

**Sermon**  
**Ps 132:1-12; 2 Sam 23:1-7;**  
**Rev 1:4b-8; Jn 18:33-37--Christ the King Sunday**

Pontius Pilate was from central Italy, historians believe. He was a horse soldier under Tiberius Caesar, stationed in Judea, Palestine. ([biography.com](http://biography.com)) He represented Rome in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Pilate had authority to seize, try and execute criminals in his jurisdiction. It seems to me that he had been promoted to the level of his incompetence. He was in over his head. Imagine trying to keep order among Israeli and Palestinian factions today. Mission impossible, right?

There are many ways of interpreting this conversation between Jesus and Pilate in John chapter 18. Wherever you come down when you parse it, the greater context of the meeting is the revelation that Jesus is the Kind of the Jews – not only the king of a nation, but the King of the universe. Pilate's fear of Rome and of the Sanhedrin (local governing body of Judah) are secondary matters. He is a commissioned officer, and his charge is to keep order. The famous Pax Romana.

Here is the challenge when a person in authority feels out of control: Not becoming cynical. Cynicism rears its ugly head when you and I feel that we can have no say and no control over the circumstances of our lives. So, we come to Pilate's famous question: "What is truth?"

Is truth about facts – or is truth about the worldly need to survive? Whatever Pilate judges to be "truth," he is going to have to spin it to his advantage in Jerusalem and in Rome. I believe his question is not sincere, but cynical.

Before Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?" (*quid est veritas?*) he asks Him. "Are You the King of the Jews?" Pilate asks in the sense of judging a man who is a traitor to Rome – a man who seeks to usurp Caesar's power. Jesus replies, "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.***" (Jn 18:37) Pilate cannot see into Jesus' heart – but Jesus can see into Pilate's heart. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" The truth lies in the perfect will of God to bring His majesty and power to the world in the flesh.

As 21<sup>st</sup> century readers of this holy text, we are not necessarily called to interpret Pilate's character and motives. Although they are interesting. We are called to lay hold of who Jesus is and what our response to Him is – what it should be. We read this passage in the context of a great body of prophecy that has come before and points directly to Jesus Christ as God's Messiah – the Savior of the world – the Savior of the universe.

David was Jesus' ancestor, according to the genealogies of Scripture. David is recorded saying these last words: "The God of Israel said,

The Rock of Israel spoke to me,  
'He who rules over men righteously,  
Who rules in the fear of God,  
Is as the light of the morning *when* the sun rises,  
A morning without clouds,  
*When* the tender grass *springs* out of the earth,  
Through sunshine after rain.' "

Truly is not my house so with God?

For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured..." (2 Sam 23:3-5 NASB) This was written in the time of the kings of Israel

The covenants of God are true. They are the truth. Jesus was sent from God to spread the truth of God's long and faithful search to rescue all who believe in Him and call upon Him. Jesus tells Pilate as much. If Pilate – and if we – look at this Man with worldly vision, we see a poor country preacher who is in trouble with the law. He is about to be charged with crimes against the state by a small-time military commander.

John of Patmos writes:

"Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before

*(Continued on next page.)*

His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood — and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 1:4-6 NASB) This was written in the time when the movement of Jesus-followers was growing and was persecuted by Rome.

At the Feast of Christ the King, we celebrate the fulfillment of prophecy – we celebrate the revealing of Christ’s heavenly kingdom – on earth. We bring the truth of who Jesus really is – the Good News. This Good News is for all creation – all kingdoms – all peoples. We take our place in the great procession of truth-bearers: King David, the Psalmist, John of Patmos. We bear this truth to all the bitter and worn-out Pontius Pilates, the frightened, the worried, the cynical in our sphere of influence. How do we do this?

We live it out daily right where we live and work and play. Most International Christians consider North American Christians to be the spoiled brats of the family. Imagine being a Jesus-follower in mainland China:

You search your favorite online marketplace to purchase a Bible and nothing shows up. No result. As if the scripture did not even exist. Such is the surreal scene that many Chinese citizens have found themselves in since their government banned online retailers from selling the Holy Book. After the ban was announced, searches came up empty on major retail platforms like Amazon, Taobao, and Ali Baba.” ([providencemag.com](http://providencemag.com))

Ever since 1949, the year of the Chinese Communist Revolution, Christians have been at risk of imprisonment and execution in a society that is entirely atheist. There are an estimated one hundred million professing Christians in China. That number is divided between churches that submit to Chinese government control of their doctrine and practices and leadership appointments – and the part of the body of Christ that has moved underground to escape that strangle-hold on its spiritual life. It is estimated that about 70M have chosen to worship and be in ministry outside the government’s control. Close to 30M attend churches that answer to the Chinese government.

Let me repeat the original question:  
“What is truth?”

Is truth about facts – or is truth about the worldly need to survive?

Jesus says, “I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” (v 37)

Be a truth-bearer to the world! Bring the Good News as it is written in the Bible no hedging, no editing, no compromise! You must choose to be a truth-bearer to the world! Bring the Good News as it is written in the Bible no hedging, no editing, no compromise! You must choose to speak the truth – or not. Amen.