



EST FONDS VITAE

DATE

September 23, 2018

SERIES

John: *That You May Believe*

TITLE & PASSAGE

A Demanding Invitation
John 18:15-40

OCCASION

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter on the Lord's Day to the congregation of First Baptist Church of Diana, TX.

INTRODUCTION

What does Jesus invite sinners to do? This is a good question to consider, especially for those familiar with the churchy language of an "invitation." We would also do well to consider the tone or the posture of Christ's invitation to sinners. In this message, we shall see the bitter irony of religious and political obsessions, and we shall also see a piercing invitation from Christ's own mouth. We shall observe that Christ's invitation is exceedingly gracious and superlatively demanding.

MAIN POINT

Christ exposes our religious and political obsessions, demanding that we listen to (believe and obey) His words.

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO PASTOR@FBCDIANA.ORG

SCRIPTURE READING

John 18:15–40

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter stood outside at the door.

So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. 17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, “You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.”

18 Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

20 Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”

22 When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?”

23 Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”

24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?”

27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor’s headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor’s headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?”

30 They answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.”

31 Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

33 So 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?”

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

40 They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

MAIN POINT

Christ exposes our religious and political obsessions, demanding that we listen to (believe and obey) His words.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) RELIGIOUS IRONY

(2) POLITICAL IRONY

(3) INVITATION FROM THE KING OF TRUTH

(4) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) RELIGIOUS IRONY

- **Jewish leaders played religious games**
 - Annas interrogated Jesus
 - The “mob-boss” high priest
 - Annas wasn’t the high priest (Caiaphas was), but John makes no mistake by saying, “The high priest then questioned Jesus” (v19) when referring to Annas’ interrogation (v19-24).
 - Under the Mosaic law, the high priestly appointment was for life, but Annas had been deposed by a previous Roman governor.
 - Since Annas was still alive, many of the Jews considered him the true high priest.
 - And Annas acted as “true high priest” through the service of 5 of his sons and one son-in-law (Caiaphas) as high priest in his place.
 - The farce interrogation
 - The *accused* should not have been subject to questioning, but the *accusers* should have been
 - So, when Jesus replied to Annas, “Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me” (v21), Jesus was exposing their hypocrisy
 - The “mob-boss” didn’t like Jesus’ response, and neither did one of the officers.
 - “one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, ‘Is that how you answer the high priest?’” (v22)
 - The officers were more interested in the superficial dignity of their ‘mob-boss’ than they were in the genuine dignity of the accused.
 - Rather than “bear witness about the wrong” (v23), as Jesus requested them to do, Annas simply sent Jesus away to Caiaphas, who was the legal high priest that year (v24).

- *Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin give the rubber stamp*
 - John tells us nothing of what happened at Caiaphas' house, but Annas' judgment was obviously carried out.
 - The very next thing we are told is that “they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters” (v28).
 - Jesus was now being taken from the Jewish Sanhedrin to the Roman governor, in order to be executed.

- **Jewish leaders played games with holiness**
 - *They wanted to avoid “defilement”*
 - Passover had already begun at sunset on Thursday evening (technically becoming Friday by Jewish reckoning), so the Jewish leaders “did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled” (v28).
 - In this way, the Jewish leaders reach higher in their hypocrisy.
 - They are slanderously charging Jesus with insurrection against Rome, and simultaneously doing their best to keep up extra-biblical rules of piety.
 - The irony is quite thick here, because the Passover they are focused upon keeping is being fulfilled before their eyes.

 - *They demanded the death of the Holy One and the release of the wicked*
 - The zenith of the Jewish irony is their request for the release of Barabbas who was “a robber” (v40).
 - The word translated “robber” is more precisely an “insurrectionist”
 - This means that Barabbas was exactly the kind of man they were accusing Jesus of being, but they were demanding Jesus be killed as they were demanding that Barabbas be released.

Here, Jesus exposes *religious obsessions*.

- Friends, we are wise to take a moment and reflect upon our own religious obsessions.
 - Is there any way in which we prop up religious practices or beliefs that have no biblical basis?
 - Do we, like those Jewish leaders, try to manipulate the religious system so that we can merely maintain the *status quo* (the same old same old)?
 - Are we ever more interested in religious expedience (what is practical or convenient) than we are in divine truth?
 - Oh, God help us!
 - I do not think we honestly answer any of these well.
 - My friend, if your religious obsession is exposed today, what will you do?
 - Will you repent from your sinful obsession with your own vision of religiosity?
 - Or, will you turn your fury against the one exposing your sinful obsession?

Jesus exposes *religious* obsessions, and He also exposes *political* ones...

