

Christ the King Sunday

TAKING ON THE TRUTH

John 18:33-37

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Analysis by Robin J. Morgan

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" 35 Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

DIAGNOSIS: What Is Truth?

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Fighting*

Our gospel lesson for Christ the King Sunday dumps us down in the middle of the Passion story where all the players are fighting for something. Judas is fighting for what he believes is right by standing with the men who come for Jesus from the chief priests and Pharisees. Peter thinks he's fighting for Jesus as he cuts off Malchus' ear. Caiaphus is fighting for Israel under Roman domination by taking Jesus to Pilate. Then

Pilate enters the scene fighting for his position in the Roman hierarchy by controlling and yet trying to keep peace in Jerusalem. What are we fighting for in the midst of Jesus' Passion?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Fear*

Usually fighting like this comes from a heart full of fear. Whether people use swords or words or the slow, grinding gears of bureaucracy, we fear losing what we've worked so hard to build and so we fight. Yet Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world so there will be no fighting on his behalf.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Failure*

In verse 38, Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?" and with that inquiry, he exposes his failure to see what God is doing in Jesus, the enfleshed deity standing in front of him. He/we are blinded by our fighting for position in this world. The way, the truth, and the life standing right in front of us is lost to us. The Creator leaves us to our fighting, our maneuvering, our obliviousness of what is really happening before our eyes.

PROGNOSIS: He is Truth

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal solution) : *The Truth Testifies*

"For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (v. 37a). Jesus testifies to the truth through his life, death, and resurrection. He spoke openly in the synagogues and the temple (18:20). He does not fight for position in this world, but allows himself to be taken by the chief priests (18:5, 6) and questioned by Pilate. He goes to the cross and takes our fighting, our fears, and our failure to understand God's will, God's truth with Him to His death. In His resurrection we share His new creation life, the truth that God so loved the world that He gave Jesus so that we might have eternal life.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Trusting the Truth*

“Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (v. 37b). We can trust Jesus as the truth of God for us today and into eternity. We hear his voice in the love of the Father to care for us and carry us through all the trials and storms of this life. Our fears and need to fight for position in this world fade into the background as the truth of our Lord becomes the guiding light of our lives.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Speaking the Truth*

“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth” (17:18, 19). Jesus prayed to the Father that we might be sent into the world to testify to the truth with our words and our actions just as he did. This is our calling. We are set apart to share the truth with a world that is consumed with Pilate’s question, “What is truth?” We have an answer for those struggling with this question. He has sent us, He will guide us and give us the words to speak so that all may hear and believe.