

“Clashing Kingdoms”
John 19:1-16a
February 28, 2021
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

This morning we come to the second portion of Jesus’s trial before Pontius Pilate. Three weeks ago we read of Jesus’s trial before the Jewish chief priests. Then the chief priests brought Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. Last week we considered Pilate’s initial questioning of Jesus. It ended with Pilate declaring that he found no guilt in Jesus. And now we come to chapter nineteen.

With that in mind, please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

^{19:1} Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³ They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands. ⁴ 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.” ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” ⁶ 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.” ⁷ 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.” ⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ 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?” ¹¹ 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.”

¹² 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.” ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, your hands have made and fashioned us;
give us understanding that we may learn your commandments,
that we, your people, might rejoice together,
as we see the work that you are doing in each of us.
Let your steadfast love comfort us,
according to your promises.

Work now in our hearts, to conform them to your word,
that we may not be put to shame,
but might delight in you.
Teach us from your word now, we ask,
in Jesus's name. Amen
[Based on Psalm 119:73, 74, 76, 80]

Introduction

Why did everyone agree to kill Jesus?

As we look at the four gospels, we see in the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus a surprising coming together of groups that had historically hated each other.

Sadducees and Pharisees, Herod and Pilate, chief priests and the Roman governor, all pairs that had been at odds with each other, coming together here in agreement to kill Jesus.

Why?

And not just "Why?" in some vague spiritual sense – but "Why?" in concrete terms? Spiritual principles matter – but spiritual principles are expressed in concrete ways, responding to concrete realities. What, on the ground, led all these different people to agree to kill Jesus?

It has been pointed out recently that this is an aspect we sometimes fail to see. For example, as one writer puts it, most Jesus films fail to get this right. The chief priests and Pharisees show up as stock villains. Pilate is there, but we don't really understand his motivations. And when we see Jesus as he is presented, he doesn't seem like a threat to anything. He isn't "crucifiable" as one theologian puts it. "In the movies," another writes, "Jesus is a hippy peace-child, a delicate flower of a man, a dew-eyed first-century Jewish Gandhi. Why would anyone want to hurt Him? Maybe because He's so annoyingly precious; but that's not the story of the gospels." [Leithart]

In the gospels, Jesus was treated as presenting a real threat. But what exactly did he threaten? What did he threaten that made him crucifiable?

That question will be our starting point. And as we go from there, we will consider four things.

First, we will consider how Jesus threatens the claims of worldly kingdoms.

Second, we will consider how Jesus exposes the false promises of worldly kingdoms.

Third, we will consider how Jesus delivers us from the tyranny of worldly kingdoms.

And fourth and finally, we will consider how Jesus redeems our relationships to worldly kingdoms.

Jesus Threatens the Claims of Worldly Kingdoms

So first, we will consider how Jesus threatens the claims of worldly kingdoms.

It is this threat that makes Jesus crucifiable. But where do we see it? We actually get two pictures here of Jesus' threat to the claims of the kingdoms of this world. We see it in the life of Pilate, and we see it also in the life of the chief priests.

First, let's consider Pilate. And to do that it might be best to simply walk through the passage.

In verses one through three we are told of the flogging of Jesus. And then in verse four Pilate brings the beaten and battered Jesus out and declares that he thinks Jesus is innocent.

We need to understand some historical background here. There were actually a range of different types and severities of floggings in the Roman world. What seems most likely is that the flogging described here is the least severe form of beating – one that was often used as a warning to someone who was not really guilty of a serious crime but had caused some trouble. The effect is that Pilate is saying that he finds no guilt in Jesus, he has given him a warning in the form of this beating, and now he would like to release him. Only later on, after Jesus was sentenced, he would receive the much more severe beating that was associated with a capital sentence. [Sherwin-White, 27-28; Carson, 596-598]

But at this point, Pilate is seeking to end this matter. He has warned Jesus. He displays how harmless Jesus is, and now he wants to release him. [Carson, 598]

But the chief priests are not done. They know that the charge of sedition that they have brought requires death, and so that is what they call for. Pilate responds with a taunt – essentially disparaging them for coming to him for judgment, and then rejecting his judgment. [Carson, 598-599]

But then, in verse seven, things take a turn. The chief priests and officers say to Pilate: “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”

Then we read: “When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.”

