

**John 18: 28 - 40; “The King of the Jews”, the 2nd Easter Sermon
in this series- Delivered on March 16th, 2008, by Pastor
Paul Rendall in the Morning Worship Service.**

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ began before His being crucified on the cross of Calvary. We can say in a real sense that Jesus suffered from His birth, the indignities which are not befitting a King. Kings are born to be honored and especially when they are honorable men. But the King of glory was born in a stable, and not long after that He was hunted for by Herod, because wise men from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is He who has been born the King of the Jews?” The Kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ has often been considered an intrusion in both the political and the personal realm of men throughout all generations since He was born. The Lord of glory was welcomed by wise men and shepherds as He made His entrance into this world. And he was greeted by a great multitude of disciples 5 days before the Passover; greeted with the waving of palm branches and the acclamations of “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel.” This is what many churches are celebrating this morning. But just a few days later He lay in the grave, “His visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,” as it says in Isaiah 52: 14. Where is the honor of the Lord Jesus?

It would seem to me that many people would like to think of Jesus in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as a King, and leave Him there in their minds. They would like to think that they can welcome the Lord Jesus into their hearts and into their lives without His having to suffer for them. They admire Him as they behold Him in His humility, riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey. But do they follow Him on further, to the place where the Jewish leaders and Pilate take away His dignity and trample it in the dust? I would like to ask you this morning, do you think of Jesus as the One who was misrepresented, maligned and degraded by sufferings of the worst sort, in order that you could be saved? Do you think of what it cost the Lord Jesus to come and rule in your heart? Do you own Him in these sufferings, the sufferings on your behalf, to establish His Kingship in your heart?

Jesus, in order to establish His kingdom of grace and truth in our hearts, had to suffer much in body and spirit from leaders in the Jewish church, as well as from Pilate the governor. And these sufferings teach us much about why men need to be saved, and how we can show our allegiance to Jesus Christ the King of Kings, in the way that we promote His Kingdom. So, I would like to give you 4 Lessons from the sufferings of Christ this morning, lessons which I hope will teach us what establishing His Kingship cost, and what it means to us personally.

1st- These sufferings of King Jesus teach us that the hearts of men are hard enough to hold to their own ceremonial religion with exactness, while they reject Christ’s claims over their lives. (Verses 28-32)

It is truly an amazing example of the depravity of men’s hearts that is given to us in verse 28. “Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, in order that they might eat the Passover. The Praetorium was the governor’s residence and these Jewish leaders were not going to defile themselves by coming into contact with Pilate and his heathen soldiers lest they not be able to eat the Passover feast later that day. This was a Passover feast that came a little later than the main Passover

Supper. They come to Pilate's residence early, some say 3-5 o'clock in the morning, some a little later. They are afraid to enter lest they become ceremonially unclean, but they are unafraid to bring Jesus, the Son of God, the fulfillment of all their Old Testament types and shadows, to the place where He will be cruelly and unjustly tried and killed. These men are very particular indeed about their ceremonial duty and yet very careless about the weightier matters of the law; justice, mercy, and faith. They want to think themselves very spiritual for their separation from ceremonial defilement but do not mind the blood of the Son of God upon their hands. J.C. Ryle says in his Expository Thoughts, "The conscience of unconverted men is a very curious part of their moral nature. While in some cases it becomes hardened, seared and dead, until it feels nothing, in others it becomes morbidly scrupulous about the lesser matters of religion. It is no uncommon thing to find people excessively particular about the observance of trifling forms and outward ceremonies, while they are the slaves of degrading sins and detestable immoralities. Robbers and murderers in some countries are extremely strict about confession, and absolution, and prayers to the saints. Fasting and self-imposed austerities in Lent, are often followed by excess of worldliness when Lent is over. There is but one step from Lent to Carnival." A little later he says, "Let us pray that our consciences may always be enlightened by the Holy Spirit and that we may always be kept from a one-sided Christianity. A religion that makes a man neglect the weightier matters of daily holiness and separation from the world, and concentrate his whole attention on forms, sacraments, ceremonies, and public services, is, to say the least, very suspicious. It may be accompanied by immense zeal and show of earnestness, but it is not sound in the sight of God. The very Jews who thirsted for Christ's blood were the Jews who feared the defilement of a Roman judgment hall, and made much ado about keeping the Passover! Let their conduct be a beacon to Christians as long as the world stands."

