forgiveness? You spill blood. You want to be right with God? Somebody has to die.

Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The person who sins will die."

One more verse here, Isaiah 53:11 says, "God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity." And that's what this is saying here. That's what you're seeing. This is Jesus being punished for the world's evil. This is a Son of God being beaten for our iniquities. This is His blood poured out for us. This is Him being tried in our place. So, the next time you say something isn't fair, you need to stop and remember this. This is what fairness looks like. This is what you and I should experience at the hands of God. The next time you want to complain about taking out the trash in the rain (I'm feeling convicted as I say this) or losing your job or getting pulled over for speeding, remember, you have nothing to complain about because Jesus died in your place. He spilled His blood for you.

That leads to another main character in this trial – and that is the character of Peter, Jesus' disciple. And John starts off by telling us about Annas, the high priest's father-in-law, the one who questions Jesus and beats Him and treats Him like a criminal. But then he turns his gaze toward Peter. He kind of goes back and forth in this passage. Talks about the courtroom, talks about Peter. He goes back to the courtroom, goes back to Peter. Peter didn't question Jesus, but he was one of His close friends. And if you look back up in verses 15 through 16, it says that while Jesus was on trial, while all this evil was happening to Him, "15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, 16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. And so the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in."

Apparently, after all the disciples had fled, Peter and another disciple made their way back to Jesus. Mark 15:44 says that they followed far off, they didn't get too close. But they were there enough to see where He was going. They must have gone down the Mount of Olives, through the streets of Jerusalem, into the high priest's house where the trial was. In verse 15, it refers to another disciple. We don't get his name, but most scholars believe that this was the Apostle John. Every time John refers to himself, he uses that phrase, "other disciple" or "another disciple". And apparently, verse 15 also says John knew the high priest. He had a relation to him. He gets them into his house and while they're there, Peter is warming himself by the fire.

And verse 17, if you look on down, says, “Then the slave-girl who kept the door (very unintimidating person, nobody special) said to Peter, ‘You’re not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’” Now, if you think about this for a minute, Peter’s not on trial here. There’s no threat to the question. They may not even be anybody around to hear it. So, there’s no reason to not say, “Sure, yes, I am.” But if you look at his response, Peter says, “No, I’m not.” That was the first of his denials. He said that to a lowly slave girl, a nobody in the first century. Jesus told Peter earlier that, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” This is the first one of those. The rooster crows (I looked that up by the way) around 3:00 AM. I don’t know if you guys grew up with a rooster or not, but around 3:00 AM ... I would probably shoot something that crowed at 3:00 AM in the morning. Not shoot it, but I would move it to someone else’s property. So, sometime before 3:00 AM, these denials happen. This is the first one.

Then if you look down in verse 25, as the trial goes on and Jesus is struck across the face and the violence begins, which is important by the way. Which means Peter is watching this violence happen and he denies Him again. Verse 25 says, “Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. And so they said to him, ‘You are not also one of His disciples, are you?’ He denied it, and said, ‘I am not.’” “They” there is a reference to the people standing around the fire with him. Luke says that this was actually said by another slave girl. So, it’s another unintimidating figure. And then everyone standing around the fire just kind of jumps in and peppers Peter with questions. And Peter denies Him again. That’s denial number two, two denials to slave girls.

Then verse 26, goes on and says, “One of the slaves of the high priests, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with Him?’ Peter then denied it again and immediately a rooster crowed.” That was the third denial. It’s a pretty toned down version of this because Matthew says that, “As he said this, Peter began to shout and swear, and bring down curses on himself, saying, ‘I don’t know the Man. I have no idea what you’re talking about.’” Other Gospels say that, as he said that, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Jesus is in the middle of the trial, He’s in the middle of being questioned and beaten and He turns, and looks at Peter.

But the point here is that everyone left Jesus at the cross. Everyone abandoned Him. Even His best disciple, even His closest friend. And you can imagine at any point in Jesus’ life and ministry, the one thing He needed right now was a friend, right? And they all left Him. John was still there, but he didn’t do anything. He didn’t step in to stop this. As he wrote about this in His commentary on John, J. C Ryle said, “The best of men are men at best.” It’s a good quote, isn’t it? Peter was the best of men. He was the greatest of the disciples. It wouldn’t be long, about a month later, Peter’s going to turn the whole world upside down with His preaching. But right here, he is failing Jesus. Which means that if it could happen to Peter, it could happen to us, amen? If it could happen to the best of men, it could happen to the rest of us. You should never be too confident in yourself. You should never be too proud of your own achievements. Very simple application here.

