

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK FORTY-TWO: JESUS IS FOUND GUILTY

READING

1 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. 2 The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. 3 “Hail! King of the Jews!” they mocked, as they slapped him across the face. 4 Pilate went outside again and said to the people, “I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty.” 5 Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, “Look, here is the man!” 6 When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” “Take him yourselves and crucify him,” Pilate said. “I find him not guilty.” 7 The Jewish leaders replied, “By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God.” 8 When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. 9 He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave no answer. 10 “Why don’t you talk to me?” Pilate demanded. “Don’t you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?” 11 Then Jesus said, “You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.” 12 Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, “If you release this man, you are no ‘friend of Caesar.’ Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar.” 13 When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, Gabbatha). 14 It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, “Look, here is your king!” 15 “Away with him,” they yelled. “Away with him! Crucify him!” “What? Crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the leading priests shouted back. 16 Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. John 19:1-16 (NLT)

TEACHING

In the middle of this text, Jesus and Pilate have a conversation about power. Power is something everyone wants – power over others, power over themselves, and power over their circumstances. In this story, we see power at display in a few different ways.

- 1) There is the soldiers’ power. They use brute physical force to whip Jesus, inflicting terrible pain on him. This is power that the world recognizes and fears, but this power can’t change the human heart. You can’t overpower someone into loving you.
- 2) There is Pilate’s power. He has positional power because he has a title and he has authority to make decisions. But the power that comes from a title or a position doesn’t mean people respect you or want to be under your power.
- 3) Finally, there is God’s power. And it’s seen in this story in two different ways. Jesus says that Pilate would have no power if it wasn’t given to him “from above.” God rules over the activities of all humans and has the ultimate power. But God’s power is also seen in Jesus allowing himself to be punished and sentenced to death. Jesus laid down his power and gave his life for us. That’s real power. That is the kind of power that makes us love him and want to be led by him.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Who is the most powerful person you know? Why?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who uses their power to hurt Jesus?
- Who laid down his power to save us?

CHILDREN:

- In this story, how did the soldiers use their power?
- According to Jesus, where did Pilate's power come from?
- Why did Jesus lay down his power and what does it mean for you?

TEENAGERS:

- What are the three different examples of power in this text?
- How did the soldiers, Pilate and Jesus all use their power differently?
- What would it look like for you to "lay down power" to help others?

ADULTS:

- In what ways is the desire for power an issue for you? In your marriage, family or workplace?
- What would it look like for you to "lay down power" to help others?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you are a powerful God. You reign and rule over all things and I trust in your power. I know that your power doesn't mean I won't ever go through difficult times. But I also know that your power means I won't go through them alone and they will not last forever. Help me to use any power you give me to lift up the weak and not to crush them. Help me to speak up for the powerless by the power of your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

There is the subtext of political power in this story. When Pilate wants to release Jesus, the Jewish religious leaders say in verse 12, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.' Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

Pilate was the governor of a region of the Roman empire and he was under Caesar. One of his main responsibilities was to make sure there were no rebellions on his watch. Caesar was known to remove men from political positions if they couldn't control their people and one of the greatest fears was an insurrection led by a false king. The Jewish leaders knew that Pilate loved political power and that he wouldn't risk losing it. It's a powerful lesson: The power we think we have, often has us.