I hope that each of us realizes this morning that many people in their zeal for their religious ceremonies have nothing of true religion in them and yet think of themselves as true Jews or Christians. When you say that you are saved by Baptism, infant or otherwise; what are you saying? You are saying that you must have something religious besides the merits of Jesus Christ, something besides the grace of Jesus Christ, something besides the person of Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Be very careful about putting the ordinance of Baptism or the Lord's Supper above Christ Himself as though you obtain Christ or salvation through that means. It is getting the cart before the horse and you will not have salvation. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5: 12) It does not say, he who has the sacraments has eternal life, or he who goes through ceremonies has eternal life. It says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5: 13) It is faith in Jesus Christ, who He is, and what He has done in righteously keeping God's law and sacrificially dying for your sins that saves you. It is a living faith, a true faith; a receiving of Christ, His work and His Word that saves the soul. It is not a ceremony or being scrupulous about religious rituals. It is for errors and sins like this that Jesus had to die. The errors of these religious men were sinful errors, their reasoning was sinful reasoning. These men were saying that it was not lawful for them to put anyone to death and yet they hypocritically would have Pilate put Jesus to death. And they thought more of their ceremonial religion than they did the great gift of

their Messiah.

Ask yourself, is this the kind of religion that I have? If you believe in this kind of religion it will be necessary for you to repent of it, and stop trusting in ceremonies if you want to be saved. May you repent of these dead works such as celebrating the Passover if you are Jewish, infant Baptism, Baptismal regeneration and the Mass, and come to Christ. His Person and His sufferings, no man needs to manufacture in a wafer; they are finished, they are all accomplished on behalf of sinners. You have only to believe to receive them. An infant cannot believe, and he cannot take communion with any understanding. No ceremony will change his heart. But God can apply the blood and righteousness of Christ where no man can, to those who cannot reason or exercise faith. We leave it with Him. We do not create ceremonies and hold to them in order to be saved, while we have anger and murder in our hearts because God will not accept it from us. We cannot reject faith in Jesus Christ alone, and conversion, because we would like some man-made way or a ceremony.

2ndly- These sufferings of King Jesus teach us that He is more than mildly concerned with how each person views His Kingship. (Verses 32 -35)

We see here that Pilate was a man who really wanted to separate himself from, and distinguish himself from the Jews. He was a Roman. He doesn't really want to involve himself in their religious concerns. He is interested in facts. He wants to know from them, what accusation they bring against Jesus. They tell him that they would not have delivered Jesus to him if Jesus were not an evildoer. This is not a straightforward answer, and Pilate knows it. So he says to them that they ought to take Jesus and judge Him themselves according to their law. They say that it is not lawful for them to put anyone to death, which was true because they were under Roman rule. They had tried to stone Him at certain points (John 8: 59 and 10: 31) and to throw Him down a cliff at another. (Luke 4: 29) Implied in their answer is the notion that Jesus had done something which was worthy of death. Their saying this, John says, was the fulfillment of how Jesus Himself said that He would die. In John 12: 32 Jesus is saying that He would be lifted up from the earth, in crucifixion. This is how God would have Jesus to die, indeed, this is the only way that He would have Jesus to die. In Luke 23: 2 the accusation is brought this way by the Jewish leaders, "We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." Pilate decided to focus his attention on the most serious charge; of Jesus' saying that He was a King. "Are you the King of the Jews?", he says to Jesus. Jesus gives him an answer which we would not expect. "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Jesus is very concerned that Pilate understand what kind of a King that He is. If he had answered, "Yes," right away, Pilate would have taken it to mean what the Jewish leaders wanted it to mean in this case; that Jesus was a politically dangerous man. If He had said, "No," then He would not have told Pilate the truth about Himself and His Kingship. He asks Pilate this question in order to clarify, but also to put this whole matter on the right footing. Jesus is a King. And God has appointed Him a Mediatorial kingdom. Jesus has always been a King in the sense of His Divine Nature. Psalm 29: 10 says, "The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever." God has appointed Jesus Christ, the God-man, to judge the world. All judgment has been given to Him, in order that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father. He would have each and every man respond personally to His being a King. He would have this of Pilate, especially, at that hour. He would have it of you,

especially, at this hour. Without grace at work in our hearts, we will respond the same way that Pilate did. He wanted to separate the religious implications of Jesus' Kingship from the personal decisions of his position as governor. "Am I a Jew," he asks Jesus? "Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have you done?" This is often how we are when we do not want Jesus to be King over us. We shift the conversation and our attention to what is wrong with Christ, or Christianity, or the Bible, or Christians. Jesus is giving Pilate the most wonderful opportunity in his lifetime to know the meaning of his life and how he can know the truth about salvation and eternal life, and he rejects it. What will you do my friends with Christ who is the King?

