

061825

I. My Notes ... WWC message 6/21

II. Series: That You Might Believe

- Title: What is Truth?
- Text: John 18
- Quote: Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy. Warren Wiersbe (Pastor, Author)

III. Introduction

- I am going to jump right in and give a synopsis of some of the events recorded in John 18. There is a portion of this chapter that I want to focus on after laying the background. From where we left off at our last time together in John's Gospel, things are beginning to move quickly. Think of it this way ... there were 3 separate scenes of a play taking place at the same time. The action in one scene takes place while the other scenes are going on. It all comes to a dramatic conclusion seen in the choice the audience (crowd) makes.
- Jesus has just finished His explanations, warnings, and encouragement after the Last Supper. He has spoken clearly to the Disciples and then allowed them to listen to His conversation with the Father. I am sure that after all this, everyone was tired, they might have been emotionally spent. But the night wasn't over. In fact, Jesus understood this was the precursor (the opening of the path that led to the Cross) to what was about to take place. After Jesus prayed, it was time for

them to leave the Upper Room and move on. *“18 After Jesus had said these things, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. 2 Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.” (John 18:1-3 CSB).* They were heading to the Garden of Gethsemane, a familiar place – a place that they had stayed and rested in the past (see Luke 21:37). As a side note, this was the same place that King David was betrayed by a close friend (see 2 Samuel 15). So, while it was a place of comfort, there was a history contained here too. I find it interesting that John doesn’t go into details about the struggle that Jesus faced in prayer in the Garden – this is detailed in the other Gospels. John focused on the deity, on the glory, of Jesus ... the other Gospel writers focused on His humanity. Neither way is wrong, it paints a better picture for us to understand Jesus.

- Judas shows up, with a small army, to capture Jesus. Let me just say here, that it didn’t matter how many showed up ... whether they were armed or not ... Jesus chose to go with them. He wasn’t surprised by what was taking place. Judas chose greed over his relationship with the Messiah. Ultimately, that cost him (Judas) everything. Remember what Jesus said when explaining who He was to the crowds and religious leaders ... *“17 “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life*

*so I may take it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” (John 10:17-18 NLT).* In every circumstance, there is a choice. Jesus made the choice to walk the path that God had determined for Him – you and I have a choice to do the same.

- Look at the confrontation (interaction). This small army was approaching with swords and lit torches. It was in the early morning – likely around 2 or 3 a.m. So, there were no crowds – no witnesses. Jesus went out and approached the group. He asked who they were looking for and told them that He was the One they were seeking. Evidently, this was difficult for them to comprehend because He had to clarify that it was Him once again. The power of this statement (the words Jesus spoke) knocked the army to the ground. That didn’t stop them. And even when Peter attacked one of the guards, Jesus intervened and performed another miracle. In His willing submission, Jesus showed that He had the authority of God. This event – Jesus declaring who He was and the soldiers falling to the ground was a foreshadowing of what will ultimately take place when Jesus returns to establish His kingdom on Earth. **Philippians 2:10-11 NCV:** *“so that every knee will bow to the name of Jesus—everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. 11 And everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and bring glory to God the Father.”*

- The scene is set ... Jesus has (willingly) been arrested. He goes before His accusers and yet no one can dispute the truth He had brought. During this, I am sure the Disciples were worried and confused. Some followed the Lord as He was being taken before the religious elite – others went to a safe place to wait. Think about what Jesus had just told them ... **“But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.” (John 16:32 NLT)**. And this was just the beginning of the persecution and criticism the Disciples would endure. While Jesus was being questioned and abused more of His words would come to pass. Think back to the moment when Jesus was washing the Disciples feet ... *“Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.” “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.” (John 13:36-38 CSB)*. Peter would deny Jesus 3 times while Jesus was being questioned. Jesus was taken into custody around 3 a.m. and Peter’s denials would take place before sunrise.
- Up to this point, Jesus had endured persecution and hatred for the grace He revealed and the truth He taught. Can you relate to this kind of treatment? Being criticized and singled out for your beliefs can be a painful process. And when it is without

any basis or reason it makes it more difficult to understand and endure. None of us is perfect ... we have our flaws, and we live in a world that is polluted by sin. Jesus lived in the same world, but He was without sin (flaws). And because the Pharisees, the Religious Leaders, the High Priest couldn't get beyond their fears and their desire for control they chose to eliminate "their problem." Maybe you have been under tremendous strain and criticism, can you continue to show grace and compassion while standing for the truth?

