



Nov. 25, 2018 John 18: 33-37 & Dan. 7: 13-14

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Stone, Naomi. [Conscious Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Jesus Before Pilate](#)

[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

[Fr. Rolheiser](#) puts it this way: "Jesus, before Pilate, was free, but not emancipated. We, today, are emancipated, but not free. As we struggle for freedom, we might well contemplate that image of rare freedom, Jesus before Pilate, externally bound but internally free, telling the world that no human power can ultimately coerce the heart. However as we contemplate that image, we need to follow through on why Jesus was free in this deep way. Pilate had no power to take his life from him only because he had already given his life to his Father. Through obedience he became free, through submission to the God of heaven he escaped the power of the gods of earth. Too often today our notions of freedom are too adolescent to understand this. We are emotionally resistant to all notions of obedience, submission, another's will, and sometimes even to the very idea of Someone being above in such a way that puts us below. But until we give ourselves over in obedience to what is ultimate, higher, we will constantly find

ourselves at the mercy of lesser gods whose altars perennially demand human sacrifice."

John 18:33-37

33 **Pilate** 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. "It was **your people** and your **chief priests** who **handed you over** to me. What is it **you have done?**" 36 Jesus said, "My **kingdom** is not of **this world.** If it were, my **subjects** would **fight** to **prevent** my **arrest** by the **Jews.** 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.** 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."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Each person born into this world is to live their own truth. What/who helps you do this best?

PRAYER: Lord, I am attracted to your words and your teachings. My own "[truth detector](#)" resonates to your understanding of God and God's love. Yet so many voices want to drown out your words that I often have trouble hearing Yours. Help me as I stand before the judgment seat of truth to trust that you will guide me to where I need to be. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

PILATE: Pilate was between a rock and a hard place. He held his position on condition that he kept the "Jews" in line for Rome. This was especially difficult during the times of Jewish holy days when passions ran high.

If you were Pilate, what would you have done in this situation? How do the four gospels portray Pilate? See Mt. 27:11-25; Mk. 15:1-15; Lk. 23:1-4, 13-25;

PALACE: Kings live in palaces. Jesus will be accused of proclaiming himself a king. This is what will be hung on his cross as his 'crime'.

Try to imagine how Jesus felt as he was ushered into Pilate's presence. Is this where the disciples hoped to be when Jesus "comes into his kingdom"? Can you sense the irony here?

SUMMONED: To be summoned is to be called somewhere on another person's initiative because they can impose penalties if you do not come as they wish.

Have you ever been summoned to come someplace by someone who had the power to punish you if you did not come? What did that feel like? Have you ever summoned someone?

KING / KINGDOM: A king in this world had ultimate authority over all that lived in that kingdom. This usually takes the form of coercion by force.

In what ways did Pilate have anything to fear from Jesus? What kind of 'force' could Jesus exert?

JEWS: Jesus himself was a Jew. In John's gospel, the 'Jews' were not all the Jewish people, but those who held positions of authority. Pilate needs to be full of care when he questions Jesus about this because his own future is at stake here. *Can you think of situations where caution was not observed in stereotyping a people by a few of their members? Why do you think people fall prey to this form of thinking?*



(Christ Before Pilate: Pietro Lorenzetti (Siena c. 1280-1348)
The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art. NY. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Pub. 1982. Page 138.

OWN IDEA / OTHERS: Here we see Jesus probing for more information. Instead of answering Pilate's question, he questions Pilate. *What might have been different if Pilate had stopped to think through Jesus' question? Might that have enabled him to act instead of react to the pressures of the situation?*

YOUR PEOPLE/CHIEF PRIESTS: Pilate throws Jesus' question back like a spear. He misses the chance to receive the gift of insight that Jesus wanted him to have. *Do you think that Pilate's impossible position made it almost inevitable that he would be unable to see what Jesus wanted him to see? When you are holding on to power with a slender thread, are you equally apt to respond in this way?*

HANDED YOU OVER: His own people gave over Jesus to Pilate. He refused to resist by using the methods of "this world". *Why do you think Jesus permitted this to happen? If you had been one of the disciples, what would you have made of this?*