Why is Pilate suddenly afraid? While it is possible that the chief priest's words brought about some superstitious fear in Pilate [Carson, 600], what seems more likely is that Pilate realizes that the situation has politically escalated for him.

“Son of God” meant something in Pilate's world. It meant Caesar. [Wright, *How God Became King*, 145]

Craig Evans has compiled some examples of this. Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor from 48 to 44 BC was referred to in numerous inscriptions as “god” and as “savior.” From there, it became the practice to refer to Caesar's successors as “savior,” “lord,” and “son of god.”

And so, for Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor from 30 BC to AD 14, inscriptions and references have been found that identify him as: “Caesar, son of god”, “Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god,” “Caesar, son of god, Emperor,” “Emperor Caesar, god from god,” “Emperor Caesar, son of God,” and so on.

And then there was Emperor Tiberius, whom Pilate served, and who was identified as “Emperor Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of god.” [Evans, lxxxii-lxxxiii]

When the chief priests say that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, that is what came to mind for Pilate ... and the chief priests knew it.

Pilate had thought he’d pretty much handled the issue of Jesus. He’d warned him, and was ready to release him. But now the chief priests are escalating their claims that Jesus is guilty of sedition against Caesar. And Pilate is concerned about the turn this is taking and the position it is putting him in.

Pilate takes Jesus back into his headquarters in verses nine and questions him again. At first Jesus won’t answer. Pilate reminds Jesus that he has authority over him.

And then Jesus speaks about authority. And he makes a striking claim. He does not deny that Pilate has authority. He does not even deny that Pilate has authority over him in that moment. But he tells Pilate that the authority Pilate has was given to him from One who is above him – from God himself.

Jesus, in other words, emphasizes that there is a higher authority over all of this – and it is the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God had authority even over the kingdom of Rome ... even over the kingdom of Caesar.

Jesus’s words lead Pilate to seek to release Jesus. It seems he was once again convinced that Jesus was not a threat, and he had no desire to be the pawn of the Jews who were supposed to be under *his* authority.

But then the Jews pull out their trump card. They say “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”

The phrase “friend of Caesar” may have been an official title, but even if it wasn’t, there was a real threat behind these words. [Carson, 607]

One commentator puts it like this – he writes: “Pilate had ample reason to fear [this] implicit threat. Tiberius Caesar was known to be quick to entertain suspicions against his subordinates, and swift to exact ruthless punishment. On earlier occasions the Jewish authorities had communicated their displeasure with Pilate to the Emperor; Pilate had no reason to think they would refrain from doing so in this case. What defense of himself could he possibly give to a somewhat paranoid ruler, against the charge that he had failed to convict and execute a man arraigned on well-substantiated charges of sedition – brought up on charges put forward by the Sanhedrin, no less, the highest court in the land and known to be less than enthusiastic about the Emperor’s rule? Whether or not ‘friend of Caesar’ was at this point a technical term, everyone knew that even the claim to be a king [...] signaled opposition to Caesar.” [Carson, 602]

In verse thirteen, Pilate knows they’ve trapped him politically. He has to do their bidding, or endanger his relationship to the kingdom of Caesar. He throws in a few more taunts against the Jews in verses fourteen and fifteen, but in the end, he caves and sentences Jesus to crucifixion. [Carson, 605-606]

How are we to understand Pilate in these actions?

Pilate is a man who is seeking to find security and success in a kingdom from this world: in this case the kingdom of Rome.

And the kingdom of Rome demanded that no other allegiance be placed over it. Caesar was a god, and no other power – spiritual or otherwise – was allowed to be placed over him.

This meant that any other authority – worldly or spiritual – had to be either underneath Caesar's rule, or in some small area of life that could never challenge Caesar's rule. In either case, Caesar was supreme.

