

“The King’s Coronation” John 19:1-16 Shane Hatfield 6/6/21

We are continuing our study in John tonight. Turn your Bibles to John 19. We’re going to look at verses 1 through 16. We’ve been looking at the glorious truths that John left for us in these final chapters. This glorious truth that Jesus is the true King who died and rose for us. Over the last few weeks, we started with His Jewish trial with Annas the high priest, and then we went through His Roman trial with Pilate, and now we’re going to finish that Roman trial. This is the second part of His trial where Pilate is going to bring Jesus out and crown Him. This is the King’s coronation. It is a bloody coronation. It is a painful coronation. It is a humiliating coronation. But it is, nonetheless, the coronation of the Lord of heaven and earth, and so we’re going to read that together. Hear God’s word from John 19:1-16:

“¹Then 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.”

John recorded these words that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ and in Him have life. Let’s pray that God would help us find life in these words now.

You might think that for sermon preparation pastors spend hours involved in grueling translations of Greek and Hebrew, tedious readings of scholarly commentaries with lots of dust on them and endless writing, memorizing, writing, and rehearsing. Maybe sermon prep looks like that for some pastors. I do a little bit of that, except for translating Greek and Hebrew; I don’t do any of that. I read people who can actually translate Greek and Hebrew. I do a little bit of that, but what I do a lot of in my sermon prep is walk my dog. I’ll take a passage like this and I’ll read over it several times, I might even write out some verses on a card, and I’ll take my dog

and we'll go for a walk and I'll just meditate on the passage. I really try to soak into it and listen to it and let God speak to me through that passage. This week I was reading this passage as I was walking my dog around the neighborhood and I was just struck by the violence of it. It is violent. It is horrific. What Jesus undergoes is a terrible, humiliating, excruciating death that words cannot even describe. It is violent. At the same time, I am thinking about this passage, and the violence of this passage, I'm walking my dog down the street, and it is perfect. Just as perfect as it could be. It had just rained that morning, so it was nice and cool, and I could feel this breeze on my face and the birds were out and they were chirping, and the sun was out a little bit, so you had the warmth of the sun with the cool breeze and I've got my dog with me who just loves me, most of the time. The most violent part of my walks are when my dog sees a squirrel and he tries to just go after that squirrel, but he can't, because he's on the leash, and even if I let him go, he would never catch the squirrel anyway. He would just run to the tree and the squirrel would run up the tree and so he wouldn't catch him. There's basically no violence, right?

So, as I'm taking my walk, I'm meditating on this passage, and this thought hits me like, "Why do we still need the crucifixion?" Life is good! Life is perfect! Life is peaceful! Right? Look at this! Why do we need such a violent, terrible passage? And I remembered: life is not always peaceful like this. In fact, oftentimes it's not. And it's not, because inside each and every one of these homes is a heart, and inside that heart there is a war going on for the throne of that heart, the throne, the ruler of that heart. Who will be the ruler of every heart in every home in this peaceful neighborhood? And the question that is raging is: Who is the king? Who is the king of your heart? And as I read this passage, that to me is the question that this passage is asking us. Who is your king? Who is the king on the throne of your heart? So, that's the question that I want to try to answer tonight. In this passage, we're going to see three different kings: we're going to see that Pilate has a king, the Jews have a king, neither of which are Jesus, and God has a King. As we study that, I want you to answer, who is your king? And I pray that we're going to see that God's King is the king that we want and need to sit on the throne of our hearts. Young listeners, you can listen for three things: a basketball star, a powerful king, and a humble king.

The first one we're going to look at is Pilate's king. So, Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. He pronounced Him innocent three times. He also knew that Jesus was dangerous. One of the other gospels tells us that his wife had a dream with Jesus in it, and she came to him and said, 'Have nothing to do with this man. He is a righteous man and I have had a bad dream because of Him.' He also knew that Jesus was special. So, after the chief priests had said, 'He has made Himself God.' Pilate goes back and He asks Jesus where He came from, and that's because Pilate, like most Greeks, believed in demigods. They believed that humans could be elevated to some god-like status, so he's literally thinking, 'Oh my. I have a god on my hands. I might have a god in front of me!' And he's probably heard all of the stories about Jesus and now he's got the priests saying He's making Himself God and so, now he's got a god right in front of him, and he wants to know, 'Where did you come from?'

