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## LIFE IN HIS NAME

### THE TRIAL OF JESUS

John 18:28-19:16

*Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

*So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"*

*After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.*

*Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the*

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*man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*

*From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.*

*A number of years ago, many years ago now, I was asked to appear in court for a custody hearing. It was a really difficult situation. This goes back many, many years, as I said. I went into this courtroom expecting to be asked about what I knew about the parents and what I thought would be the best situation for these kids. But when I got into the courtroom I realized very quickly that was not what was going to happen. The judge, as it turned out, was hostile before we ever began. He began to ask me very direct questions like: "Do you spank children?" and "Do you tell people to spank children?" and "Do you tell wives to obey husbands?" I'm like, "What is going on here?" I felt like I was on trial.*

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*It was obviously a very disturbing situation, but I began to realize immediately that my understanding of truth and this judge's understanding of truth were miles apart. I thought I was going to be able to come in and offer some help in a difficult situation, but it just wasn't the case.*

*You see, in every case we know there are facts, and we hope for a verdict that is true to those facts, and then a sentence, a judgment, if it's appropriate. What we see in the case of Jesus in this trial is that the judgment is not appropriate. It does not fit the facts at all. It teaches us something because John is not just telling us a story. He is doing that, but he is bringing out certain themes, and we are going to look at three of those themes.*

*He tells the story in a way, not just to tell us what happened, but to emphasize certain themes. He is exposing this fatal flaw that the judgment is in error, but there is a bigger problem. Our judgment on the whole is just off. We deal with judgment all the time. I felt judged in that moment in that courtroom. We often feel judged. We make judgments. But there is something off, there is something askew, and it is exposed in the situation that we see here.*

*Here is the promise, here is the takeaway for this morning: What is revealed in this passage will prepare you for the final judgment. There is a final judgment. Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment." There will be a verdict rendered on your life and my life. No matter how unpopular that may be, the bible is very clear that God made us, and we will stand before God when it's all over and give an accounting for our lives.*

*This passage has what we need to prepare ourselves for that moment. Here is part of the amazing way that John portrays this, and the whole gospel of John teaches us. It's not only going to prepare us for that moment, but when we settle that moment, it works backwards into time, helping us with judgment right now, helping us know how to respond when we are judged, and helping us to judge appropriately. Because there is a restoration of certain things that happens when we know that that final judgment is set for us, that it's going to be okay, that it's going to be right in Christ.*

*So, let's pull out those themes. Are you ready? Three themes: 1) Jesus is King. 2) Jesus is the Truth. 3) Jesus is the Lamb of God. Let's start with the first theme.*

*I. Jesus is King.*

*The entire event develops around this idea. The Jewish leaders bring Jesus to Pilate very, very early in the morning. It's before 6:00 in the morning. Pilate was the regional leader. The word*

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*“governor” here is a pretty accurate word for us. He ruled there in that region. He was there in Jerusalem because there was a feast. Everyone was coming to Jerusalem for the Passover and he wants to keep the peace. So the Jewish leaders bring Jesus but they won’t go into the headquarters. Look at the hypocrisy here. They are about to execute an innocent man, yet they refuse to go into Pilate’s headquarters because they don’t want to be declared unclean by going into a gentile’s dwelling and they want to enjoy the Passover. The Passover is a whole week long. It has already begun. “Hey, we don’t want to miss the party. We don’t want to sin and enter this gentile’s house, but we do want to kill this guy, who is innocent.”*

*So, that’s the setting. It’s a little comical. Pilate is going from inside to outside, inside to outside -- it happens four times. He goes in, talks to Jesus, goes out, talks to them; goes in, talks to Jesus, goes out, talks to them; back and forth, until finally....he says it three times: “He’s not guilty. I find no fault in him.” So he has Jesus flogged.*