And Pilate knew that. Pilate's goal was to have security and success within Caesar's kingdom. And so when Jesus came before Pilate and claimed to come from One who had authority over Pilate and even over Caesar, Pilate soon found himself in the midst of a clash of kingdoms. While Pilate saw no real threat in Jesus, he knew Jesus had made a claim that the kingdom of Caesar would not tolerate. And the chief priests knew it too.

Of course the chief priests were disingenuous in presenting Jesus as a violent political threat to Caesar. But they were right that there was a sense in which Jesus was a rival to Caesar. While Jesus honored the political role Caesar had been placed in, Jesus's claims also contradicted Caesar's claims to divine sovereignty. Jesus says plainly that another kingdom – the kingdom of God – reigns above the kingdom of Caesar.

When the chief priests push this clash to the right pitch, Pilate had a choice to make: He could accept Jesus's claim of being the true Son of God, of coming from One who was sovereign even over Pilate and Caesar ... or he could choose to keep his place in the kingdom of Caesar secure by ordering Jesus's execution.

For Pilate, there wasn't even a question. If your chief allegiance is to finding ultimate security or success in a kingdom of this world, then Jesus is a threat to you, because he insists that allegiance to him and to his Father outranks every other allegiance. And so Pilate orders the execution.

That is the pattern we see in Pilate.

We see something similar, but also a bit different, in the chief priests.

Jesus himself brings out this similarity and difference.

In the second half of verse eleven Jesus makes a distinction between Pilate's more responsive (or even passive) role in his execution, and the role of those who had been more active. While we might assume Jesus is speaking of Judas here, it actually fits better to read him as speaking of Caiaphas, and with that including all the chief priests who have actively handed him over. [Carson, 600-602]

Which should lead us to ask: What is it that motivates them? Why are they seeking to kill Jesus?

What we see is that they are not seeking security or success in another kingdom so much as they are seeking their own kingdom. And so Jesus, with his claims of being God's king for Israel, is not

just an obstacle to them, but he is a direct challenge to their aims. They are seeking, above all else, the autonomy of their own kingdom.

And doing that leads them in some strange directions. They claim allegiance to God – to Yahweh, the God of Israel. But here we find them rejecting the very king that Yahweh has sent them.

They claim to follow the Hebrew Scriptures that repeatedly assert that Israel's truest king is Yahweh himself, but then here, in a shocking repudiation of the Scriptures, they declare "We have no king but Caesar." [Carson, 606]

They pledge their loyalty to Caesar, but we know, and John knew as he wrote, that it would not be very long after this that these same Jewish leaders would violently rebel against Caesar. [Carson, 603]

The chief priests illustrate an important truth for us. When our primary allegiance is to our own autonomy, then our love for, or loyalty to, any other thing is always conditional and qualified. For the chief priests, any commitment could always be cancelled the moment it was an obstacle to their own kingdom – to their autonomy.

So they were committed to Yahweh until Yahweh sent them a king who wouldn't let them rule as they saw fit. They'd pledge their loyalty to Caesar when that served them in the moment, but that wouldn't keep them from rebellion later on. Ultimately, their loyalty lay nowhere but with themselves. Their own kingdom must be supreme.

If someone's chief allegiance is to their own autonomy (their own kingdom), as we see with the Jewish leaders, then Jesus is a threat, for he demanded chief allegiance for himself.

And, at the same time, if someone's chief allegiance is to finding success or security in the kingdoms of this world, as we see in Pilate, then Jesus is a threat to them as well, because he demands ultimate allegiance for himself.

And those patterns continued beyond this moment and into the life of the early church. The ancient world of the early church had a range of religions, and each one claimed supremacy in its own domain. You had household gods, and they were primary over family life. You had client cults for gods that offered success or security in different areas of life, and in those areas of life they were supreme. You had mystery religions that met your internal emotional or spiritual needs – and in those areas, they were supreme. And you had civil religions, including the worship of the emperor – and in public, civic life, they were supreme. Compartmentalization was key. Each kingdom had its own domain.