Pilate knew all these things about Jesus, and yet, he still executed Him! Why? Pilate had another king sitting on the throne of his heart. Who was it? Well, I think the answer lies in two places. I think first, it lies here, when the people say, "If you let this man go, you are not a friend of Caesar's." So, a friend of Caesar's was an honorific title that you could earn back in that time, but you had to do something special to get it. There was a man named Sejanus. Pilate was a

friend of Sejanus' and Sejanus had bestowed on him this honorific title that he was Caesar's friend. Well, Sejanus had recently been removed in rebellion and him and all his buddies had been executed. So, when Pilate hears this, he could be thinking, 'Oh my. If this gets back to Caesar that I've got this rebel and I've let him go, then they're going to find out that I'm no friend of Caesar's and I'm going to be a goner.' So, letting Jesus go would have been political and maybe physical suicide for him. The other clue, I think, is this: one of the other Biblical accounts tells us that Pilate knew he was getting nowhere with this trial, he knew the people were about to riot, and so he decided to satisfy the people and give them Jesus.

I think Pilate had two kings that were sitting on the throne of his heart that caused him to give Jesus over, even though he knew He was innocent, and the first one I think is his work. Work was sitting on the throne of his heart. He had probably worked his entire career to get to this point, and he thought, 'If I let this guy go, I'm going to lose it all right now.' We can sympathize with that, right? Work is a place where we get our identity, our sense of purpose, and not to mention money and power in our lives. Work is important to us. Secondly, I think the other thing that was sitting on the throne of his heart, and this is probably deeper, is this: that Pilate, I'm guessing, I don't know Pilate's heart, but Pilate looks like a people pleaser to me. It looks like he is a people pleaser. On the one hand, he is trying to please Caesar because that's what his job is and that's how he gets power and fame, and on the other hand, he's got these people that want to execute this rabbi, and so he's got to find a way to please all these people and the only way he can do that is to give an innocent man over to death. So, that's what he does. He's a people pleaser. Now, a people pleaser is different than a people server, I want to make that distinction, right? It's good for us to serve people. A people pleaser is someone who does everything they can just to placate people, even if it's harmful for them. A servant does what is best for the people, so sometimes to serve people you have to say no, and sometimes you say yes. A people pleaser just gives people whatever they want.

I think, like Pilate, many of us struggle with people pleasing. The opinions of others sit on the throne of our heart. Think about it: whose voice is the loudest voice in your head? When you're in a moment of temptation, or you're in a moment of trial, whose voice do you hear? That voice is the person, that is sitting, in that moment, on the throne of your heart, and you're being tempted to listen to and follow. I think that voice can be approving you or it can be condemning you. It could be work, it could be approval for Pilate, but I think there's a crosshair problem where both those things cross and I would say our work is where a lot of us try to get our approval and it's where we're trying to get affirmation. We tend to think that most of us base our decision and beliefs solely on intellect. But what we probably don't want to admit is that opinions carry a lot more weight than we want to admit.

A few years ago, Malcolm Gladwell did a podcast called "The Big Man Can't Shoot." It's on revisionist history. It's pretty fascinating. He talks about a famous basketball star called Wilke Chamberlain. Wilke Chamberlain is one of the greatest basketball players of all time. Wilke Chamberlain was a great basketball player, but a terrible free throw shooter. His career free throw percentage was 51%. Well, at one point in his career, Wilke Chamberlain decided he was going to shoot free throws underhanded granny style. So, he literally is an NBA basketball player, one of the greatest of all time, shooting free throws like this. In fact, in the game when he scored 100 points, maybe the greatest basketball game of all time, what people don't know is he

shot his free throws underhanded and made 28 of 32 free throws that night. That's like 87%. So, a career 50% free throw shooter shot 87% for one night and scored 100 points! Right after that game he went back to how he shot before. Why would he quit shooting free throws underhanded and go back to being a 50% free throw shooter? Later in his career he was interviewed, and he said that he stopped shooting free throws underhanded because it looked silly and he thought people would think he was a sissy even though it was wrong.