3rdly- These sufferings of King Jesus teach us that setting up a spiritual rule in the hearts of men is not brought about by political rule or military force.

(Verse 36)

Pilate's question, "What have you done," was not answered by Jesus, by His saying that He had done nothing to deserve this. It was true that Jesus was not personally guilty of any sin. But Jesus was on a mission, and He will explain to Pilate the nature of that mission. He says, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered over to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Jesus' servants are not fighting for Him in any political sense. He, however has fought for them in every real spiritual sense. He has done battle with sin and Satan and the World and has overcome them all for us who believe in Him. Pilate asks what has Jesus done? We cry out, "Nothing wrong, everything right; what has he not done in order to bring us out of our sin and into the presence of God?"

Pilate and the Roman government have nothing to fear from His being a political king with earthly political ambitions. He was not perverting the nation, He was not advocating tax evasion, and His Kingdom's advance was not in order to conquer territory or exercising earthly rule. His kingdom advances into people's hearts and conquers their sins, and changes their allegiance spiritually. This makes Christians the best kind of citizens. Having been brought out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light, they promote everything that is good, and true, and righteous. This is not a kingdom whose origin is upon the earth or from men's doings and strivings, it is from God. Christians render to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that belong to God. Christ's Kingship comes at God's appointment, but it does not do violence to any earthly king's legitimate right to rule, but it does establish by grace, the authority of God in the realm of men by the force of truth exercising itself upon the minds, the hearts and the consciences of men. This Kingdom's advance through her King Jesus is opposed by these religious men and by Pilate because they do not really want this man, or God either, to reign over them. They are going to see to it that their own ideas of religion and life are established even if they have to misrepresent and kill God's Son to do it. But Christ is going to see to it that the kingdom of heaven comes to this earth!

4thly- This leads me finally to say that these sufferings of King Jesus teach us that everyone who would know the truth about God, salvation, and how to live godly, must come to Jesus, the King of Truth, for it. (Verses 37-42)

Pilate doesn't understand Jesus' spiritual Kingship and Kingdom, where it is from and so he says to Jesus, "Are you a king then?" Now Jesus is able to tell him straight out, "You say rightly that I am a King. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I

came into the World, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. Jesus came into this world that He should bear witness to the truth. This should tell us all that there is such a thing as “the truth.” There is objective spiritual truth and Jesus’ primary reason for being born and coming into this world was to bear witness to it. All truth is that which originates with God first and then is revealed and taught to man. It does not originate with men as philosophers, but with God who created all things. All things were created through Jesus Christ, the Word, and therefore their definition and reason for existence originate from Him. Jesus says that He is the truth in John 14: 6, not simply that He is a witness to the truth. Since truth originates from God coming to us through Jesus Christ, then all of how we conceive this physical life and existence and universe must be subservient to the definitions that God has given each person, each thing, each idea, each conclusion that we make. This is what it means when Jesus says, “Everyone who is of the truth, hears My voice.” To be of the truth means that you have consciously submitted your definitions of God, salvation, and how we should live, to the definitions which God has made by His revealed Word. Jesus is that Word personified. The Bible is that Word in written form, this document being brought together in 66 books, with the Holy Spirit coordinating and superintending its writing by the various authors. Christ is in every portion of it speaking of Himself in types and shadows in the Old Testament and in parables and sayings in the New. He speaks the truth with His life and actions. He speaks the truth in His sufferings and death. Everyone who would come to know God and everyone who says that they know God submits to hearing the voice of Jesus Christ speaking to define all things pertaining to life and godliness, all the things which He has commanded. This is how a true Christian thinks and lives and concludes. He is not His own, He was bought with a price. It was the precious blood of Christ who suffered in the way we have described here in this hour, so that you might be saved. Pilate concluded this interview with Jesus by saying, “What is truth?” He thought that it was something that could not be objectively established. But the Truth personified was standing right before Him, ready to suffer, bleed, and die at his hands that day. And he would talk once more with Jesus before He died. We will look at that this afternoon.