If you remember, Peter was confident. He said, “Lord, even if all fall away from You, I will never fall away. Even if everyone else leaves You, I will never leave You,” and then he does this. One moment, he’s swinging his sword, trying to cut off somebody’s head, the next moment he’s denying Jesus to a slave girl, three times. I remember talking to a friend of mine in high

school about all the people we knew who had abandoned the faith. And I remember this young man (we were both young men) telling me, "I'll never do that even if everyone else falls away, I will never fall away. I will never leave Christ." And a few months later, he was gone. I never saw him again. You should never be too confident in yourself. Friends, our faith is in Jesus, it's not in ourselves. Our faith is in Him, not in us. It's in His cross. It's been said that the emptier the vessel, the louder the noise. Some of you will get that on your drive home. You'll be driving home, "That was actually a pretty good quote." You don't want to be an empty vessel. Samuel Rutherford, the puritan said it this way. He said, "Never be proud of your race, place, face or grace." Your race, place, face or grace, because none of that will get you into heaven. Trust in the cross.

By the way, the neat thing about Peter's story is the Lord forgives him later on. Isn't that neat? As a matter of fact, He's about to die for the sins that Peter is committing at that moment. And it leads us to one more character in this trial.

We're just kind of going through the different perspectives here, looking at it from different angles. So far, we've seen this from Annas, the high priest and Peter. And seeing their very different reactions. It is interesting they both deny Jesus. They both abandoned Him, but for different reasons. Annas hated Jesus. He couldn't stand Him. And Peter was just simply afraid. And that's how the trial begins. It begins with hatred and fear. Everyone leaving Jesus and abandoning Him. And it goes onto this. One more character in the trial, one more perspective is that of Pontius Pilate. If you're taking notes, one more character is that of Pontius Pilate. This is the only Gentile we see in the trial. The only non-Jew, kind of the outsider. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea.

If you think politics are complicated right now, you should study politics in the first century Israel. It's hard to figure out who was leading who and what was going on where, because the Romans were involved, Jews were involved. It was one big mess. Israel was kind of like a ping pong ball getting bounced around from leader to leader.

After Annas, Jesus is taken to the high priest Caiaphas where He's pronounced guilty and given the death penalty. And then they take Him to Pilate because the Jews didn't have authority to kill a man. They weren't supposed to beat Him either. I guess they forgot about that here. But they weren't supposed to kill a man. So, they bring Him to Pilate. And just to skip on down, if you look in verse 28, to say a few words about this, it says in verse 28, "Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover."

When it says it was early here, that means early in the morning, early on the Friday morning of Passover. They did not enter into the Praetorium. That was the headquarters of the Roman government in Israel, Pilate's home. It says, "They didn't do that for fear of being defiled, so they would not to be banned from the Passover." That's kind of interesting because these men were willing to kill a man, but they wouldn't go into someone's home for fear of being defiled. Talk about bad priorities, right? Talk about hypocrisy. They were willing to break all those laws like I just told you, but they wouldn't enter Pilate's home. Which is why as you read this account, you can just feel the sarcasm of Pilate jumping off the page.

But if you look in verse 33, it says, “Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’” The idea of him entering again is that the Jews stood outside the palace, outside the Praetorium, and Pilate would bring Jesus inside, investigate Him, and then go out and talk to them. And then come back to Jesus and go out and talk to them, and come back to Jesus. And his first question, John gives us is,

33 “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” 35 And Pilate answered (here's the sarcasm), “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you to me; what have You done?” 36 And Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” 38 And Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”

I think I've told you guys before, but in the British Museum, there is a copy of the Gospel of John from about the second century. And it is these verses here where Pilate says, “What is truth?” It's a pretty cynical statement. Pilate doesn't say that because he thinks there's an answer. He says that because he doesn't think there is an answer. Pilate says, “What is truth? You have your truth, I have mine. You have your kingdom, I have my kingdom.” When Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world,” Pilate kind of sneers and says, “What are you talking about? You don't look like a king. Kings don't get beaten like this.”

