

Sermon Note: To Testify to the Truth

Christ the King Sunday

Introduction

Today, we conclude our Truth-Telling series on Christ the King Sunday. This day marks the end of the liturgical year and invites us to think about the kind of reign Jesus models as our king. In this week's scripture, Jesus stands before Pilate, the Roman governor, in a moment that contrasts worldly authority with the heavenly kingdom Jesus proclaims. Pilate's interrogation leads us to a crucial question: "What is truth?"

The truth Jesus testifies to is not a concept or ideology but a person—Jesus himself, the embodiment of God's love and justice. Pilate represents a world grasping for power and control, while Jesus represents a kingdom of peace, humility, and truth. As we reflect on this text, we are challenged to consider: Whose voice guides us? What kind of truth shapes our lives? And how might we testify to Christ's truth in a world full of competing narratives?

Illustration Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysb_gxJ8LE4

In the re-imagined *The Lion King* (2019), Simba sings about being king

Why This Video?

In this classic scene, young Simba dreams of being king, imagining a reign full of fun and freedom with none of the responsibilities or challenges. His vision is playful but naive, reflecting a common human desire for power without accountability. This contrasts sharply with the kingship Jesus describes to Pilate—a kingdom not of this world, marked by service, sacrifice, and truth. Simba's excitement offers an accessible starting point to discuss how we often misunderstand leadership and authority, while Jesus's response to Pilate reveals the deeper calling of living under Christ's reign.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Simba envisions a kingdom where he can do whatever he wants, free from responsibility. What does this reveal about how people, especially when they're young, tend to think about leadership?
2. How does Simba's idea of kingship compare to Jesus's description of a kingdom "not from this world"?
3. Reflect on how Simba learns what being a king truly means later in the movie. What does this say about the journey of understanding leadership and truth?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where your assumptions about leadership or truth were challenged? How did you respond, and what did you learn?
5. Like Simba, we often focus on what's immediately appealing or comfortable. How can listening to Jesus's voice help us see the bigger picture of what truth and leadership mean in our lives?

John 18:33-37 (CEB)

³³Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

³⁴Jesus answered, “Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?”

³⁵Pilate responded, “I’m not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶Jesus replied, “My kingdom doesn’t originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn’t have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn’t from here.”

³⁷“So you are a king?” Pilate said.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice.”

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. This dialogue between Jesus and Pilate is central to understanding Jesus’s mission and identity. Have you ever thought about how the story of Jesus’ birth at Christmas connects to his journey toward the cross at Easter?
2. When Pilate questions Jesus about being the King of the Jews, Jesus speaks of a kingdom “not from this world” (John 18:36). What do you think Jesus is trying to convey about his kingdom and how it contrasts with worldly kingdoms?
3. Considering Jesus’ dialogue with Pilate, how might you understand the concept of truth in a spiritual sense versus a worldly sense? How can these different understandings of truth influence your witness as Christians?
4. We bring questions about truth, identity, and purpose into our worship and our daily lives, seeking understanding and direction. How can the church help guide people toward understanding and living out the truth of Jesus?
5. How might you listen to Jesus’ voice? (“Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37c))
6. What is one way you will commit to testifying to the truth in the coming week?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. Reread the scripture, and this time add verse 38: “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Why do you think Pilate asked this question? Does reading the scripture with this addition change anything for you? If so, why?
2. Why do you think Jesus answers Pilate’s question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” with this question, “Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?”
3. Can you think of a time recently when someone answered your question with a question? Did you find that scenario helpful or frustrating in getting the information you needed?

4. This event occurred long before social media, when news traveled mostly by word of mouth. How accurate do you think Pilate's perception of Jesus might have been, considering that the story came to him from guards, chief priests, and government officials who thought Jesus was a threat to their way of life?
5. Think about a situation in your life & experience when the "truth" was not clear to you. Was it helpful to hear both sides of the story?
6. How have you reacted when someone failed to believe your truth?

Weekly Action

This week, consider how you discern truth in your daily life. Think about how the voices and messages you hear may shape your understanding, whether through news, social media, or personal conversations. Identify one step you can take to align your focus more closely with Christ's truth—whether that's pausing to listen carefully to someone's perspective, researching an unfamiliar topic with care and an open mind, or filtering your thoughts and actions through prayer and scripture. Write John 18:37c ("Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice") on a sticky note and place it in a prominent place, or use a dry-erase marker on a mirror. Let this verse remind you to prioritize Christ's voice above all others.

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for the truth that you have revealed through Jesus Christ. As we go forth from this discussion, empower us to listen to your voice and to stand boldly for your truth in all aspects of our lives. May we be faithful witnesses to your love and justice in the world. Amen.