YOU HAVE DONE: Pilate asked Jesus what he has done to warrant being given over by "his own people"? Once again, Jesus gives Pilate a chance to see as he sees, and Pilate misses his opportunity. *How is Pilate's fear keeping him from the chance to really see what is right before his eyes? How does fear do that to you? Can you remember a time when you were 'blinded' by fear?*

OF THIS WORLD / ANOTHER PLACE: Pilate only has the here and now for his reality and Jesus knows that reality involves more than space and time. Jesus is willing to die rather than be confined to this space and time. This is the only way to reveal the way to eternal life. *Look back to Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk. 4:1-13 for Jesus' first experience of dealing with the limits of space and time. How might that experience prepared him for his encounter with Pilate here?*

SUBJECTS: This word in John appears 9 times and always refers to the temple police with this one exception. *What allusion might John be making by using this word here?*

FIGHT: To fight is to use force to get your way. *What is Jesus doing by refusing to use force? What is Jesus revealing about God by doing this?*

PREVENT: To prevent something is to go before something. In other translations the words *save me* were used. *Why do you think Jesus allowed himself to be handed over? Have you ever allowed something to happen because you would have had to betray your own truth in order to prevent this from happening? Can this help you understand Jesus' action?*

ARREST: To arrest something is to stop it. Jesus allowed the movement to establish him as an earthly king to be arrested. *Do you wish he had not done this? Is there still ways in which we want him to establish control by force in the world now? What examples of this can you give?*

FOR THIS I CAME: Now Jesus reveals the reason for the Incarnation. *Do you think Pilate understood his answer?*

TRUTH: Truth is something that can't be falsified. *Does the Resurrection reveal the truth Jesus is proclaiming for you?*

TESTIFY: To testify is to put your truth on trial. *Does making the end of the liturgical year give you an opportunity to test the truth of Jesus testimony?*

LISTEN: To listen is to let something you hear into your being. *Have you listened well to Mark's words this past year? If so, how have they helped you to accept Jesus' truth?*

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 18:37 // Jn. 8:47; Mt. 26:64;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Dan. 7:13-14; [Ps. 93: 1-2,5](#); Rev. 1: 5-8; Jn. 18: 33-37;
Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Sam. 23:1-7; [Ps. 132: 1-18](#); Rev. 1:4-8; Jn. 18: 33-37

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Shout your truth.

***Many will tell you to quit,
soften it,
be more careful.***

***But if you want to make even the slightest change,
do not listen to them.***

Keep shouting.

Shout louder.

That's what it means to be a witness."

Joan Chittister

"Once the truth has made its presence felt in a single soul, nothing can ever stop it from invading everything and setting fire to everything." Teilhard De Chardin (New York, March 1955)

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them. - Ida B. Wells-Barnett

The entire trial scene consists of seven smaller scenes, justified because the accusers would not enter the Praetorium due to their purification for the feast. So it was necessary for Pilate to shuttle between the scenes with Jesus inside and the Jews outside.

In the course of these interactions Pilate has two lengthier scenes in conversation with Jesus, which are not part of the other Gospels (18:33-38; 19:8-12). The first dialogue revolves around the charge "King of the Jews." This is the first we learn of the charge of kingship. The accusers have chosen this language to have a charge against Jesus that involves Roman interests—something that they hope will force Pilate to act. It allows Jesus the chance to tell Pilate that his kingdom is not from "this world." We understand this to be Pilate's world, as illustrated by Jesus noting he lacks followers rushing to spring him loose (18:36). His kingdom is not that kind. Instead, he comes to testify to the truth. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" (18:38). Pgs. 204-205. Beck, Robert R. *Jesus and His Enemies*

Speaking truth to power while adhering to realistic hope remains the only viable way to community flourishing in a culture of fear.
- Kenyatta R. Gilbert

Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.
- Dolores Huerta

The great mystics tend to recognize that Whoever God Is, he or she does not need our protection or perfect understanding. All our words, dogmas, and rituals are like children playing in a sandbox before Infinite Mystery and Wonderment. If anything is true, then it has always been true; and people who sincerely search will touch upon the same truth in every age and culture, while using different language, symbols, and rituals to point us in the same direction. The direction is always toward more love and union—in ever widening circles. Richard Rohr

