



Tonight we remember the evening Jesus eats his last supper with his disciples.  
The evening he washes his disciples' feet.  
The evening he speaks to them about what's going to happen.  
The evening he is betrayed.  
The evening he is arrested.  
The evening his disciples deny him.  
The evening his disciples desert him.

Jesus leaves the meal, his last supper, and walks to the garden of Gethsemane with his disciples. And he prays. He prays for his mission. He prays for his disciples. He prays for the world. And he prays for us, his church.

And while he prays, Judas arrives with Roman soldiers and chief priests and their police to arrest him. They arrive with lanterns and torches and weapons. They arrest Jesus, and take him to the high priest, Annas.

And all through the night, tonight, Jesus is on trial.

Jesus says to Annas: "I've done nothing in secret. What are you arresting me for? You know all I've taught. In the synagogues. In the temple. Nothing was secret. I haven't hidden anything from you."

A Jewish soldier strikes Jesus across the face.

Jesus replies (18:23)

*"If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"*

Jesus has done nothing but speak the truth.

They take him to Caiaphas, the high priest in charge that year. And from Caiaphas, they take him to Pilate, the Roman prefect of the province of Judea. By this time it's early morning. Friday.

Jesus has been on trial all night. Tonight.

Pilate says to the Jews (18:31)

*"Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."*

The Jewish leaders respond:

*"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected.*

In other words: “We want him dead! But we can’t kill him! So we’re handing him over to you, to kill.”

And Pilate seems to struggle with this.

Pilate says similar things to what Jesus has been saying:

Verse 29 – he says to the Jewish leaders: *“What charges are you bringing against this man?”*

Verse 35 – he says to Jesus: *“What is it you have done?”*

Verse 39 – he says again to the Jewish leaders: *“I find no basis for a charge against him”*

So here we have Jesus faced with an unfair trial. A trial conducted under the darkness of night. A trial without any actual charges. The religious leaders use all their power to maneuver the Romans into crucifying Jesus.

But Pilate stops and asks the question –  
***“What is truth?”***

And that’s a good question to ask ourselves tonight: “What is truth? Do we want to **know** the truth?”

Do these pants make me look fat?

Am I a good parent?

Is there anything I do that annoys you?

Is coffee bad for me? Bacon?

We don’t always want to know the truth to those sorts of questions. And if we find out the truth, maybe we’ll conveniently ignore it!

Someone said to me the other day, as they looked at my stomach – “Looks like you could afford to lose a bit of weight!” They were right. I ate chips and chocolate that night.

Because sometimes I don’t care about the truth.

There are times, I think, we don’t particularly care about the truth.

### **The truth of your life**

Let’s say that tonight YOU were on trial. What if the real truth of your life was paraded before the public courts? Would you be guilty of anything? Have you done anything wrong? Would you want people to know the truth about you?

None of us would stand up to trial if the truth of our life was on public display. Because we are not innocent. We are here tonight hearing about the trial of an innocent man. But deep down, we’re glad it wasn’t us on trial! We’re glad it wasn’t us facing a public trial and punishment. Because we know we’d be found guilty of something.

Pilate asks the obvious question of Jesus:

What has **he** done? Why don’t you deal with him yourself? I can release one prisoner at Passover. Do you want me to release Jesus?

“No!” they say. “Release Barabbas!”

But at this point, Pilate **still** doesn't turn Jesus over to be crucified. He hands him over to be flogged. Surely THAT will be enough to satisfy the Jews.

They mock him. They hit him. They spit on him. They place a crown of thorns on his head.

Then Pilate comes out again in 19:4-

*"Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him."*

But the crowd doesn't want Jesus back. They shout "Crucify him!"

Then verse 6 Pilate says: *"I find no basis for a charge against him."*

Finally, about noon on Friday, Pilate brings Jesus out once more. And he hands him over to be crucified.

When did Pilate give up trying to protect the innocent Jesus? When did Pilate surrender to the crowd rather than pursue justice or fairness?

Let's go back to chapter 18, from verse 37:

*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."*

### **Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**

Hear what Jesus is saying to Pilate. If you're on my side, you're on the side of truth. If you listen to me, you're listening to truth.

And how does Pilate respond to that?

*38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there...*

"What is truth" Pilate says as he walks outside to the crowd.

"What is truth?" "What is the point of truth?!" You can almost picture him throwing his hands up in the air. "What does truth matter! This is politics! This is religion! This is about power and control! This isn't about truth! What is truth! Why does truth matter?"

At that point, Pilate gives up on the truth. It's too hard.

This is one of the great struggles of our world. We can get to the point where the truth no longer matters. When we no longer want to **find** the truth. When we no longer want to **know** the truth.

If we're happy in life, if we have all we want, if we're getting by OK, who cares about the truth? Sometimes we only care about the truth if it affects us.

### **Caring about the small things**

I've noticed that people get really upset when their trains or buses are late.

When I was at school, about once a month, our after-school bus just didn't turn up. So we had to walk about a kilometre to the main road and catch another bus. And we'd get home

about an hour late. I still get annoyed when my train is late today. But I don't get annoyed when YOUR train is late. I really don't. I see your post on Facebook and I feel a little sorry for you that you've been held up. But I'm not really that annoyed. Why? Because your train being late doesn't really affect **me**. I feel for you. But I'm much more upset when MY train is late.

We get so upset with things that make **our** life difficult.

Do you get upset knowing that 100,000 Australians face homelessness or poverty each day and that many of them are children? I do. But I think I'd be more upset if I were one of those homeless people. If it affected me directly. Let's be honest. Do you stay up at night thinking about the homeless? If YOU were homeless, you'd probably think about it a lot!

We care more about the truth when it affects us directly.

And **that is why** this truth of Jesus' is so important. Because it is THE truth that affects all of us - the truth that Jesus died on a cross to take the punishment from God for OUR sins. But how much attention do we give **that** truth? How much do we care each day about **that** truth? How passionate do we get about **that** truth? How active are we in responding to **that** truth? How much does **that** truth impact our life each day?

Tonight is THE time to think about the truth that really matters. Not to give up on the truth.

Do you want to know what the actual charges were against Jesus? It wasn't a charge from the Jews. It wasn't a charge from the Romans. It was the charge against him from God. The charge against Jesus was **our sin**. Your sin. My sin. He was charged, convicted, punished, crucified, killed, as a punishment from God for **our sin**. And why did he do that? Why did he stand guilty and condemned for our sin? To bring us into his new, eternal kingdom.

This is the truth that matters more than any other.

If you are still thinking about the truth of Jesus, if you don't yet know him personally, then let me encourage you tonight not to give up seeking that truth. This truth **does** matter. And if you are a follower of Jesus, hear this truth again tonight, and let it **dominate** your life. Let it impact every **moment** of every **day**. Instead of being passionate about late trains, be passionate about this one truth that affects every person in our world today. Including you. This Easter, may we be marked as people who are passionate about the truth of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

*Let's pray. Then...*

Connect cards...

John 15:26-16:15 :

15:26 “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. 27And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

16:1 “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. 2They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. 3They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 4I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, 5but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 7But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. 12 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

John 18:28-40

28Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. 29So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?”

30“If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”

31Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” they objected. 32This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

33Pilate 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?”

36Jesus 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.

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.”

38“ What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. 39But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?”

40They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.