*If you are familiar with the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there were three levels of flogging. There was a lighter level, then it progressed until the worst level of flogging meant you were flogged with an instrument of strips of leather that had metal and steel and rock imbedded in those strips. It would often itself be fatal. It would often bring death. It would just strip away flesh, and we know that Jesus was flogged in that way, with the worst flogging.*

*It’s possible that John is telling us that Jesus was flogged twice. The flogging that’s recorded here is on the lighter level, because he’s just trying to appease the religious leaders. “Listen, let me beat him, let the soldiers ridicule him, then maybe the Jewish leaders will be appeased and they will leave it alone and we can go on.” But that doesn’t happen. As you heard from John’s account, they insist, “Crucify him, crucify him!”*

*This theme of “Is Jesus a king?” runs throughout the passage. Their accusation is twofold: 1) That Jesus is guilty of blasphemy; there is a theological crime that’s been committed, and then 2) There is a political crime. He is a threat to Rome. He is a threat to Caesar. Of course, with Pilate they emphasize the latter. They emphasize that he’s a threat. That’s why Pilate is asking him: “Are you a king? Are you the King of the Jews? Is this who you are?”*

*They only bring up the theological crime (that he claims to be the Son of God) later when they are fearful they are not going to have success. They are pushing for Jesus to be executed. So, “Is Jesus a king?” That’s the question that’s stated, and it provokes a second question of you and me: “Is*

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*Jesus your king? Is God the ruler of your life? Is he the king of your life?" Jesus teaches here something very important. He says, "You know, I am a king, but my kingdom is not of this world. If it were, we would have fought. My people would be fighting and I wouldn't have been handed over to you so easily.*

*It's a difficult concept that Jesus is teaching us there when he tells us, "My kingdom is not of this world." He is not saying, "My kingdom has nothing to do with this world, and I don't care about this world," because he came into this world to bring the truth. He came into this world to save. God's kingdom impacts this world and brings change and renewal. He is saying it's different in origin. It doesn't come from the same place in exactly the same way. It's different in character and it's different in significance. "My kingdom," Jesus tells us, "changes hearts. It renews people. It doesn't just control people. It doesn't just exercise power. It comes in and saves and makes new and brings light and darkness. My kingdom will never know an end. My kingdom is forever, and those who know me will live forever. They will be changed." Jesus is basically saying, "Listen, I'm really no threat to Rome. My agenda is much, much bigger."*

*Part of what John does here is use irony. We lose it in our English translations. There is this tradition that at the Passover, someone is released. In this magnanimous gesture, a criminal is released, signifying the forgiveness of God. So they want Barabbas. The translation there that Barabbas is a robber is really inadequate. It's a very specific word. He is guilty of insurrection. He led rebellion. He tried to overthrow Rome. You see the irony, right? They are going to execute Jesus because he's a threat to Caesar (which he is not), then they are going to release a man who really is. It all is revolving around this whole idea of kingship, provoking in us this question: "Is Jesus your king?"*

*Think about this for a moment before we move past this first point. Jesus is the King of kings. But look at the type of king. He is ridiculed. They put a crown of thorns on his head, piercing deep into his brow. They dress him in a robe. They mock him.*

*I think most of us, if we had the authority and the power that Jesus had...I'd just strike them all dead. Right? Really. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. And in order to accomplish that agenda, it wasn't enough just to show force. He had to pay for sin. He had to conquer death.*

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*You may say, "Okay Brian, I get it. The theme is there. Jesus is the king. What do I do with that? What do I take away from that?" I would say that it's this question: Have you settled this? Is Jesus the king of your life?*

*Some of us experiment. I'll try a little of this. I'll go to church once in a while. I'll do a little of that. No, no, no, no, no. Give God everything, just everything. He's King. He is the Creator. Trust him with your whole life. There's a freedom that comes when we do that.*

*In fact, it's kind of humorous -- Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4, has a problem child in the Corinthian church. He is bringing correction, bringing correction, trying to sort them out. He is loving on them, encouraging them, and correcting them. So he says to them, "Listen, you know, it's no big deal if you judge me. I don't care what you think." Now, I read that and I'm thinking, "Paul, maybe you could just dial it back a little bit?" "I don't care what you think?" He's in and out of trial because his life is constantly threatened to be taken from him, by Rome. He says, "I don't even care if the courts judge me. I care about one judge. I care about God."*

*That would be my first encouragement to all of us. We worry so much about what people think: "How am I perceived?" and "I don't want to be misunderstood" and "I want to protect my reputation." All of that is understandable, but really, have you stopped to consider: What does God think? Are you living to please him? Is he the king of your life?*

*There is a freedom from worry that comes when we do that. A marvelous verse is Matthew 6:33, just a theme verse: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Matthew 6 is probably the single most helpful passage of scripture on the topic of worry. That's what Jesus is teaching us there in the second half of Matthew 6 -- how to live a life free of anxiety. He is saying, "Just keep it simple. Seek to glorify God. Seek to live for him with everything you are. Just settle that, and God will take care of everything else." So, Jesus is King. This is the first theme. The second theme is that Jesus is the truth.*

### *II. Jesus is the truth.*

*In the conversation about "Are you a king?" in chapter 18, verse 37, Jesus answers: "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is*

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*truth?” Jesus said, “For this purpose I came.” Do you remember John 14:6? Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”*

*I teach a worldview class for some high school seniors in CEDAR, our program for homeschoolers. We use a resource there by James W. Sire. He has eight questions to help us understand a given worldview, eight components. It's kind of a philosophical text. It's a classic text. I have to admit, the first time I read it I was like: “I'm not sure I really understand all these questions.” The first one is: “What is prime reality?” I'm like, “prime reality – that sounds like a fancy term. I don't know. What is prime reality? Because I don't know what prime reality means.”*

*What he's asking in that question is what is most real? What is uncreated? If you are a naturalist, if you are a materialist, a secularist, and you don't believe in God, then what you believe is most real is matter, and that that is uncreated in some form or substance. Something has to have always existed, and matter is most real. So when you get down to answer other questions about what it means to be human, and how we choose right and wrong, you in essence believe, “Well, there is no real meaning and purpose. All my desires and all my emotions -- what we could call the spirit man or the soul -- that's just a collection of atoms, a collection of matter, organized in a certain way to create a certain dynamic.” That's prime reality for the naturalist.*

*Well, the Christian believes that God is prime reality, that God is truth. What you see in this passage is that (this is an important link here) when you reject God as king, you lose truth, and you don't just lose certain parts of truth. You are totally off center, because prime reality is no longer prime reality for you. You've taken a secondary something, a created something, and you've put it in that center spot of being most real. You see Pilate saying, “He's innocent! He's not guilty. Okay, kill him.” You see this perversion, this twistedness of the truth. You see the religious leaders rejecting the one that came in the fulfillment to all their prophecies. Why? Because we have rejected God as king and we have lost sight of the truth.*

*We really need a savior, right? That's the message of the bible. We don't need to be reformed, we need to be delivered. We need to be saved. That stark reality comes to us in so many ways.*

*It came to me the other day standing at my sock drawer. I have a drawer with socks and other things in it. And I have five sons who steal my stuff. They take it. It's rather disturbing. What they really take is dress clothes. They will wear my dress shoes, my belt, my ties, anything, because all they own is shorts and flip flops. If they have to go somewhere and look halfway decent (that's an*

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*exaggeration -- I'm sorry dear, I don't want to make you look bad) they borrow my stuff and they don't return it. And I feel it the most when I go to get a pair of socks. It agitates me.*

*I try to deal with this in various ways. The other way I'm standing at the sock drawer, and my favorite pair of socks is now a different color. It's my favorite! I love these socks! They mean a lot to me. So, I'm standing there and I'm thinking, "Man, my stuff disappears. No one respects me. What is the deal? Beth, how hard is it to wash a pair of socks? You don't put the whites and bleach and..." I'm going through this in my mind.*

*Now, I heard a voice at this moment, before I said anything. This wasn't the voice of God. I know it should scare you that I hear voices, but I heard a voice and it was something like this. It was like: "You're an idiot. You are a complete idiot. She washes your clothes, and they just appear magically in this drawer." It was a revelatory moment. I don't even know how to work the washing machine!*

*So I started thinking about the times I argue with my wife. Once in a while we have friction. We do. We're married. You know, sometimes I meet a couple and they'll say, "Yeah, we've been married 10 years and we've never had a fight." I turn away and say, "Liar, liar." You just don't believe it, right? Now, I understand that not all marriages are the same. If you're single, don't be discouraged. I don't want to give marriage a bad name.*

*I'm thinking, "Why would I ever fight with her? She cooks for me." I know all wives don't do that and I'm not saying that they have to. I'm just saying that I come home at night and there's a warm meal on the table – for me. Just try this. Go out and find someone you don't know and say, "Hey, would you come home and do my laundry? Would you cook for me?" It's not a normal thing! I totally take it for granted. And, she's good looking, right? Right?! Yes! Now you're like, "This is getting awkward. I hope he doesn't keep going with this."*

*We do this! We totally lose sight of the truth. We come out of the house: "Oh, it's so humid. I hate it here. My hair – I just can't do anything with my hair in this humidity." God has put a blazing ball of fire in the sky to keep you from freezing to death, and your response is: "I hate this humidity!" I can think of some better responses, like: "Thank you. This is amazing! You are awesome!"*

*We are off when it comes to truth. And you know what? We are so confident in our own judgments, and we hate it when other people judge us and don't get it right. It goes back to these simple links: We have rejected God as king. We have lost the foundation for truth. And so we are*

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*like Pilate. There is this moment where you look at Pilate. He goes out, he's not giving them what they want, and they say, "Well, he has claimed to be the Son of God." Then he gets scared. Not like, "I'm afraid of God," but superstitious scared. Then he goes back in and tries to have this conversation with Jesus.*

*I'll give you this last little illustration before we move to our final point. I learned to play golf about 25 years ago. I'm not a great golfer, but I play a little bit. I went to this course, the Carolina Club, not far from here. Carolina has water on 16 of 18 holes. I was just learning to play and I found the water on all 16 holes. I literally thought, "I'm going to run out of golf balls before this is over." It was frustrating, I was doing terribly, but there was this one moment. In golf there is this one moment where you hit an amazing shot. It all comes together and you think, "Wow, I'm really good. I could be good at this game," which is totally not happening because the other 120 shots you hit were horrible. But we deny that reality and we live on that one shot.*

*So here I am. I'm over 200 yards from the green and I just hit this amazing, brilliant shot. Boom! On the green, by the flag. I'm like, "Yes!" I'm just all happy. Then my playing partner says, "What are you doing? That's not our green. That's the wrong green." I'm like, "Are you for real?!" I'm aiming at the wrong target! Stupid game.*

*This is us in life. We are so off center we don't even realize we are aiming at the wrong target. And it's not restored for us until the Creator of the universe is the monarch of your life. He made you. He knows your purpose. Your judgment will be askew. It comes all the way down to your relationship. Jesus taught in Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount -- he says, "Don't judge others. You are going to heap judgment on yourself. Get the log out of your own eye so that you can see the speck in your brother's eye."*

*Our relationships are completely off because we are full of judgment towards others and we are not properly seeing our own need. We need a savior. Jesus comes in, he takes the log out, and he does that perpetually. So whether it's in marriage, or friendship, or working together, we learn: "I've got to examine myself first. I've got to start with me. I've got to apply the gospel, the truth of Jesus Christ to my life in this relationship."*

*So, that's the second point. Let's look at the last one – it's a great theme.*

*III. Jesus is the Lamb of God.*

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*This is the good news for us, because if I say to you: “Okay, Jesus needs to be the king of your life, and restoration of truth needs to take place,” you could leave today and say, “Yeah, I’m going to go out of here and that’s what I’m going to do.” But you can’t. You won’t. You won’t be successful at that ultimately, because it’s one thing to begin to see selfishness, but entirely another thing to defeat it in your life. It’s one thing to begin to see pride, but entirely another to defeat it. We are unable to bring about that necessary change.*

*So what do you do when you are there, you are a religious leader, you are standing on the outside of the headquarters. You won’t go in because you are so meticulously trying to keep God’s law, but your heart is so far from God that you are about to execute the Son of God, the Messiah -- so off, so blind to your own selfishness and pride and your own agenda. You need a savior. You need redemption.*

*That’s the third theme: Jesus is the Lamb of God. This is the theme of the book. Remember in chapter one that John the Baptist is heralding the way for Jesus to come? What does he say in John 1:29? “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

*What feast is taking place in Jerusalem? It’s the Passover. The lamb is slaughtered and the blood brings redemption. But the blood of animals won’t save us. It won’t cleanse us. But the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ brings salvation. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. So that scene, now, as the Passover is taking place, is really the grand theme for us – that Jesus is offering himself for us as a sacrifice.*

*As you read it, John tells you how it’s going to end. Spoiler alert: He tells you. All of this is happening, where the Jewish leaders cannot execute Jesus. Had they executed Jesus, it would have been by stoning. Rome has to do it. They alone have the authority as they occupy Israel, and their form of execution is the cross. John tells you that all of this is happening because Jesus had to be lifted up on a tree in fulfillment of ancient prophecy: “Everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed,” Deuteronomy, chapter 13. We find it again in Galatians 3:13. What happens is: The curse of sin, my verdict, my judgment, is placed on Jesus Christ, and I am forgiven because he has paid my debt. The promise of scripture is: “All who call on the name of the Lord will be forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life.” We do nothing to earn that. We receive it.*

*Now, that prepares us for the final judgment. That was my promise to you. The themes here help us prepare for the final judgment, and that is the clear message of scripture and the appeal I want*

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*to make to every person here. Trust in Jesus. Receive forgiveness. Believe that he has paid the penalty of your sin, your judgment. One day, by faith in Jesus you will stand before God, and when the verdict of your life is read, it will be read as: “You are completely forgiven and righteous before God because of what Jesus has done for you.” When that’s a settled fact in your life, it rolls back on you so that your response to judgment and your judgment begins to live in the reality of that security. We begin to just get real and honest.*

*Here’s a silly, little illustration to help you see that. I’m not good at all with directions. I don’t know why. I used to think I was really good. I believed this lie. I believed that if you’re a man, real men always know where they are going, and they know better than their wives how to get there. I don’t know why that was hard-wired into me, but I believed it. It’s kind of stupid as I hear myself say it now.*

*But Beth and I would get in the car and I would get us lost all the time, like bad lost. We would have those sock drawer moments, those friction moments. And one day it just hit me: I’m really bad at directions. So now I just ask my wife for directions. She’s pretty good at it and we get to where we are going. You are sitting there thinking, “Why did she marry him? I don’t get it! The more I hear, the more...” It’s freeing to say, “I need a savior.”*

*If the verdict of this moment is: “I didn’t do right,” it’s not a final judgment on my life. The final judgment is set. I’m free now to grow in Jesus Christ because of the security of what I know that final moment will be in Jesus. Amen?*

*I’m going to ask you to pray with me for a moment. I don’t want to single people out, but I want to encourage you: If you haven’t called on the name of Jesus to be saved, call on his name. Just privately, right where you are, begin to pray. Say, “Lord, save me. Jesus, I believe that you died for my sin. I want to put my faith in you. I want to trust in you and I’m asking you to save me.” We read it earlier, Romans 10:13: “All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Thank you, Lord.*