

Sermon Title: "On Knowing Who's Truly on Trial"
John 18: 28-30; 19:1-11
Pastor Warnock
March 24, 2024

Scripture Passage

John 18:28-30

28 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. 29 So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 30 They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you."

John 19:1-11

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." 5 So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate[a] said to them, "Behold the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

Sermon Summary

Sometimes we are confused about who is on trial. We often put the wrong people on trial. For example, we put poor people on trial, putting policies in place that penalize them for being poor as opposed to calling out the injustices that create inequitable conditions which cause poverty. In this text, Pilate is under the impression that Jesus is on trial, so he starts questioning him. Jesus doesn't respond until Pilate asserts that he has the power to determine if Jesus will live or die. Jesus then responds "you have no power over me unless it had been given you from above." In other words, if you only knew that standing in front of you is truth, justice, mercy, and unconditional love, all things you have no power over. Like Jesus, who stood before Pilate we have a moral obligation not to cooperate with evil and injustice. So, if you, like Jesus are facing a trial, you need to:

1. **Remain focused:** What God has called you to do supersedes what you are facing. You are not on trial; you are on assignment.
2. **Be fearless:** Stand in the face of evil and don't feel the need to respond. Let your silence speak like Jesus' did. You don't need to respond to every accusation against you.
3. **Remain faithful:** You do not control the outcome of the trial; your job is just to remain faithful so that God can be glorified in and through you.
4. **Stay in the fight:** Don't give up. The fight you are in has been rigged in your favor through the resurrecting work of Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. Jesus' trial before Pilate is a key part of the holy week narrative. What part of this scripture is most meaningful to you?
2. What trials have you faced in your life? How did you respond to trials in ways that are consistent with the ways that Pastor Warnock drew from the text?
 - a. Did you continue to focus on your assignment or did you become distracted by the trial? Why do you think it might be easier to focus on the trial?
 - b. In what ways did you face your trial fearlessly? How did you move through those moments when you felt afraid?
3. What "fights" are you tempted to give up on? Is it your fight or someone else's?
4. What feels different about looking at yourself as going through a trial as opposed to being on trial?