In Gladwell's fashion, he uses this story, and he goes and looks at all this research, and he shows that for us to change our beliefs, there is a threshold that we have to get over and there is a threshold of change that has to take place. That threshold doesn't just require information, it requires approval, and if we think that we will not get approval and affirmation for making this change, then we won't do it. Wilke Chamberlain literally could have been unstoppable on the basketball court, and he wouldn't change because he didn't want to look silly. How many of us in our lives will conform our beliefs or change our beliefs about Jesus, about our life, about our faith, based on the opinions of others? Maybe you're here tonight, and you're considering becoming a Christian, but you're thinking about all the voices of negativity in your life that will criticize you and rebuke you and condemn you, and so, you won't let Jesus have the throne of your life. Or maybe, you're a Christian, like me, and you struggle with approval day in and day out and you want to make everybody happy. You want to be liked and loved by everybody, and every decision feels like this turning point in your life where people will hate you if you make one decision or the other. In that moment, the thing that is sitting on the throne of your heart is approval. It's the desire for approval.

That was Pilate's king, and that sometimes is our king, but what was the Jewish king? It is obvious from this passage that they are rejecting Jesus as their king, right? Pilate declares Jesus their king, and they shout, "Crucify Him!" And then they do something that is honestly mind-blowing. They say, "We have no king but Caesar." Now, think about this. They were so delusional that they went from wanting to overthrow Caesar, to claiming allegiance to Caesar. They were mad at Jesus, they wanted to crucify Jesus, because Jesus was not going to overthrow the government like they thought he would, and they have gone from being mad at Jesus about that, to now saying, 'We're going to crucify this guy and we're on team Caesar.' That's just crazy!

Unfortunately, this is a familiar cycle for the Israelites. The very thing that they hated became the very thing that they worshipped, and this is not the first time that this has happened. Think back to the Exodus. They're in Egypt. Pharaoh is using them and abusing them, and they cry out, 'Lord, please deliver us.' God delivers them with a mighty hand through Moses. They get out into the wilderness, and what do they say? 'We want to go back to Egypt!' What? They want to go back to that cruel and oppressive way, right? Then, they eventually, they're in the promised land, and they want to have a king, and they say, 'Give us a king like every other nation!' And you're just like, you just had a king in Egypt, and he used and abused you! And God says, 'Fine. Go ahead. Give them their king. They wanted to have a king like every other nation.' Now, asking for a king wasn't totally forbidden, but there were some warnings that came in with it. The law made provisions for that. The problem was they didn't want God to be their king. They wanted a king like everybody else. They wanted the wrong kind of king for the wrong kind of reasons, and when they got that king, guess what? They hated that king.

Then, if you look throughout their history, they have good king, bad king, good king, bad king, and their empire kind of fluctuates based on the kings. But what eventually happens, and with their hard hearts, they become the oppressors, and they are oppressing all of the people around them, and they are worshipping all these false gods. So, the very thing that they hated about Egypt, as they go through their cycle, is the very thing that they end up doing towards the end of the Old Testament. Here I think, we see the same thing. They have rejected God as their king, and they have crowned their own god. Why? They wanted a king of their own making. They wanted a politically powerful king. They wanted a king that would exalt them above all the other nations, not humble them. They wanted a king that would bring vengeance on all their enemies, not forgiveness. They wanted a king that was going to accept their self-righteousness and not demand faith and repentance in Christ for righteousness. Their desire for power had corrupted them to the point where they became the very thing that they hated. Do you see that? Their very desire for power corrupted them so much they became the very thing that they hated.

The Lord of the Ring provides a great illustration of this. In the Lord of the Rings, there's one ring of power and everybody who has the one ring of power gets distorted by it. There's nobody that can have this ring and not be affected. There's one hobbit named Frodo, he's the ring bearer, and it's his job to take this ring and throw it in the fiery flames of Mount Doom so it's destroyed, and Frodo's the only one who can kind of wear it without it destroying him. But as you go through the story, Frodo goes on this incredibly long journey to destroy this ring, and the whole time he's wearing it, it's his burden. It's wearing him down more and more and more. It's getting harder and harder and there are times when he's tempted to put the ring on and when he puts the ring on then the ring changes him. When you get to the very end of the story and Frodo is at the point where he can take this ring and he can destroy it, this is the thing that he's been on the journey for forever to do, and what does he do at the very end? He says, 'This ring is mine' and he puts it on his finger. Not even Frodo can wear the ring of power without being destroyed by it.

