

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November**  
**Service held at Ipswich Road United Reformed Church**  
**Led by Revd Carole Pearl**

NOTICES AND WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE FOR PEACE

WORSHIP SONGS : [Don't build your house on the sandy land](#)  
[Abba Father, let me be](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN [Make way, make way for Christ the King](#)

PRAYER OF APPROACH

THE LORD'S PRAYER

FIRST READING John 18:33 – 37

<sup>33</sup> Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'

<sup>34</sup> 'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?'

<sup>35</sup> 'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied. 'Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?'

<sup>36</sup> Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'

<sup>37</sup> 'You are a king, then!' said Pilate.

FAMILY TIME

HYMN [You are the King of glory](#)

*Children leave for their own groups*

MEDITATION OF PONTIUS PILATE - by Nick Fawcett

SECOND READING Revelation 1: 4 – 8

<sup>4</sup> John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Look, he is coming with the clouds,’  
and ‘every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him’;  
and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’  
So shall it be! Amen.

<sup>8</sup> ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’

PRAYER

HYMN [Come and see the shining hope that Christ's apostle saw](#)

PRAYERS AS WE PREPARE FOR HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION/ASSURANCE OF PARDON

SERMON

### SERMON

“And Pilate asked Jesus, “*What IS truth?*”

*To the Jews who HAD believed in Him, Jesus said, “If you HOLD to MY teaching, YOU are REALLY MY DISCIPLES.*

*THEN, You will KNOW the truth -*

*And the TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE. (John 8:31 - 32)*

*And, Pilate asked Jesus, “WHAT IS TRUTH?”*

Today, the last Sunday before Advent is, in the Church’s calendar, the Sunday of CHRIST THE KING.

Psalm 46 tells us that the Lord *is KING, majestic, strong, all powerful - Creator God, whose REIGN is EVERLASTING.*

Psalm 85 tells us that in the Lord “*mercy and TRUTH are met together. RIGHTEOUSNESS and MERCY have KISSED EACH OTHER.*” What wonderfully poetic words, words which would not have been familiar to Pilate.

The meeting of Jesus and Pilate was a CONFRONTATION between TWO powers, the power of the Kingdom of HEAVEN, and the power of an EARTHLY ruler - the might of Rome.

The power of GOD is beyond OUR understanding, too mighty to truly KNOW, too AMAZING to compare with anything OUR world contains.

Jesus is brought before Pilate, who holds the kind of power all too familiar to us. Power that is easily recognisable. Pilate is a Roman governor, prefect of Judea, sent to subdue a foreign people of whose lives and beliefs he has little understanding OR interest.

Pilate is deeply suspicious of the motives of those Jews who have brought Jesus to trial. By what charge, valid in ROMAN law, have they taken him? Pilate tries to pass the problem of Jesus back to those who accuse Him, "Take Him yourselves and try Him according to YOUR law". Their answer reveals their determination to have Jesus killed, "WE are not allowed to *put any one to death...*"

Jesus is brought before Pilate, who surely KNOWS the charges being brought against Him are almost certainly false, but is less interested in issues of justice and fair play as in the challenge which Jesus may bring to HIS rule.

"ARE you the *King of the Jews*" he asks Jesus. *Are you here to CHALLENGE my power?"*

Jesus counters the question with another. NOT the reply of a conquered, submissive, condemned man, and HARDLY what Pilate might have ANTICIPATED. Looking directly at Pilate, Jesus asks, "Are YOU asking this on your OWN, or did OTHERS tell you about ME?"

Pilate wants to establish whether Jesus is a REBEL Jewish leader. Maybe a member of the Zealots? COULD Jesus have come to lead a rebellion against the ROMANS? Was Jesus plotting sedition, perhaps raising an army to *counter the Roman OCCUPATION*? Pilate's own contempt for the Jews is revealed when he SAYS to JESUS, "Do you think *I am a JEW*? It was *your own people* who handed you over to me. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

In answer, Jesus tells Pilate, "MY Kingdom is not from THIS world. 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."*

Pilate LISTENED, but, did he really HEAR Jesus' words? Did he UNDERSTAND what Jesus had said? OR did he just hear the words KING and KINGDOM and conclude that Jesus was A *definite threat to HIM and HIS power*? If JESUS is KING - then PILATE is NOT?

Was Pilate's sole concern expressed in his question to Jesus "ARE YOU A KING THEN?"

Here is Pilate, in a sacred moment of history, part of the eternal story of a God of love. Part of ETERNITY itself. Pilate here and now in the presence of the King of Heaven. Pilate facing the very REALITY of TRUTH and given the opportunity to HEAR the truth - from the SON OF GOD. Pilate was given the chance of becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

If he had REALLY heard what Jesus was saying, would it have been enough to change his mind? Jesus' kingship DIDN'T threaten PILATE'S status, OR seek direct confrontation with the occupying powers. Jesus has made it clear that HIS followers are not blood-thirsty power-hungry REBELS, trying to make Him their King. Neither had they fought off the mob who dragged Jesus to the authorities on false charges.