Christians too can be caught up in networks of verbal violence through the internet and the various forums of digital communication. Even in Catholic media, limits can be overstepped, defamation and slander can become commonplace, and all ethical standards and respect for the good name of others can be abandoned. The result is a dangerous dichotomy, since things can be said there that would be unacceptable in public discourse, and people look to compensate for their own discontent by lashing out at others. It is striking that at times, in claiming to uphold the other commandments, they completely ignore the eighth, which forbids bearing false witness or lying, and ruthlessly vilify others. Here we see how the unguarded tongue, set on fire by hell, sets all things ablaze (cf. Jas 3:6). Pg. 115. [Pope Francis](#)

Big Truth was manifest in reality itself before it was ever written in books. All disciplines and religions are looking at reality from different angles, goals, assumptions, and vocabulary. If we are really convinced that we have the Big Truth, then we should also be able to trust that others will see it from their different angles—or it is not the Big Truth. Richard Rohr

"I am not afraid of the pen, or the scaffold, or the sword. I will tell the truth wherever I please." Mother Jones

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them. - Ida B. Wells

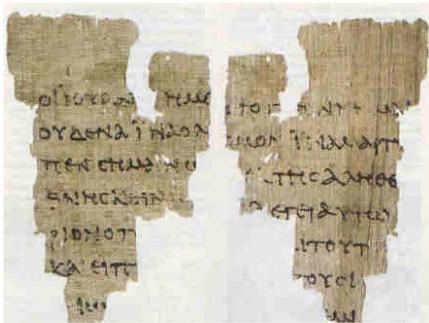
I cannot tell you any spiritual truth that deep within you don't know already. All I can do is remind you of what you have forgotten. Eckhart Tolle.

"It's hard to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding." Upton Sinclair

The demand issuing from personally experienced moments of truth is the new world we have inherited. The eye of the needle. If threaded, it will sew. Pg.81. Fuller, Ross: The Eye of the Needle. Parabola 12/07

Truth revealed must enter into the fires of testing, this is the only way that truth can be confirmed in the soul. - Anonymous

"Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals or groups (or tribes or states or nations or churches) that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth: especially about how to live, what to be and do-and that those who differ from them are not merely mistaken, but wicked or mad: and need restraining or suppressing. It is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you alone are right: have a magical eye which sees the truth: and that others cannot be right if they disagree." — Sir Isaiah Berlin, "Notes on Prejudice", The New York Review, October 18, 2001.



This small fragment of St. John's Gospel, less than nine centimeters high and containing on the one side part of verses 31-33, on the other of verses 37-38 of chapter xviii is one of the collection of Greek papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester. It was originally discovered in Egypt, and may come from the famous site of Oxyrhynchus (Behnesa), the ruined city in Upper Egypt where Grenfel and Hunt carried out some of the most startling and successful excavations in the history of archaeology; it may be remembered that among their finds of new fragments of Classical and Christian literature were the now familiar "Sayings of Jesus". The importance of this fragment is quite out of proportion to its size, since it may with some confidence be dated in the first half of the second century A.D., and thus ranks as the earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language. It provides us with invaluable evidence of the spread of Christianity in areas distant from the

land of its origin; it is particularly interesting to know that among the books read by the early Christians in Upper Egypt was St. John's Gospel, commonly regarded as one of the latest of the books of the New Testament. Like other early Christian works which have been found in Egypt, this Gospel was written in the form of a codex, i.e. book, not of a roll, the common vehicle for pagan literature of that time. The John Rylands Library, Deansgate Feb. 1990 issue of Bible Review on pages 7ff.

Truthfulness demands that I allow the other to learn what he needs to learn, that I do not conceal my own need to learn, and that I do not withdraw from the circle of learning in ironic detachment.' Alisdair MacIntyre

See Lev. 24:16 for the penalty for blasphemy

Civilization depends upon vigorous pursuit of the highest values by people who are intelligent enough to know that their values are qualified by their interests and corrupted by their prejudices." — Reinhold Niebuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion?*

Is this space and time all we really have? How do we get what we want and need in the here and now? These are the basic questions of this part of scripture. Jesus is inviting us to a deeper understanding of reality by refusing to be limited by space and time, just as he refused to be tempted in the desert at the beginning of his ministry. Pilate is being given a chance to go beyond the limits, and the fears that these limits impose. Even though Jesus is the one constrained by the powers that be of his day, Pilate, and all the others that have missed seeing what Jesus is all about, will condemn themselves to limits that obscures what eternal life is really all about. Now we move into the palace to witness the beginning of our liberation.