It's a great illustration of Christians. Of us! Not even us. We cannot pursue power and privilege and pride without being distorted and destroyed by it. We will become the very thing that we hate. It looks like this, right? It looks like this inside your home. You want to serve your spouse. You want to be a good husband. You want to love your wife and you want to take care of her. So, what do you do? You serve her the way that you want to be served, but she doesn't like that. Why? Because she's not you. And then, she tells you that she doesn't want to be served that way and you get angry. So, what do you do? You get mad and you get forceful and you start stomping around the house and pretty soon you look at yourself in the mirror and you go, 'Man. Who am I? I have become the very thing that I hated in that moment.' Or you're parenting your kids and you want them to love Jesus and so you are going to micromanage everything about their lives so they can never sin and they can never struggle and everything is going to be great and you know what, they don't like that! They don't like to be micromanaged. And what do they do? They rebel and they push back against you. And what do you do? You get mad and you crank down on them and you start threatening them and you're going to discipline them and you're going to send them to their room and... And then you look at yourself and you go, 'Who am I?' The very thing that you hated, the very thing that you didn't want, is the thing that you became.

None of us can touch power without being destroyed by it, and none of us can create a god of our own making without being destroyed by it. You see, if you think about the ten commandments, if Pilate's sin was that he made his own god, he made his own god out of work and approval, then I think the Jewish sin is the second commandment, the second commandment tells us to not make God into any image. I think the Jews here, they had taken the second commandment, and they created this image of God that He was this powerful political king that was going to come in and annihilate their enemies, and worshipping that false god distorted them to the point where they killed the Lord of glory and they swore allegiance to Caesar. So, Pilate's king was work and approval and I think the Jewish king was power.

Who's God's King? God's King is Jesus, and He is a humble King. God's King suffers. Jesus experienced excruciating torture in this passage. He suffered what was most likely the most severe form of punishment that the Roman empire could think up and the Roman empire was well-known throughout history as the most tortuous barbarous empire there was, and the crucifixion was the worst way to die in this culture. This flogging that He experienced, one scholar put it like this, he said, "The victim was stripped, bound to a post or pillar, and beaten by a number of torturers until later, grew tired, and the flesh of the victim hung in bleeding shreds." In the providences such as Judea, this was the task of soldiers. In the case of slaves or criminals, such as Jesus, scourges, or whips, were used. The leather thongs often fitted with a spike or several pieces of bone or lead joined to form a chain. It's not surprising that prisoners not infrequently collapsed and died under this procedure. This is what Jesus experienced before He went to the crucifixion. God's King is a humble King that suffers.

If you're here tonight and you're suffering from pain, from sickness, from divorce, from loss, from abuse, from humiliation, God's King knows how you feel. He has experienced every form of suffering imaginable. He did it for us. That's the kind of King He is. God's King suffers and God's King submits. When Pilate said, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus said, "You have no authority over me except what has been given to you from above." Jesus knew that whatever power Pilate had was given to him by His heavenly Father, and so by submitting to Pilate, he was submitting to His heavenly Father. Can you imagine how humiliating it was to be the King of heaven and earth and to be stripped, flogged, beaten and mocked by Pilate and his buffoons? And yet, He submitted. Kids, I know it's hard to submit to your parents. I know that is challenging. But I want you to know that the God of the Bible knows how hard that is. He submitted to His heavenly Father even when it hurt. He's calling you to submit to your parents, even when it hurts. I think you can trust Him with it because He knows what it's like and He's a good Father.

God's King suffers, God's King submits, and God's King sacrifices. When it says on here that Pilate brought out this stone pavement and he sat on it, this place of judgement, and then it says, "Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour." It's really curious that John puts in there that it's about the sixth hour. Right? That's not just some throwaway line. He put that in there because around that time was around the time when the lambs would be taken and slaughtered to prepare for the Passover sacrifices. It was preparation for the Passover. For the Passover to happen, lambs had to be slaughtered. So around, think about this, around the same time that Jesus is being beaten and being prepared to go to the cross and die, at the temple the priests are preparing the sacrificial lambs that are going to foreshadow

the coming of Jesus to die for God's people and bring forgiveness. That's pretty amazing, isn't it? And just picture this, you have this righteous judge on the throne about to sacrifice perfect, innocent Jesus. At the same time, you have these unrighteous high priests, literally the buddies of the guys who are shouting "Crucify Him!" at the temple sacrificing the lambs that will foreshadow the coming of Jesus, because Jesus is a sacrificial King. He is here to give Himself up for His people. He is here to give Himself up for the very people that are shouting "Crucify Him!" God's King suffers. God's King submits. And God's King sacrifices. Who is God's King? He is a humble King. He is a King on a cross. And that is good news!