DID Pilate pause for a moment to mull over these words of Jesus? Did he REALISE that this was no *ordinary prisoner* standing before him. *Something makes Pilate ask Jesus,*

*"WHAT IS TRUTH?"*

We don't know exactly HOW Pilate asked this question - what emphasis or effect was placed on his words. We DO know that Pilate later twice appealed to the mob to approve his RELEASE of Jesus; saying "I find NO case against HIM."

Was Pilate a little afraid? Had he considered Jesus' words and understood a little of the absolute truth of Jesus? Perhaps he was frightened of the consequences of having a riot on his hands if he

over-ruled the demands of the mob. His job, above ALL, is to QUELL uprisings and rebellions and to keep the people subject to the might of Rome.

Jews and Romans alike shared a suspicion and dislike of kings. Both nations had experienced bad times with kings and preferred their ABSENCE. The Romans still PRETENDED to be a REPUBLIC, even when ruled over by EMPERORS. Their provinces were ruled by the appointment of GOVERNORS such as PILATE. Appointed to watch OUT for ambitious LOCAL leaders, and to ENSURE that they were subject to the might of ROME.

So the Jewish religious leaders plot against Jesus was a clever one. A report to Pilate that Jesus WAS a REBEL KING, out to undermine the Romans and overturn their rule provided them with a sure fire way of gaining Pilate's attention. THIS was ONE accusation that Pilate simply DARE NOT ignore. The accusation of SEDITION and TREASON brought against One whom MANY had not only FOLLOWED, but APPLAUDED.

Dismissing the false claims against Jesus would have been very dangerous for Pilate. He KNEW the plot to have Jesus killed was suspect...BUT, to IGNORE it COULD have endangered not just his CAREER, but *his own life*.

John's Gospel makes it very clear that Jesus is NOT the ruler of a kingdom which involves political struggles, lies and deceit. It IS a Kingdom where the real battles are between those who OPPOSE God and those who FOLLOW His Kingdom Way of Truth - those who know Jesus as their Lord AND King.

The army of Christ the King is not one bearing weapons of war. It is one whose armament is full instead of TRUTH, FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE, LOVE and THANKSGIVING. Jesus calls HIS followers to be *witnesses to the TRUTH of the GOSPEL - and to obey HIS commands. His NEW command of loving not only the Lord GOD with all their heart, mind and strength but to LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOURS, and even their ENEMIES - as they love THEMSELVES.*

How often are we warned, "Don't mix politics and religion...?" How CAN we do anything LESS? Are we to be *seen and not heard citizens of Christ's Kingdom?* We Jesus people simply CANNOT remain silent and inactive in the face of injustice. We cannot ignore the cries of the homeless, the starving, the unemployed, the refugee, the oppressed and the unloved. In those cries we hear the voice of the GOD OF THE MARGINALISED - Jesus Christ, who came to tear down the boundaries and set the people free.

His voice calls US to *testify to the truth.* However *uncool or inconvenient that may be.* Just as Jesus turned the tables on Pilate by asking HIM questions, reversing the role of prisoner and interrogator, so the topsy-turvy Kingdom of Heaven stands WORLDLY values UPSIDE DOWN.

Christ the King calls US to serve Him AND His people, reminding us that "*even the Son of Man did not come to be SERVED, but to SERVE, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*" He came not as rebel rousing King, but as a refugee, born in a humble stable. His ministry was that of a servant King. He befriended those whom society rejected and so great was His love that He went to the Cross for each of us, taking OUR burdens upon Himself, offering us redemption and the sure promise of eternal life.

God's Son did not stand far off, aloof and disinterested. Jesus, Emmanuel - God with US - came among the needy, the hurting, the outcast, and gave them healing, wholeness, love and identity. He knew every rejection, sadness, temptation and hurt which we could ever experience.

Jesus came INTO the world to establish the Kingdom of God, the ULTIMATE truth, and we who are HIS subjects BELONG to the truth. He calls us to serve him and says, "I TELL YOU THE TRUTH - whatever you did for one of the LEAST of those who are members of MY family- *you did it for Me.*"

The decision is ultimately OURS alone. We have been given free will, freedom to choose. Either to ask, *with Pilate, "What IS TRUTH?"* OR to follow the GOD OF ALL TRUTH. The God whose HUMANITY was revealed to us in JESUS. The God who is ALPHA AND OMEGA, who WAS and IS and IS TO COME,

*We are invited to own HIM as our Lord and King - throughout eternity! We are invited to be part of the FAMILY OF GOD - children of the LIVING GOD who can REJOICE in the TRUTH and the POWER of GOD'S eternal love and grace. We can build our lives, not on the false promises and lure which the world offers, but on the unshakeable foundation of God's promise, love and forgiving kindness.*

*Our GOD REIGNS for ever and ever. "I am the ALPHA and the Omega," says the LORD GOD, who WAS, and IS, and IS to come."*

Amen

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

THE PEACE

HOLY COMMUNION

HYMN [An upper room did our Lord prepare](#)

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING