

Here is your King !?!

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Preacher: Jonathan Wu

[0 : 00] Jonathan Goyunwan Jonathan Jonathan Ruth And I'll confess that I've been to Malaysia before, but this is my first time in coaching.

I recall, you know, when I was an undergraduate in the UK, that's more than 10 years ago, I'm not going to review my age. You know, when Singapore and Malaysian students come together and we're very homesick, what we do is to eat, you know, Singaporean and Malaysian food.

And I've always heard, and I can say I've tasted for myself, you know, food in Singapore is good, is very good, but Malaysian food is even better.

So let's not make comparisons. Char Kwe Tiau, I will have to comment that I think the Penang Char Kwe Tiau is even better than the Singapore Char Kwe Tiau.

So, you know, I always look forward to visiting a new part of Malaysia. And, you know, here at Kuching, I find out that Kholomi doesn't always have to have dark sauce or black sauce.

[1 : 28] So that's something new to me. So I always learn new things when I come to Malaysia. But what I'm really looking forward to this morning is the fact that Good Friday is near.

And so I'm looking forward to the fact that I can speak to you from one of the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' trial under Pilate.

That trial, that trial that climaxed with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the very first Good Friday.

So before we turn to our passage today, let me open us in a short prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are God who speaks to us. We thank you that you speak to us in your word. We hear your voice as we open up John's Gospel. And pray that you would teach us from your word, that we would respond accordingly to what you say.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Our passage for today is John chapter 19, verses 1 to 16. That's the second half of Jesus' trial under Pilate.

[2 : 33] And there's a theme that runs across the passage. The theme of seeing or looking. So in your Bibles before you, do look down with me at verse 4.

Now, when Pilate begins speaking, the first word he uses is the word look. Look, I'm bringing him out to you. And a similar word look or see actually appears two more times in the passage.

And both times is used in relation to presenting Jesus. So end of verse 5, Pilate speaks again. Here is the man. End of verse 14, Pilate speaks yet again.

Here is your king. And in both verses, actually what Pilate says can be literally translated to mean look or see. See, the man.

Look, your king. And so our passage for today sets up this question. This question as to how we look at Jesus and whether or not we see him for who he truly is.

[3 : 40] John's conclusion to his entire gospel account can be found near the end of the gospel. You have John chapter 20, verse 31 printed on your outline. And this verse tells us that John wants the reader to look at Jesus and see Jesus to be the Christ or the Son of God.

Well, these are Old Testament terms for the term of king. So John wants us to look at Jesus and see him to be the Christ, the Son of God, God's chosen king.

But we know, don't we, it's not always easy to look at Jesus and to see him as king. John's very first readers were probably first century Jewish readers.

And for these first century Jews, they would have seen Jesus to be a figure of humiliation, of suffering, of defeat. After all, Jesus was rejected by the Jews, his very own people.

He was crucified by the Gentiles, the Roman governor Pilate, the Roman authorities, the Roman soldiers. So John's first readers, the first century Jews, they would have struggled to look at Jesus and see him as king.

[4 : 55] And even today, the struggle remains. Even today, we can feel like Jesus is still on trial. He's made fun by the culture around us. He's rejected by our society.

His claims are disputed by those who can be closest to us, our friends, our colleagues at the workplace, even our family members. And so 2,000 years later, as we open up John's gospel, we can still struggle to look at Jesus and see him as king.

We'll now turn to our passage for today. We'll see what John has to say in the light of our struggle to see Jesus as king. If you have closed your Bibles, do open it back up to John chapter 19.

I'll be referring quite closely to the verses here. And the first seven verses of our passage, well, in these first seven verses, John tells us that Jesus is rejected.

That's the first point on your outline. See Jesus rejected despite innocence. Do look down at verse 1 in your Bibles.

[6 : 01] I'll read it out. So Jesus is not just being humiliated.

He's humiliated in torture. And this torture is a rejection of Jesus as king. You know, think about it. The crown of thorns, the royal purple robe, the repeated cries of hail king.

These are all parodies of Jesus' kingship. They are ironic. They are sarcastic. They are designed to ridicule, to mock, to reject Jesus as king.

But the real sting in the tale, the real twist in the story is found in verse 4. Do look down with me at verse 4. I'll read it out. One small pilot came out and said to the Jews gathered there, Look, I'm bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.

Jump with me ahead to verse 6. So verse 6 says, As soon as the chief priests and the officials saw him, they shouted, Crucify! Crucify! But Pilate answered, You take him and crucify him.

[7 : 25] As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him. And so this is the great irony, the twist in the story, the sting in the tale, where Jesus is humiliated, he's tortured, and all this while he's actually innocent.

Two times, two times, verses 4 and 6, Pilate declares two times, I find no basis for a charge against him.

In other words, it seems as if, you know, Pilate had humiliated and tortured Jesus to kind of appease the Jews so that they would be happy for, you know, Pilate to release him later on.

But after all the torture, after all the humiliation, well, for the Jews, their hatred remains. Their rejection of Jesus is still there. They still have the desire to crucify him.

In fact, the more Pilate tries to declare Jesus as innocent, the harder the Jews try to crucify him.

They press home their charges against Jesus. Verse 7 says, The Jewish leaders insisted, we have a law, and according to that law, he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.

[8 : 38] At first glance, this accusation seems a bit strange, you know. You know, if you read your Old Testament, if you know your history of Israel, well, throughout the history of the Jewish nation, there were people who were designated as kings.

There were people who were regarded as kings, and therefore they were regarded as sons of God, the title for kings. But in John's Gospel, Jesus' claim to be the Son is quite a special claim.

It's actually a claim of equality with God the Father. We won't turn to that page, but just to give you the verse reference, chapter 5, verse 18 of John's Gospel.

So just take it down, and you can look at it later. When Jesus claims to be the Son, he's claiming to be God. Therefore, the law that the Jews are referring to in verse 7, well, it's actually a command against blasphemy.

But even against the command against blasphemy, well, Jesus remains innocent. Think about it with me. Well, blasphemy only happens when a man, or a woman, or a human, calls himself or herself God.

[9 : 47] Well, surely it's no blasphemy for God the Son to call himself God. After all, he is God. So Jesus is innocent not just by Pilate's standards.

He's innocent even by the Jews' own standards. Even in the face of accusation, Jesus remains innocent. Jesus is the king who is rejected despite his innocence.

We'll now jump ahead to verses 12 to 16.

We'll return back to verses 8 to 11 later on. But for now, verses 12 to 16, well, that's the second round of rejection that Jesus faces. So like the earlier verses, verses 1 to 7, Jesus is rejected as king.

That happens again in verses 12 to 16. However, there's a slight difference. Verses 1 to 7, the focus is Jesus' rejection despite innocence.

[10:50] Well, verses 12 to 16, the focus shifts slightly. Shifts to Jesus' rejection in favor of a different king. That brings us to our second point on your outline.

See Jesus rejected in favor of Caesar. Well, that is very clear in verse 12. Do look down with me. I'll read it out. From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free.

But the Jewish leaders kept shouting, if you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar. And even more clearly in verse 14, do jump ahead with me.

Verse 14, it was a day of preparation of the Passover. It was about noon. Here is your king, Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, take him away, take him away, crucify him.

Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asked. We have no king, but Caesar. The chief priests answered.

[11:53] Let's pause for a moment and register just how shocking, just how outrageous the Jews' response really is. It was outrageous for one nation to choose a foreign government over its own.

So think about the British nation. Imagine that the British community decides to reject their own British government and choose the French government instead. Well, perhaps if you have kept up with the controversies and the disputes over Brexit, you might think the British government might want, the British community might want to choose a different government.

But if you are aware of the history of Britain, their rivalry with France, we know just how shocking, how outrageous that really would be.

But even more outrageous, even more shocking would be the Jews' rejection of Jesus in favour of Caesar. Well, Caesar was the Roman emperor.

Well, the Jews hated the Romans. The Romans were their colonial overlords. They were their oppressors. And yet the Jews rejected Jesus in favour of Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire.

[13:07] And not just the Jews, not just the Jews reject Jesus, even Pilate rejects Jesus in favour of Caesar. Up to now, we still have kind of a slightly positive impression of Pilate.

Pilate repeatedly says Jesus is innocent. But at the end of the trial, Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified. All because of what the Jews say in verse 12.

Do look down with me at verse 12. If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. In other words, when Pilate is confronted by the kingship of Caesar, Pilate chooses to distance himself from Jesus instead.

Pilate knows Jesus is innocent, but Pilate chooses to align himself with Caesar. So he allows Jesus to be crucified. So both the Jews and Pilate, they reject Jesus in favour of Caesar.

So far, two rounds of rejection, and both rounds of rejection would make it challenging for us to look at Jesus and see him as king.

[14:22] It would be quite natural, wouldn't it be, for John's reader to be wondering, how can Jesus be king when he's humiliated, when he's rejected? More than that, when he's humiliated and rejected by so many people.

You know, the Jews, his own people, the Jewish leaders, the representatives of his own people, the Gentiles, the governor Pilate, even right down to the Roman soldiers.

And yet, John wants us to look at Jesus and see him as king. John encourages us to do so, even persuades us to do so, by including the verses that we have skipped over.

So that's verses 8 to 11. This brings us to our third point, see Jesus, the king's subject ultimately to God's authority. Look down with me at verse 8.

I'll read it out. When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid and he went back inside the palace. Where do you come from? He asked Jesus. But Jesus gave him no answer.

[15:28] At this juncture, let me share a little bit about myself. At the start of this year, I moved in my own flat. So in Singapore, single people can only apply for their own flat after a certain age.

I won't tell you what the age limit is. So I passed the age limit and finally got my own flat. And as a housewarming gift, my brother-in-law got me Netflix. So for those of you who are watching Netflix, you can know that's quite addictive, actually.

For me, I've always loved reading mystery novels. So on Netflix, I'm kind of scrolling down, searching for all these crime or police dramas. And I confess, I've been watching quite a lot of police dramas on Netflix recently.

And one pattern I see across quite a few of these crime dramas is there's often this episode where the police are tracing down and chasing down this criminal. They have sufficient evidence. They finally capture the criminal. They try to convict him. They interrogate him. And there will be this hardened criminal who in the face of overwhelming evidence, this criminal will just absolutely refuse to say anything in interrogation.

[16:33] Now, I myself am a very talkative person, so I marvel at people who don't say anything. So, you know, this criminal will just keep quiet in the face of overwhelming evidence. They keep quiet and refuse to respond to any of the questions.

And if we think about it, actually, this keeping quiet, this silence, is probably driven by pride, isn't it? You know, the criminal knows that he or she is facing defeat. And so, in the face of inevitable defeat, this criminal tries to preserve some dignity.

You know, in fighting a losing battle, I will go down keeping quiet, that kind of thing. But just to clarify, this is not what's happening in verse 9. Let me say that again.

This is not what's happening in chapter 19, verse 9, in Jesus' trial of Pilate. Well, Jesus keeps quiet, that's what the verse says, but not because he's fighting a losing battle.

Jesus is not a guilty criminal. He keeps quiet, it's because he's actually above Pilate. Jesus is not accountable to Pilate, and therefore, actually, he has no need to speak to Pilate.

[17:40] How we know this is, you know, Pilate actually interprets Jesus' silence as a challenge of authority. That's why Pilate says what he says in verse 10.

In verse 10, Pilate replies to Jesus' silence by saying, do you refuse to speak to me? Pilate even says, don't you realize I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?

And finally, Jesus responds. And what Jesus had implied with his silence, he now says explicitly with his words. Verse 11, Jesus tells Pilate he has no real authority over him.

And in fact, verse 11, Jesus also implicitly answers the earlier question, where do you come from? So let's look at verse 11. Jesus answered, you 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. So going back to Pilate's earlier question, where do you come from? Well, verse 11 implies that Jesus is actually from above.

[18:47] He's the king from above. The son of God who was by his father's side, who stepped away from heaven, came down to this earth, came down to be king over his people.

And Jesus being the king who is from above, he's not under Pilate's authority. He's not under Pilate's jurisdiction. Even as Jesus is tried, humiliated, crucified, but all these are happening not because Jesus lost a battle against the Jews, against Pilate, or even against Caesar.

No. Jesus, the king from above, he's tried, he's humiliated, he's crucified. But that's all according to God's plan and God's purpose.

Even in the phase of crucifixion, in the phase of defeat, even in the phase of death, Jesus is still king. He's a king from above. He's not under earthly or human authority.

He's not defeated by earthly or human forces. He's a king who is subject ultimately to God's authority alone. It's now time for us to summarize our passage for today, and for me to draw a few key applications for us.

[20:08] So verses 1 to 7, verses 12 to 16, the passage presents Jesus as the king who is rejected, he's tortured, he's crucified, despite his innocence, in favor of Caesar.

And yet the passage still upholds Jesus' kingship. The passage even gives us reasons to look at Jesus and to continue seeing him as king.

The king from above, the king who is subject ultimately to God's authority. Jesus' humiliation, his rejection, even his crucifixion, are by no means a defeat for Jesus.

And so the main application for today's passage would be this, do we look at Jesus and see him as king? More specifically, do we see him as the king from above, the king who is subject ultimately to God's authority alone?

Do we see Jesus as king despite the opposition he faces, despite the apparent defeat that he endures by his opponents? Well, think about it.

[21:18] Right from the start of Jesus' ministry, the Jews, even the world, they have all opposed him. And this opposition only increased as Jesus continued to do his ministry, and this opposition finally climaxed with the crucifixion of Jesus.

And such opposition may have caused John's first readers to question his kingship, where the first century Jewish reader probably would have questioned his kingship.

Well, to put ourselves in their shoes, it's like asking you to look upon a criminal sentenced to death, sentenced to capital punishment by your own government, it's like asking you to look upon such a person and say that is the king and the saviour of the world.

Well, you'll find that quite strange at best. For us 21st century readers of John's Gospel, to be fair, Jesus' death on the cross took place 2,000 years ago, it might not really make us question Jesus, but the opposition against Jesus today may cause us to do so.

Well, opposition began at the start of Jesus' ministry, it increased throughout its ministry, it climaxed with the crucifixion of Jesus, and that same opposition continues to this very day.

[22 : 36] And such opposition today, at present, that can undermine our faith and believe in Jesus as king. Such opposition may take the form of society's scepticism against Jesus and the gospel.

Such opposition can take the form of your friends' mockery of Jesus and your Christian faith. Such opposition can even strike closer to home. It could be your family's disapproval of your commitment to Jesus Christ.

The trial of Jesus took place and ended 2,000 years ago, but in the light of society's scepticism, your friends' mockery, your family's disapproval, it can feel like Jesus is still on trial.

And during these times where the passage will reassure us, reassure us that Jesus is still king.

Jesus is the king from above. The world's crucifixion of Jesus didn't really change who Jesus is.

Well, 2,000 years later, the world's scepticism and continued rejection, well, that doesn't change who Jesus is. Neither the scepticisms of society, the mockery of friends, the disapproval of family, none of these would change who Jesus really is.

[23 : 55] Jesus remains king. The king from above, subject ultimately to God's authority alone. And so when we are confronted by the world's scepticism, mockery, disapproval, let me urge all of us, let us not give in to doubt.

Let us not give in to doubt. Let's continue to look at Jesus and see him for who he really is, God's chosen king. Our passage for today doesn't really elaborate on what truly seeing Jesus would look like in practice.

For this we have to turn elsewhere in John's gospel. John's gospel has already spoken about having faith in Jesus as our saviour and obeying Jesus as king. Our passage doesn't really unpack these, but what our passage does say is what truly seeing Jesus doesn't look like.

So let me repeat this. Our passage does say what truly seeing Jesus doesn't look like. But simply put, it doesn't look like the responses of the Jews and of Pilate.

For both parties don't show faith in Jesus as saviour or obedience to him as king. Both parties reject Jesus even though they do it in slightly different ways and for slightly different reasons.

[25 : 19] So let's spend a moment and consider both the Jews and Pilate. On the one hand the Jews reject Jesus and what's very interesting is that they are highly religious people.

They uphold the Old Testament law. That's the reason why they are persecuting Jesus at least the reason they give to Pilate. Many of those who push hardest for Jesus to be crucified well who are they?

The chief priest the religious leaders of the Jewish community the spiritual giants the spiritual elite of that day. Yes they were very religious but all their religiosity is only covering the fact that they reject God.

They reject God they reject God's king to the point that they even choose Caesar above God's chosen king. The Roman emperor they hated the human king that oppressed them.

And so we need to ask ourselves might we be in danger of falling into the same trap? Might we be in danger of falling into the same trap as the Jews?

[26 : 31] For I believe that many of us here today we will qualify to be those who are regarded by the world to be highly religious. For a start we observe church attendance on Sunday.

Many of us here today will be concerned about God's commandments. But might we be more like the Jews in this passage that John wants us to be?

Might we be more like the Jewish people here? Might our church attendance, our concern for commandments, might all this religiosity mask the fact that there is little faith in Jesus or little obedience to him as king?

According to our passage for today, what really matters is not that other people look at us and think, oh, this is really religious, this is a really spiritual person. But that doesn't really matter according to today's passage.

What really matters for John is that we look at Jesus and see him as king. so that's the Jews on the one hand, let's now turn to Pilate.

[27 : 42] To be fair, we can appear somewhat harsh to Pilate. After all, if we are really fair to him, we will admit that in a way, he does see Jesus rightly. He's right in declaring that Jesus is innocent.

He even tries to release Jesus. Surely this must count to some credit for Pilate. In fact, Pilate even appears to think that Jesus may very well be someone special.

He asks, where do you come from? But the fact of the matter still remains that Pilate in the end rejects Jesus. He doesn't see Jesus as king.

He doesn't see Jesus as king precisely because his loyalties are elsewhere. His loyalties are aligned with the kings and the kingdoms of this world.

More specifically with Caesar, with the Roman Empire. And so there will be some of us here today who might appear to see Jesus rightly to some degree.

[28 : 46] We might make certain correct declarations or statements about Jesus. We may even have this inkling that Jesus is someone special. But let's not be complacent.

seeing Jesus rightly to a degree, making some correct declarations, having the suspicion he might be special, that just puts us in the same boat as Pilate.

Pilate who ultimately rejected Jesus. What really matters is where our loyalties ultimately lie.

Are our loyalties given to the kings and the kingdoms of this world? If so, this may very well hold us back from seeing Jesus as the king he really is.

Just think about Pilate. He feared offending Caesar. He feared being branded as an enemy of the great Roman empire. Might we too give in to fear of society, of the authorities above us, of our friends, of the people at the workplace, or even our families?

[29 : 56] All of these, or even any of these, they may very well hold us back from acknowledging and seeing Jesus as king. Perhaps what we might feel might not be fear, but we might struggle with ambitiousness.

You know, Pilate wanted to please Caesar. We might want to please the world. We might want to gain approval of the world. We might want to secure our standing with the world. And again, any of these, all of these, where they could hold us back from seeing Jesus as king.

Allow me to close our time together by addressing those among us who would not call ourselves to be believers or followers of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you're here visiting and exploring the Christian faith.

Let me just say that I'm delighted that you're here with us today. For the Jesus we have seen from today's passage, this Jesus, well, he's someone worth seeing for who he really is.

What other man would claim to be from above? What other man can claim to be from above? What other man can claim to be subject to no earthly or human authority, but God's heavenly authority alone?

[31 : 12] The world may speak lowly of Jesus, the people around us might ignore him, might use his name in vain, he might be openly rejected by friends and family, but let me urge you to look at Jesus and see him for who he really is.

See him for yourself who he really is. God's chosen king, the king who has come to save and to judge this world. Let me close us in a short prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for revealing to us who Jesus really is in your word. We thank you that despite the rejection and the defeat he faced, he is still the king from above who is subject only to your authority.

Father, help us to see that, to look upon him and to call upon him in trust and obedience as our king and saviour. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. to more than o'