(2) POLITICAL IRONY

- **Pilate played politics with the Jewish leaders**
 - *Pilate already knew the plan when the Jewish leaders brought Jesus*
 - Pilate must have known about Jesus' arrest.
 - Roman soldiers were dispatched with Jewish officers to arrest Jesus (Jn. 18:3).
 - Pilate and the Jewish leaders must have previously discussed the accusation against Jesus.
 - The reply from the Jewish leaders would not have been tolerated if it had merely come out of nowhere, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you" (v30).
 - Furthermore, Pilate's question to Jesus makes better sense with this in view.

- Pilate went to Jesus, asking “Are you the King of the Jews?” (v33). Pilate must have gotten this accusation of “insurrectionist” from somewhere, and it seems most likely that it came from the Jewish leaders.
- But, Pilate wanted to keep up powerful political pretenses.
 - Pilate has his court set up outside (v29).
 - Pilate calls for accusation and testimony: “What accusation do you bring against this man?” (v29).
 - Pilate seems to have threatened a full dismissal of the charges: “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law” (v31).
- **Pilate even played politics with Jesus**
 - Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (v33).
 - Jesus replied, “Do you say this of your own accord?” (v34).
 - This shows Jesus cutting Pilate to the bone... Jesus didn’t care what the legal accusation was, He was asking Pilate if his inquiry was sincere.
 - Of course, Pilate’s inquiry was not sincere.
 - Pilate says, “Am I a Jew?” (v35).
 - Pilate thought a Jewish king – even a Jewish God – had nothing to do with him personally.
 - But Jesus fires back, “My kingdom is not of this world...” (v36).
 - In this way, Jesus claims at least two things:
 - One, He is a King!
 - Thus, truly challenging Pilate’s authority.
 - Two, He is THE transcendent KING!
 - Thus, challenging everything Pilate thought about gods and kings (religion and politics).
 - Pilate did understand what Jesus was claiming, because Pilate answered, “So you are a king?” (v37).
 - But Pilate also showed his rejection of Jesus’ claim when he dismissed Jesus by saying, “What is truth?” (v38).

Here, Jesus exposes *political obsessions*.

- Friends, again, we are wise to take a moment and reflect upon our own political obsessions.
 - By “political” I mean to call attention to worldly power-structures, especially tribal and communal expectations.
 - Pilate schemed with the Jewish leaders, but he wanted to keep the display of an honest judge.
 - Do we want to be impartial and rational people, or do we merely want others to think we are?
 - How about Pilate’s conversation with Jesus?
 - Didn’t Jesus tell Pilate that the transcendent King of the universe was standing in front of him?
 - And, what did Pilate do? He rejected Jesus’ claim by exercising his own authority over Jesus!
 - Do we ever read something in God’s word that challenges our social expectations?
 - Do we ever read a command from Jesus that rubs against our tribal political views?
 - Do we ever hear Jesus claim authority over something that we think we control?
 - And, what do we do?
 - Do we hear and obey?
 - Or, do we dismiss Christ’s command as impractical, unworkable, and irrelevant?

Jesus Christ exposes our religious and political obsessions...

And, yet He extends an invitation to anyone who will hear it.

He demands that we listen to (believe and obey) His words.

(3) INVITATION FROM THE KING OF TRUTH

- **Jesus is the King of truth**

- Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (v36).
 - As noted above, this is nothing less than a claim of transcendent authority over everything and everyone.
 - Jesus is not just the king of one tribe or the god of one nation.
 - Jesus is the King of glory and the God of all creation!
- Pilate’s reply is telling... “So you are a king?” (v37).
 - Pilate understands Jesus’ claim. He knows what Jesus is saying.
- Jesus goes on to say, “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**” (v37).
 - Jesus came into the world to “bear witness to the truth.”
 - What truth?
 - ...that there is a God?
 - ...that God has a Son?
 - ...that God loves sinners?
 - ...that sinners are right now under God’s wrath?
 - All of the above... and then some more!
 - Jesus is “the truth” in the flesh!
 - Didn’t John tell us in chapter 1? “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have **seen his glory**, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14).
 - Friends, do you want to know what’s true about God?
 - Look to Jesus!
 - Do you want to know what’s true about you?
 - Look to Jesus!
 - Do you want to know what is truly glorious?
 - Look to Jesus!

But, the blessings of Jesus’ truth are exclusive to those who submit to Him as King...