How might the rulers of this system quake if for a moment they thought that Christians truly meant to live defiantly according to their whispered petitions and strange, simple signs of bread and wine –those seditious words and acts which, in such contrast to the Devil's ways of doing things, invoke the doing of God's will upon the earth no less than high in heaven? Only because they doubt –with all too plausible excuse –our convictions and commitments, do the Pontius Pilate's of our present world pay bored regard, if any, to our prayerful pledges of allegiance to a kingdom not of this world Jn. 18:33ff, and our attribution of power, glory, and authority only to the crucified God. To be sure, the weak and wounded lamb whom Caesar slew, overthrew the Roman Empire; and at the end, his enemies destroyed, he shall reign forever and ever. Only rarely, though in God's providence not never, were the Caesars and the *Fuhrers*, the oligarchs and tyrants of the twentieth century, astonished at the willingness of that wounded lamb's disciples to challenge their injustices and wickedness, armed only with the weakness of the cross and grave, and with the power of prayer to tilt at the bulwarks of their despotism. Yet such is the constant calling of the prayerful, priestly church: to resist evil and division and promote the unity of Christ's just kingdom with strange gesticulations and quiet words attesting the lordship of the Crucified and Buried Lord. Lewis, Alan E. *Between Cross and Resurrection*. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001. Pg. 399.

As we make the journey, we discover that we do not name ourselves. Our name is a gift from God and others. It is only in human companionship that we discover the name that God already knows and that others help us to clarify and recognize. Jesus' personal conviction of who he was flowed over into the life of those who walked with him. When others find the message of Jesus too much for them, when they turn from Jesus in ways that people will when confronted with a person of integrity and conviction, Jesus turns to his friends and says to them, "What about you? Do you want to go away, too?".....Because of our reluctance to make the journey in self-discovery that Jesus made and our belief that because Jesus was God it was somehow different for him, we lose our truest touchstone. We lose the reference point in relation to which we understand the meaning of God's call to discover our name as God knows it and as others will come to cherish it.

Ripple, Paula. Called to be Friends. Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press. 1980. Pages 47-49.

Truth is a function not of objects or objectivity but of relationships. ...Such truth never gives itself to us absolutely: there is no full presence in science (objectivity), just as the kingdom of God will never be fully realized in religion.

Robert M. Geraci. Zygon 12.05 Pg. 955

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them. -Ida B. Wells

Can we see truth as not any 'thing' at all but indeed a way of living within the loving community of precious creatures called to be fully human by virtue of the divine image which we all bear? Then a notion of truth as correct or false or who is 'in' and who is 'out' can begin to fade. Truth then can be seen not so much as something that we 'own' but something that we belong to and actively participate in. Truth becomes a way of knowing that we belong to God and a way of directing our energy of love toward the fullness of belonging by giving ourselves to God, which, as the Body of Christ, means to give ourselves to each other.

Because the amazing fact is that truth alone will not set you free. Truthfulness will set you free. Ken Wilbur

There's an old story about a man who has just found the Truth being followed by the Devil. Someone sees this procession and asks the Devil, "Why are you, of all entities, following someone who has just found the Truth?" The Devil strokes his goatee, and replies, "He may have just found the Truth, but I'm going to help him organize it."

JN. . 18: In contrast to Matthew, John depicts no trial before Caiaphas, which, if any of the Gospel trial accounts is historical, is not possible to determine (cf. Mt 26.57-68). 28: Avoid ritual defilement, an ironic statement. "Defilement" could mean touching leaven during Passover or anything associated with a corpse. 31: Jews were not allowed to impose the death penalty; thus Jesus is crucified, a Roman penalty. 33: King of the Jews, anyone claiming kingship without Roman permission would have been regarded as a potential or actual insurrectionist. The ruler(s) of the Jewish territories owed their primary loyalty to Rome. 36: My kingdom is not from this world, in context, this is an argument against seeing Jesus as a political threat. 38: More irony: Pilate cannot see the truth in front of him. 39: This tradition has no external historical support (cf. Mt 27.15; Mk 15.6; Lk 23.17). 40: Barabbas could be translated "son of a [or the] father." Bandit, probably meaning a revolutionary rather than a thief. Pg. 191. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

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