
GROWTH GROUP LENT 2017 – AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS
WEEK 1 – MARCH 5, 2017 - JOHN 18:28-40

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Can you think of a time when you have been blamed for something you didn't do? How did you react or respond?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

During the season of Lent we are going to be exploring different people who were near the cross of Jesus. We want to take a look at what they heard and saw, as well as what Jesus had to say. We begin our series by taking a look at the conversation Jesus had with Pontius Pilate right before he was taken away to the cross.

It is interesting that the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to Pilate instead of handling this issue on their own. Pilate actually questions them on why they could not take care of Jesus using their own legal system. The main issue is that they wanted to do away with Jesus. They wanted him to be executed and Jewish law did allow for execution by hanging. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 reminds us that anyone hanging on a tree/pole would be seen as being cursed by God.

Pilate wants to know if Jesus is the king of the Jews. We will spend some more time in a couple of weeks looking at this concept of Jesus and his kingdom. Pilate would have probably been confused by this talk about Jesus and his kingdom because he did not have any sort of army or military strength. As we will talk about, the kingdom of God looks much different than earthly kingdoms. The kingdom of God transforms our lives, so that we can help to transform our communities.

The concept of truth is an important one in the gospel of John. Truth is not some sort of intellectual assent to certain ideas. Truth is not just about correct doctrine or an accurate theological description. Jesus proclaims himself as the truth. In John 14:6 he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Truth is certainly related to knowing the facts, but for Jesus it is also a calling to live a life that is marked by integrity.

Jesus goal is to integrate truth into our lives. Jesus makes it clear that people of truth (disciples), are the ones who hear and obey his voice. They do not just make certain theological statements or follow certain rules. The Pharisees and Sadducees were capable of following rules. Instead, Jesus says those who live in the truth are those who hear and obey his words.



It is clear that Pilate is not sure what this “truth” is that Jesus is talking about. It is also clear that Pilate believes that Jesus is innocent of the charges that have been brought against him. Pilate looks for a way to release Jesus, but in the end the crowd chooses to release Barabbas and Jesus is sentenced to be crucified.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read John 18:28-40

²⁸ Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?” ³⁰ “If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.” ³¹ Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” “But we have no right to execute anyone,” they objected. ³² This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die. ³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” ³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” ³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” ³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” ³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” ³⁸ “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?” ⁴⁰ They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

- 2) In verses 36-37 Jesus talks about God’s Kingdom. Jesus spends a lot of time in the gospels talking about the kingdom of God. How would you define the kingdom of God?
- 3) Jesus says that he came into the world to testify to the “truth.” What do you think he means by that? How did Jesus testify to the truth?
- 4) In verse 37 Jesus says that everyone on the side of truth listens to him. As you think about your own life, what has helped you “listen” to Jesus?
- 5) What do you think was the inflection of Pilate’s voice when he asked Jesus, “what is truth?”
- 6) Why do you think Pilate was hesitant to hand Jesus over to be crucified?
- 7) In John 8:31-32 we read, “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” How does knowing the truth set us free? What is Jesus saying in these two verses?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) How do followers of Jesus “testify” to his truth? What does that look like practically as you live out your life this week?