Then the passage says, Pilate tries to let Jesus go because he can't find anything wrong that He did. And the Jews don't let Him. And then he tries to let Him go again and the Jews don't let Him, to the point that finally, if you look down in chapter 19:13, we've just read this a moment ago. This is how it all sums up.

13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of the preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” 15 So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” And the chief priests said, “We have no king but Caesar.” 16 So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

We're going to go through the rest of chapter 19 next week. But I just read that to you to show you how this trial ends. This is how it wraps up with a Gentile (and this is important) saying, “Behold your King,” and a Jew saying, “Crucify Him!” Do you see that? The Gentiles are saying, “Here He is, the king you've always wanted.” And the chief priests answer, “We have no king but Caesar.” That's a startling statement there. Because it means they would rather be ruled by Caesar than ruled by God. They would rather be ruled by Pilate, by a Roman governor than by Jesus Christ.

Pilate doesn't believe Jesus was a king. He's just being cynical here, but they wanted Him dead. Because ultimately, this is how God looks at sin. This is how God looks at evil. He wants it dead. It's not what the Jews intended. They weren't killing Jesus for their salvation. They were doing it because they hated Him. But in an amazing display of sovereignty, God used this to punish Jesus for our sins. This is what He meant when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." He meant that, "I am a king, I am a ruler and I'm willing to die for My people. I'm willing to give My life for theirs." Pilate would have never done that. The chief priests and Pharisees, they would not have done that. Jesus was willing to die for His people.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe this today? Do you believe that Jesus did this for you? That He did everything and you don't have to earn it? That He saved you 2,000 years ago and all you have to do now is believe in Him? Do you understand that this is how much God loves you - enough to crucify His Son for you, enough to crucify the King? Do you believe royal blood has been spilled on your account?

A Jewish son once asked His father, he said, "Dad, how is atonement made?" And the father said, "Through blood, my son. Atonement is made through blood." And the boy looked around the synagogue they were in and he said, "Dad, we're in trouble because there's no blood in here. There's no atonement, no sacrifice." Friends, you don't have to say that today. You have blood, you have atonement, you have a sacrifice in Christ, and you can be saved.

Let me say this another way, is this a personal thing for you? I've given you a lot of information this morning. We've talked about a lot of angles of this, a lot of history and background. But do you believe this for yourself? Do you believe that your sins were put Jesus on the cross? Not that Jesus died for sin, but that Jesus died for my sin. Not that He went to the cross, but that He went to my cross. I should have suffered in His place. I should have suffered there on the cross. One of the reformers said, "The only way you can be saved is by using personal pronouns. And you can't just say this and that and this and that, you have to say "My ... That was my sin, my punishment. I deserve that."

In his painting called "The Three Crosses", the Dutch painter, Rembrandt famously drew Jesus dying on a cross between two thieves. And then he drew the crowd underneath Him. And off to the side in the shadows, he drew a solitary figure that looked out of place. Nobody knew who it was for years until it was discovered that it was Rembrandt himself. The painter drew himself there because he believed it was his sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. Do you believe that today? Do you believe you were there in His mind, in His heart? Listen, none of this is going to help you until you do. None of this is going to save you unless it's personal. So, will you make it personal this morning?

If you've done that, I can think of no better thing to do now than to sing about it. I can think of no better way to respond than to lift up our voices and praise and worship. And let me pray and thank the Lord for this great sacrifice. And then let's do that together.

Father, we do thank you Lord for the sacrifice of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I feel in many ways like I've rushed through a lot of things here, but Lord, we want to see this from the full perspective, which we have tried to do today. We want to see what Your Son did from start

to finish so that we can say this morning, "thank you." He was beaten and bruised for us. As we'll study next week, He was crucified for us.

Lord, I pray for those who're here this morning who believe this, that they would rejoice in their salvation. They would rejoice that it's a complete salvation. They don't have to add anything to it. For those who don't believe, Lord, or they're not sure what to do with all of this, I pray You would convict them of their sin, remind them that they are not good enough to go to heaven on their own. That their works could never get them there, but Your Son has provided a way, and may they trust in Him this morning.

Father, may we be a church that lifts high the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be a people who never forget what He has done. That we never move past this just like the Apostle John. We're always coming back to what Christ has done on the cross. Thank you for that, Father, and may You be glorified as we sing to You some more, this morning. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.