And then the Christians came onto the scene insisting that Jesus, and his kingdom, was supreme over *every* area of life, and that all powers must submit to him. Even after his ascent to heaven, Jesus remained a threat to those who sought success or security in the kingdoms from the world, or who primarily sought their own autonomous kingdom in this world.

And the same has continued to be true today – whether we follow the pattern of Pilate or the pattern of the chief priests.

First, Jesus confronts us when, like Pilate, we place our ultimate hope for success or security in any worldly kingdom, and exclude it from his claims.

And the first place we see that in our text itself is in the political realm.

Of course, Jesus's aims were not primarily political. But that's not because politics was above or outside of his claims, but because politics was just one of many kingdoms from this world that Jesus claimed dominion over. Just as it was true when Caesar claimed divine status, so it is true now when any political system or party tries to claim our primary allegiance.

The ministers here have highlighted the political dimension of life more often lately, I think.

Why is that?

It's not because our primary concern is who you vote for – though that is important. But if that were our primary concern, our comments the last few months are very poorly timed.

No – I know that my concern the last few months has been much more about how we view the kingdom of politics in relation to the kingdom of heaven.

Because the trend I am seeing, in the secular world, in the broader church, and among many of us is a pull towards the patterns we see in our text: a pull towards placing our allegiance to a political kingdom *above* or *outside of* our allegiance to the heavenly kingdom.

Now, even as I say that I'm *not* saying that political matters are not important. *They are*. I am a good neo-Calvinist – I believe that Jesus looks at every square inch of creation and says, "That is mine – that belongs to me." And that includes the entirety of the political realm. Christians should be involved in politics. Christians who are called to it should seek to serve in politics. Christians are called to engage with this area of life, not retreat from it.

And until Jesus comes back, Christians will disagree on significant aspects of politics. That's now what I'm concerned about either.

What I'm concerned about is the tendency to set our politics above or outside of the claims of the kingdom of heaven.

We see this when Christians break ecclesiastical fellowship with other Christians over political disagreements. We see this when Christians identify their political tribe as God's political tribe. We see this when Christians refuse to apply the commands and moral principles of the Bible to the character or the policies of their political tribe.

Each of those behaviors places our political life and our political kingdoms outside of the dominion of Jesus. And so each one is a way of walking in the footprints of Pilate – of refusing to let Jesus make claims over Caesar.

And there are people on *every side* of the political spectrum who are falling into those patterns. And they are patterns of idolatry. And they're not just out there in the world ... but they are here, in the Church ... and here, in our own hearts.

And my job, as your minister, is to identify idolatry in whatever form it threatens us, and call it out. Of course we struggle with many idols. But so long as one of them is an idolatry of the political realm, it will be my job to name it. Any attempt to place our politics beyond of the dominion of Jesus – above or outside of his critique – is to treat Jesus not as the supreme king of heaven, but as just one more pagan god, with his own prescribed domain.

But, of course, while that tendency to limit Jesus's authority from politics is seen in our text, it is hardly the only place where we see that pattern in our lives. We see it in so many other places. Each of us have our own area – our own worldly kingdom – that we are often so anxious to exclude from Jesus's claims. What is it for you?

For some of us it's our career. We may be Christians. We may love Jesus. But he doesn't really have a place when it comes to our career. That's a separate compartment of our lives, and he needs to mostly just get out of the way. He doesn't get to dictate what our career is *for*. He doesn't get to put limits on the claims of our career in our life. He doesn't get to dictate how we conduct ourselves on the job. Jesus's ideals may be great in the spiritual realm of life ... but in the real world things are different. Pilate understood that. And so if anyone, *including Jesus*, challenge our success or security in the kingdom of our workplace, then they become a threat ... and they have to go.

Or maybe for you the area of life you seek to wall off from Jesus is your money. The kingdom of heaven can claim many things – but not your money, not the kingdom of wealth. Or maybe for you it's your family. Or your social standing.

Which kingdoms of this world do you seek success and security in, to such an extent that no other kingdom can claim to have dominion over that area of life – not even the kingdom of heaven ... not even the king Jesus?