- We have come to a point in John's Gospel that I want to focus on for a moment. In the conversation that Pilate had with Jesus he asks a tremendous question ... it is a question that each one of us must answer.

#### IV. The Search for the Truth

- **John 18:28-38 CSB**

*28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover.*

*29 So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?"*

*30 They answered him, "If this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."*

*31 Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law."*

*“It’s not legal for us to put anyone to death,” the Jews declared.*

*32 They said this so that Jesus’s words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die.*

*33 Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”*

*34 Jesus answered, “Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?”*

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

*36 “My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus. “If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”*

*37 “You are a king then?” Pilate asked.*

*“You say that I’m a king,” Jesus replied. “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”*

*38 “What is truth?” said Pilate.*

- The Jewish leaders violated all their rules and (manmade) laws and still couldn’t come up with anything to charge Jesus with – so they made something up. The injustice becomes clearer. Because of this lie, they handed Jesus over to the Romans for punishment. And the injustice continues with Pilate.
- Pilate, a Roman governor shaped by political practicality and philosophical relativism, likely saw “truth” as a tool of power or persuasion—not as something absolute. His question, the question of truth, may reflect a jaded worldview where truth is

negotiable, especially in matters of state. Does any of this sound familiar?

## V. Irony

- The persecution has begun – Jesus knew that the Cross would be the destination. This didn't affect His demeanor at all. Jesus remained calm (see Matthew 27 and Luke 23) and collected. When Jesus answered questions, it was with purpose. Pilate was conflicted and manipulative – ultimately, he was powerless to do anything other than what the mob wanted ... he had no real authority.
- Pilate was searching for truth – or at least a way to manipulate it for his benefit. He had TRUTH standing in front of him and could not see it.
- Pilate's question reflects a mindset that truth is elusive or subjective—an attitude that's increasingly common. In a world saturated with competing ways to get attention and recognition, people often shrug and say, "Well, that's your truth." Like Pilate, many today stand before truth but dismiss it as unknowable or irrelevant.
- Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, yet he washed his hands of the decision. This is so similar to today ... people avoid truth for their own comfort or ease. The thought that truth is what fits in "my life" or "what works for me" has taken the place of what is genuinely true. The information age has brought everything imaginable to our fingertips. Yet, there is a struggle to discern what is genuine (truth) from what is false. Jesus said, "...

*everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:38 CSB).* Not everyone listens to Jesus – He is the way, TRUTH, and the pathway to life. It’s a choice that Pilate couldn’t make, even when standing in front of The Truth.

## VI. The Problem with Truth

- The thought today of truth being relative has created many problems. More than anything it opened the door to doubt about everything. The denial of absolute truth brings with the result that life has no meaning or purpose. This is the predominate thought in the postmodern world today.
- The cry “crucify Him” (Mark 15:1-14; Luke 23:21) was a shout for man’s intolerance of the truth. The crowd chose a murderer over the love of God (John 18:38-40).
- People have a problem with the truth because it shatters their ideas about themselves. It makes us look at those things that we might not like or be comfortable with.
- The TRUTH is that even with all our flaws and faults we are loved completely and perfectly by the One who created all. Even if we can’t accept it, love is there, waiting for us to receive it. His love is unconditional and eternal. Not only is God love (1 John 4:8) but He is faithful to who He is (Hebrews 13:8). His nature, His character, His love never changes.

## VII. Bringing It All Together



- The Cross, the demonstration of God's love and grace, is just a few hours away. Everything about the betrayal, arrest, and accusations of Jesus is man seeking to make himself more important than God.
- The irony of what John shares with us reveals how much of a struggle we face. Peter, who said he would "lay down his life" for Jesus (ref. John 13:37) denied knowing Jesus when the pressure was on ... was it out of fear or a lack of trust and understanding? Many aren't any different today. When confronted with having to stand for truth, there is a choice that shows where you stand.
- The world has chosen to go the way of Pontious Pilate, everything is relative and everything is permissible. The path of grace is different ... the love that we are searching for, that love worth finding, means acknowledging the Truth that you have a need and the only place it will be met is at the foot of the Cross.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always