

Mosaic Church DC

For Personal Reflection and Communal Conversation

Sermon Series: "On the Way to the Cross"

Sermon Three: "Pilate Before Jesus"

Fourth Sunday in Lent, 15 March 2015

John 18.28-38

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. 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." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Who's On Trial Here?

"The forces of religion and politics, always an evil cocktail, conspire to silence the one who is nothing more than a fly in the ointment of their competing agendas. The religious leaders hate Jesus because of he undermines their authority. Pilate doesn't hate Jesus; he just fears political instability. . . But John wants the reader to know that neither Pilate nor the religious leaders are in charge of this narrative. Pilate isn't interrogating Jesus. Jesus is interrogating Pilate. Jesus isn't being judged. Pilate and the religious leaders are being judged." Why is this important to John?

Killing Jesus Before Passover

"The religious leaders are paying meticulous attention to the details of their religion (by staying outside of Pilate's residence) while conspiring to kill the Light of the world. To hear this story clearly, one must hear God's judgment on religion's propensity to obsess over the details of religious observance while missing the heart and soul of God's loving and saving work in the world." What might this look like in our day?

Truth?

"I think we have more in common with Pilate that we do the priestly entourage that escorts Jesus to Pilate. Pilate's sarcastic question is the question of our day: "What is truth?" Or perhaps more accurately, the question of our age is simply: Is there such a thing as truth?" How do you respond?

The Burden of Truth

"I am not advocating for a militant Christianity that adamantly asserts the truth of the Christian confession over all others. I'm unwilling to assert the truth of the religion of Christianity over all other religions. But I still believe Jesus is the Truth. Pilate asks scornfully, what is truth? The Christian's simple answer is: Jesus." How is Jesus, Truth?