Or maybe you're less like Pilate, and more like the chief priests. Maybe you're not about success in some other kingdom, but you're about success in your own kingdom. You're about your own autonomy.

This is not a new struggle. The Apostle Paul saw it. In Romans 14 and First Corinthians 8-10 he had to address those who valued their own autonomy – their own right to do as they saw best – above the spiritual wellbeing of their brothers and sisters in Christ. And we are constantly tempted to do the same thing today.

And sometimes it's even more stark than that. Sometimes it's not our fellow Christians we will not give up our rights for, but Jesus himself. We are fine with him when he helps us ... we are fine with him when he comforts or encourages us. But when he tells us to do something we don't want to do, or to stop seeking something we want ... then we feel that tension in our chest ... and we are ready to assert ourselves before the very one we claim is the king of the universe. And we start finding ways to explain away his commands to us – to push him aside – because he dared interfere with our freedom and autonomy.

Because if we are going to be autonomous, if we are to serve our kingdom first – then our loyalty to any other kingdom and any other thing must be tentative and conditional. We see that in the chief priests. Every commitment you make must be thin ... because no commitment can be allowed to threaten your autonomy: not your promises, not your responsibilities, not your marriage, not your children, not your friendships, not your ethics, not the institutions you commit yourself to.

Everything else must be held loosely – you must be ready to discard or sacrifice it at the altar of your autonomy. Even Jesus. The chief priests understood that.

Where do you see a supreme allegiance in your life to something other than the kingdom of heaven – whether it is to success and security in a kingdom of this world, or a commitment to a kingdom of your own – where do you see that pattern?

And when you see that do you see how Jesus stands in contradiction of that ultimate allegiance? Do you see how Jesus stands against it? Do you see how Jesus threatens it?

That is the first thing we see in our text: Jesus threatens the claims of worldly kingdoms.

Jesus Exposes the False Promises of Worldly Kingdoms

The second thing we see is that Jesus exposes the false promises of worldly kingdoms.

And he doesn't always do this right away ... but he always does it eventually. And in some sense, he does it subtly here.

In these verses we don't see any real consequences for Pilate or the chief priests. But John, writing many years later, knows what has happened to both since these events, and on some level, he expects us to as well.

The most obvious outcome would be that of the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem. They have sought the kingdom of their own autonomy above all else ... what did that eventually get them?

Well ... it eventually got them death, destruction, and servitude. They rebelled against Rome in AD 70, and they were crushed, and Jerusalem was sacked, and the temple was burned to the ground. Their quest for autonomy demanded they sacrifice everything, and in return, it gave them nothing.

What about Pilate? He was willing to sacrifice Jesus, or whatever else he needed to, in order to find security and success in the worldly kingdom of Caesar. So, where does that get him?

In the end, it got him deposed, and then, likely, put to death. Just a few years after he ordered the crucifixion of Jesus, Pilate was removed from his position and ordered to come to Rome to stand trial for accusations brought against him by the Jews, who claimed he had violently opposed them in the interests of Rome. [Wheaton, 929]

While there is not certainty regarding his fate, Eusebius, a church historian writing in the fourth century, records that Pilate was ordered to take his own life by the very authorities of Rome that he had served. [Wheaton, 929; Eusebius II.7]

In his sovereignty over history, God exposed the false promises of worldly kingdoms.

He revealed that the kingdoms of this world are tyrants. They make ultimate demands of us, but they never deliver what they promise.

And we see this in the world still today. Men and women seek their own autonomy only to end up slaves to their own desires or without anything worth living for. Men and women put some area of life over everything else – they sacrifice everything to their career, their wealth, or something else – only to be abandoned by those worldly kingdoms in the end.

Of course, that doesn't always come in this life. But it does come eventually in the next one.

You can serve the kingdom of your own autonomy, and even if you hold onto it until your last breath, at the moment of death, your autonomy dies as well. No worldly power can protect you from death, or what follows.

Similarly, no security or success in the kingdoms of this world can travel with you to the next life. They all abandon you in the end.

