

## John 18:28-40 – Speaking truth to power

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19:10-11

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11 Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

The passion of Jesus

The meaning of the death of Jesus Christ

Confrontation between Jesus and Pilate

### Truth and Power

#### POWER

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.

9:10-11

10 “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have **power** either to free you or to crucify you?”

11 Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

Jesus is talking to Pilate **personally**...

The person of Jesus Christ and how we relate to him requires a personal response.

What do you think – where do you stand in regard to Jesus?

Confrontation of Jesus Christ with political power.

How Christianity relates to political power...

Are you the King of the Jews? Are you a political leader? Are you undermining Roman political power?

On May 28, 1991 President Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia accepted the Sonning Prize for his contribution to European civilization. The biennial prize has been awarded by the University of Copenhagen since 1950.

Why is it that people long for political power, and why, when they have achieved it, are they so reluctant to give it up?

In the first place, people are driven into politics by ideas about a better way to organize society, by faith in certain values or ideals, be they impeccable or dubious, and the irresistible desire to fight for those ideas and turn them into reality.

In the second place, they are probably motivated by the natural longing every human being has for self-affirmation. Is it possible to imagine a more attractive way to affirm your own existence and its importance than that offered by political power? In essence, it gives you a tremendous opportunity to leave your mark, in the broadest sense, on your surroundings, to shape the world around you in your own image, to enjoy the respect that every political office almost automatically bestows upon the one who holds it.

In the third place, many people long for political power and are so reluctant to part with it because of the wide range of perks that are a necessary part of political life -- even under the most democratic of conditions.

There is something treacherous in the illusion of power

Every human being is empty inside and needs significance and honour and glory...

Power is then abused – and can become a means in itself...

The power to make people do things. Jesus says two things:

36 No I am not a king – I am not of this world – my kingdom is not of this world

37 I am a king

I am not a political leader...

Not using the power of the sword (Peter)

My kingdom is not moving forward through political power..

No-one should ever use political power in Jesus' name.

Only continent where Christianity is in retreat – Europe

Christendom – state churches supported by taxes and laws...

Political powers were behind Christianity

When the church gets into bed with power it loses its genius...

Jesus is saying – no I am not a political leader.

But I am a King and I have come to bear witness to the truth...

The OT prophet Zechariah prophesies of the coming of a different kind of King:

Zechariah 9:9-10

“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and

victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt."

### The triumphal entry

Luke 19:36-38

36 "And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38 saying, **"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"**

Of course, this clash between Roman power and the coming of the Messiah – this question of the kingship of Jesus – began the moment he was born..

Matthew 2:1-8

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." 3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. 4 He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 6 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. 8 Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

Now as the end of Jesus' life approaches, Pilate questions Jesus about whether he is a king, a political leader and discusses with him the limits of political power....

19:10-11

10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.

"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1)

God is the King of Kings – the Lord of Lords – The President of Presidents

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which Daniel interpreted, speaking of the King's pride and misuse of power and his imminent downfall

Daniel 4:28-31 "All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, **by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?**"<sup>31</sup> Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you."

Jesus shows us another way. Another kind of power.

When he came to earth, he emptied himself of his glory and power

Philippians 2 says he did not count equality with God something to be grasped.

He let it go.

And he humbled himself.

Submitting to his Father's will and to death on a cross.

Pilate says – I am Rome – I have power – I can crush you...

Jesus says: This is all part of the plan of salvation... The only power you have is what God has granted you...

Jesus' power is restrained in meekness

For Jesus, leadership was not about being in charge or wielding power; it was about loving, serving, and giving one's life for others.

But it was about something more than that:

## **TRUTH**

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."

(Gk: **Everyone being of the truth hears of me the voice.**)

**"What is truth?"** retorted Pilate.

That is a question for our age is it not.

Political power cannot really change people, people's **understanding of the truth** changes people – changes and transforms their hearts.

I am coming with the **truth** and that will really change the world.  
As Jesus said to the doubting Thomas:

"I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.**"

Ephesians 1:13 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard **the message of truth**, the gospel of your salvation."

### **The gospel truth changed the Roman Empire.**

Not political power.

Inside the Christian church, families flourished.

The gospel truth – all sinners saved by grace.

A great leveller – got rid of divides....

Galatians 3:28-29 "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you."

Attractive nature of the Christian church and truth....

In an age of fake truth – artificial intelligence – relativism – my truth and your truth – a generation is growing up that is aching for truth, for significance and for true purpose.

That is asking the same question: "What is truth?"

This ultimate truth is found in Jesus.

He is the truth and the way to the truth.

He comes full of grace and truth.

Satan – his and our opponent – is the Father of Lies.

News media recently reported:

Bible sales in Britain have surged by a remarkable 87 per cent between 2019 and 2024, according to new figures driven by Gen Z's renewed spirituality.

Sales have jumped from £2.69 million to £5.02 million over the five-year period.

Soldier – rough end of the trench – Unable to match what he is hearing and seeing all around him in culture and society – recognising the complete absence of truth, the twisting of reality - I have bought myself a Bible and started reading it....

“you will know the **truth**, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

“Sanctify them by the **truth**; your word is **truth**.” (John 17:17)

As a result of this gospel truth, Roman society would slowly become less brutal – as Jesus and the Christians bore witness to the truth...

Are you a King – yes and no. I am not a political leader but I will change the world.

I have come to bear witness (Gk: martyresos) to the truth...

Everyone being of the truth hears of me the voice

We are living again in a pre-Christian era.

Christendom is receding.

Political power cannot fill the void.



Gospel truth is what will fill the void.

The Jesus way will change the world...

Philippians 2:14-15

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” **Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life.**

Brett McCracken

Christians should go boldly into this narrative and imaginative void, striving to create stand-out artistic visions that are both beautifully rendered and grounded in solid truth. Our goal shouldn't be gimmickry and power grabs for the biggest share of the attention-economy pie. It's not enough to force the Christian story on people by any means necessary. We must do the work of telling good stories, full of beautiful truths, in ways that move audiences to desire Christianity's grand narrative.

We must show the Greatest Story to be not only a great story but the **greatest reality**—and, ultimately, the only one that will last.

We don't do this alone – the Holy Spirit helps us...

“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. 6 Instead, you grieve because of what I've told you. 7 But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. 12 “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. 13 **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.**” (John 16:5-13)

RT KENDALL guide for bone fishing

**Community group questions and discussion points:**

*These are to guide application and encourage discussion of the Sunday message – please don't feel obligated to work through all the questions...*

1. What does this passage reveal to us about Jesus' kingship and kingdom?
2. Read together Zechariah 9:9-10 and Luke 19:36-38. What does the Bible say about Jesus being a King and how does this contrast with the expectations of his day?

3. What does Pilate say about his own power – and does Jesus respond to this? (John 19:10-11)
4. Why did Jesus say he had come – what was his mission?
5. What does Jesus say about himself in reference to truth? (See for example John 18:37, John 14:6, John 1:14)
6. What do you think John 8:32 and John 17:17 mean?
7. In what ways do you think truth is being challenged or undermined in our society?
8. What is our role in speaking and representing gospel truth? (See for example Philippians 2:14-15)
9. Read the Brett McCracken quote – how can we telling the compelling story of the gospel better? Personally and as a church body?
10. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in sharing truth? (John 16:8-13)