- **Jesus invites sinners to “listen” to His “voice”**
 - Think about what Jesus says to Pilate at the end of verse 37.
 - “Everyone who is of the truth **listens to my voice**”
 - Do you hear the invitation?!
 - It is as though Jesus is saying, “Pilate, will you listen to my voice, right now?”
 - “You know I am the kind of king who has authority far exceeding your own.... You have heard me say that truth is precisely what I came to reveal... What will you do with me?”
 - But, how does Pilate respond?
 - He says, “What is truth?” (v38), and he abruptly ends the conversation.
 - Truth in the flesh is standing in front of him, but Pilate does not care to hear from Him.
 - Are we to understand that Pilate is a beneficiary of the blessings of God?
 - No... Pilate is a perfect example of indifference towards Christ.
 - Indifference is a kind of apathy or lack of concern.
- And the blessings of Jesus’ truth are only for those who submit to Him as King... Lord... Master.
 - Jesus said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him**” (John 14:6–7).
 - In no uncertain terms, Jesus says that to “know” Him is the “know” God... to “come to God” is to approach through Christ... for Christ is the chief revelation of all God’s truth.

- Friends, are you “of the truth?”
 - Well, do you “listen” to the voice of Christ?
 - Do you hear and obey Christ as King?
 - The Scripture lays it out like this, “**this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us**” (1 John 3:23–24).

Christ exposes our religious and political obsessions, demanding that we listen to (believe and obey) His words.

(4) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 1. Is your Christianity merely based on religious experiences or feelings?**
 - a. When you think about the most meaningful moments of your Christian life, is there any Bible verse attached to it... affirming it?
 - b. If you are sure of your salvation, is it because of some feeling you have, or is it because of biblical truth you know?

- 2. Do you expect that all of Christ’s commands will lead to your comfort, promotion, and/or safety?**
 - a. Have you ever had to choose between what you want and what Christ commands you to do?
 - b. Have you ever considered that Jesus might want you to abandon worldly luxuries for the sake of His gospel... or for the sake of your soul?

- 3. Will you take a personal inventory to see if you are *of the truth* today?**
 - a. Will you pray and ask God to show you areas of your life where you are still rebellious against Christ’s commands?
 - b. Will you confess your sins to a brother or sister, and ask them to help you make an honest assessment of where you are spiritually?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR THIS PASSAGE/TOPIC

Jesus Appears Before Pilate by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-103/jesus-appears-before-pilate-part-1>

Jesus Came into the World to Bear Witness to the Truth by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/jesus-came-into-the-world-to-bear-witness-to-the-truth>

The Sum of Your Word is Truth by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-sum-of-your-word-is-truth>

No Place for Truth by Derek Thomas

<https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/no-place-for-truth>

A HARMONIZING TIMELINE FROM JESUS' ARREST TO HIS CRUCIFIXION

- The general flow of timeline seems to go as follows.¹
 - Night **Arrest** (Jn. 18:1-12)
 - Questioned by **Annas**, the religious “mob boss” (Jn. 18:12-14, 19-23)
 - Questioned before **Caiaphas** and **Sanhedrin**, the official **Jewish trial** (Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65; Lk. 22:66-71; Jn. 18:24)
 - Brought to **Pilate**, the Governor or Procurator of Judea, the **first time**, starting the **Roman trial** (Mt. 27:11-14; Jn. 28-38)
 - Interrogated by **Herod**, the Tetrarch of Galilee (Lk. 23:6-12)
 - Interestingly, this Herod was the son of *Herod the Great*, who ordered the murder of every boy in Bethlehem 2-yrs and younger. And he happened to be in Jerusalem for the time of the Jewish Passover.
 - Brought to **Pilate** the **second time**, where Pilate reluctantly passes condemning **judgment** (Matt. 27:15-31; Jn. 18:38-19:16)
 - The **crucifixion** (Jn. 19:17-30)

¹ Carson, in his commentary (the Pillar New Testament Commentary), says, “There are several ways by which the diverse Gospel accounts of Jesus’ passion, especially his arrest and trials, can be brought into a single story-line. There were two trials, one Jewish and one Roman. The former began with informal examination by Annas (18:12–14, 19–23), possibly while members of the Sanhedrin were being hurriedly summoned. A session of the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:57–68; Mk. 14:53–65) with frank consensus was followed by a formal decision at dawn and dispatch to Pilate (Mt. 27:1–2; Lk. 22:66–71). The Roman trial began with a first examination before Pilate (Mt. 27:11–14; Jn. 18:28–38a), which was followed by Herod’s interrogation (Lk. 23:6–12) and Jesus’ final appearance before Pilate (Mt. 27:15–31; Jn. 18:38b–19:16). Other reconstructions are possible, but this one usefully co-ordinates the biblical data.”