Kingdoms from this world demand ultimate allegiance, and they promise ultimate things. But they always fall short. They always fail to deliver. They always abandon us eventually. Even if we've given them everything they asked for.

That's the second thing we see here: Jesus exposes the false promises of worldly kingdoms.

Jesus Delivers Us from the Tyranny of Worldly Kingdoms

Third, we see that Jesus delivers us from the tyranny of worldly kingdoms. And that is probably the most important thing for us to see – the thing we must be careful not to miss, lest we miss the forest for the trees.

Jesus, here, is going to the cross. Why is that?

Jesus, in this text, is not just a different king. He is a different kind of king altogether.

Every other king – every king living in the pattern of this world – demands much, and then ultimately fails to deliver what he promises. But Jesus comes, and the first thing he does is *he* gives everything. Before anyone has given him anything, Jesus, the King of the kingdom of heaven, gives himself completely for those who would follow him. He gives himself so that they might be delivered from the tyrannical kingdoms of this world.

He does it to free them from sin, and from the world, and from the devil. He does it to wipe away their sin. He does it to secure for them a place in the heavenly kingdom that can never be lost. Jesus goes to the cross to give us all that we need. And *then* he calls us to follow him and give him our loyalty. Jesus does not ask us to prove our loyalty through sacrifice before he will bless us, but he first proves his loyalty through sacrifice and then calls us to follow him.

And it is there that his glory lies. It is there that we see how he is different from every other king. It is there that we see why he can be trusted with our ultimate loyalty in a way that no worldly kingdom can be.

Third, we see that Jesus delivers us from the tyranny of worldly kingdoms.

Jesus Redeems Our Relationships to Worldly Kingdoms

Fourth and finally, Jesus redeems our relationships to worldly kingdoms.

Jesus didn't sever his followers' relationships to worldly kingdoms, but he redeemed them. And that distinction is important. Because God made this world good, and it was designed to be engaged in, in subjection to him.

And so, the early Christians didn't become militant revolutionaries against Caesar. They refused to worship Caesar as a god. But they also confessed loyalty to Caesar, serving him as one placed in authority by and under God.

Early Christians didn't abandon a world which had a god for every aspect of life, but they instead lived out every aspect of life as being under the lordship of Jesus. They didn't abandon their families, but lived their family life under the ultimate kingship of Jesus, instead of under their former household gods. They didn't abandon their work or their trades, but they performed their work for the glory of Jesus, not in subjection to the gods of their trade. And so on.

Jesus rescues us from the tyranny of this world and then redeems our relationship to it. He reorders your allegiances and makes you better at engaging the world, because every aspect of this world was meant to be engaged with under his dominion.

Jesus redeems our relationships to the kingdoms of this world.

Conclusion

In the events of our text this morning, Jesus revealed something that had been lurking under the surface: he revealed Pilate's chief loyalties and the chief loyalties of the Jewish priests and officials.

He often does the same in our lives.

In some ways he has done that in some stark ways this past year. I know I have learned a lot about myself this year. What have you learned about yourself?

How, in the events and the challenges of the past year, has Jesus revealed his work in you ... and how also has he revealed your mis-ordered loyalties?

What problematic relationships to the kingdoms of this world has he revealed in your heart ... and if your answer is none ... then is that because he hasn't revealed it, or because you haven't been willing to see it?

It's easy to see such things in others. It's easy for us this morning to see it in Pilate and the chief priests. But that does us no good if we will not see what God would expose in us.

Pilate and the chief priests were blind to the state of their own hearts. And it led to their destruction.

Brothers and sisters, let us not be like them. Let us be willing to look at what the Lord has exposed in our hearts. Let us *ask* him to reveal it to us. Let us see where the loyalties of our hearts are mis-ordered, and let us be honest about where such loyalties will lead us. And then, let us turn to the cross of Christ, and seek deliverance from him, that he might forgive us, release us from our spiritual slavery, and then redeem our relationship to this world, so that we might serve God, in God's creation, for God's glory.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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