If you're sitting here tonight, and you're thinking, 'Work is my idol. Approval is my idol. Work is my king. Approval is my king. Power is my king.' Here is the good news of this passage! Jesus died to pay for those sins. Paul tells us that through Jesus' suffering and submission and sacrifice that Jesus cancelled the debt against us. He cancelled the debt for having other kings in our lives. He cancelled the debt for your overworking. He cancelled the debt for your approval idols. He cancelled the debt for your struggle with power and control that drives you to anger and rage and rebellion. He died for that sin on the cross and He cancelled the debt that you owe. Not only that, He disarmed the rulers and the authorities of this world and triumphed over them. So, you have this Roman ruler, and you have these Jewish rulers and at the very same time they think they're killing Jesus and getting rid of Him, He is doing the very thing that is going to triumph over them by executing Jesus, and they sealed their fate. Through His crucifixion, they were disarmed. Now He has been crowned the true King of heaven and earth.

So, if you're thinking of Lord of the Rings, if Frodo didn't throw the ring into Mordor, how did it get there? Well Gollum showed up, Gollum is the bad guy, and Gollum and Frodo wrestled, and at the last moment, as they're wrestling, Gollum bit off Frodo's finger with the ring on it and as he bit off Frodo's finger with that ring, he fell off the cliff into the fiery furnace of Mordor and he died, and the ring was destroyed. The very thing that, it's exactly what is happening to Pilate and the Jewish leaders right now, the very thing that they thought was going to destroy Jesus actually brought victory! Through His humiliation, He was exalted. Through His death, He was given victory.

Who is your king? Is it work? If your king is work, you may gain the whole world and forfeit your soul and be miserable in the process. Who is your king? Is it approval? If so, then every criticism is going to destroy you and every voice that conflicts in your life is going to cause paralysis, and every bit of criticism is going to cause all of your sense of self and identity. Who is your king? Is it power? If it is, then eventually you and your friends and your family and your community around you are going to be miserable. And you're going to be miserable, because you can't control everything around you. You can't be the king. Like Tom Petty said, "It's good to be king, but just for a while." Eventually, you'll make a mess out of everything. The good news of the gospel is that only God's King, Jesus, can free us from the shame and guilt of our sin and bring us into His kingdom so that we can be His kingdom people, and we can experience His grace and kindness in the gospel and then we give our whole lives over to Him. We give Him ourselves. Not to earn anything, but because He's already done it all. We surrender ourselves to Him.

One last story, and then we'll close. In Nazi Germany, when they were torturing and killing all of the Jews, they had a policy that if anyone escaped, they would execute ten other prisoners. They would starve them to death. And so, one night, there was a man who they thought escaped, he actually committed suicide, but they didn't know that. They thought he escaped, so they brought out all the prisoners and they lined them up and they randomly picked ten people to execute and they got to the last guy and they said, 'We're going to execute you.' And he cried out, 'Oh, my wife and my children.' At that moment, another man walked out and he said, 'I want to die for this man.' And they said, 'Okay. We'll take you.' That man's name was Father Maximilian Kolbe. So, they took Father Kolbe and they put him with the other prisoners and they put them in a dungeon for fourteen days, and for fourteen days they starved him and they starved these other prisoners. At the end of the fourteen days, they needed to use the cell again for other prisoners, so they came, and Father Kolbe was still there, and so, they executed him by lethal injection. Fifty-three years later, March 13, 1995, the man that Father Kolbe died for, died, and for the fifty-three years after that day, he had spent his entire life honoring the man that died on his behalf. He said, this is his quote, "As long as I have breath in my lungs, I consider it my duty to tell people about the heroic deed of Maximilian Kolbe." Father Kolbe gave his entire life for him, so he gave his entire life for Father Kolbe.

That's the invitation of this passage. Jesus has given His entire life for us, to be our King. Will we give our entire life to Him? That's the struggle of the Christian life every day, to wake up and say, "Jesus, you are the King of my heart. Rule on the throne." Let's pray that the Holy Spirit would help us do that. Please pray with me.