



Beyond Belief – Touchpoint for November 20, 2024

John 18:33-37 (NRSVA) My Kingdom is Not of This World

TOUCH POINT

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters^[a] again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ ³⁴ Jesus answered, ‘Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?’ ³⁵ Pilate replied, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?’ ³⁶ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’ ³⁷ Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ 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.’

Grace and peace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

Who is Jesus? Whose side is he on? I want him to be the ringer on my bowling, golf or pick-up basketball team... he’s got it all! He would make the Miracle on Ice look ordinary; the immaculate reception humdrum.

Did you see what he did with the withered arm, and the leper? To Satan in the wilderness?

When Pilate calls for Jesus to come center court, I can imagine The Hit Crew singing “I’ve Got the Power,” and the Jesus of the good vibe church strutting to the judgment throne.

Or maybe it’s the post-game sweaty Jesus, pointing to the sky and thanking his mother and all glory to his Father in heaven.

Perhaps it’s the philanthropic Jesus speaking at the non-profit fundraiser, motivating his peeps to give until it hurts.

Maybe it’s the Christian school Jesus sitting in judgment with the principle as they question a student’s behavior and witness.

Could it be the activist Jesus who drives an electric car and sponsors two children and an elephant?

Is it the Jewish Jesus, or the Palestinian Jesus? The spiritual, but not religious Jesus? The ‘60s and ‘70s bell-bottomed Jesus?

The Vegan, KETO or the Daniel Plan Jesus? Is it the John Wayne or Mel Gibson Jesus?

Could it have been the contemplative Jesus, quietly centering his prayer and offering workshops on how to do the same?

Would Jesus denounce kingship to all these amazing kingdoms?

Imagine a modern-day Pilate, questioning the man, Jesus: “Jesus are you king of this or that denomination or church? Are you king of this non-profit or of a particular movement? Is “The Chosen” TV series based on you?”

It’s too soon, I know... but Jesus, are you a Democrat, Republican, or a third party? I mean after all, it’s your people who have turned on you.

No matter how much I try to ignore it, every earthly kingdom creates a side to be taken. Jesus does not even claim to be the disciples’ master.

Jesus tells Pilate that if he were from an earthly kingdom his followers would kick their asses. Like Peter, they would cut more than just an ear off an enemy. Jesus said they'd be coming to his rescue right then.

Judas would not have been able to get past the other disciples, and hundreds would rise in a great insurrection. The earthly kingdoms of Pilate, Annas, Caesar, Herod etc. feared this very thing. The kingdom Jesus testified to is a mystery; that made it more dangerous to other rulers. The King of it all would need to be removed.

Jesus sits in Pilate's judgment seat to be mocked. They dressed Jesus in royal clothing to ridicule his imaginary role as King, placing a crown of thorns on his head as he is questioned. Pilate asks Jesus if he is King of the Jews. Jesus says his kingdom is not the Jews, the Gentiles, not even the twelve.

Jesus is not on a certain side of the football field or political party. Jesus does not sit on a bench for the highest courts, and he is not a ringer for our kingdoms of belief.

Jesus said, "I am a witness to a kingdom you cannot see, but it is so real it can transcend death, time, space, illness, and mockery." Jesus's kingdom is beyond side taking. Any who hear the voice will experience it... beyond belief.

This kingdom cannot be named anything but Heaven, for it has no borders or boundaries. Occasionally the space closes between this earth and heaven's kingdom when a baby is born or a loved one passes, or when someone hears the compassionate voice of Christ testifying to the truth beyond this world's truths.

Maybe this is why Jesus said everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice and is not from a phony kingdom, a digitally enhanced kingdom, or a kingdom made of consensus and trends.

No wonder Jesus asked Pilate why he called him King of the Jews! Who have you been listening to, Pilate? What kingdom do you belong to? On whose behalf do you condemn?

Would we kill Jesus if we thought he was a threat to our kingdoms?

The Spirit is our witness. It offers itself to us in every breath. The kingdom Jesus speaks of cannot be killed.

Jesus had every opportunity to exert his hidden talents and heavenly titles, but Jesus would have none of this and laid down every title thrust upon his head, even to the point of blood.

Jesus asked Pilate a question, inviting Pilate to the edge of the kingdom Jesus spoke of. With Pilate's heart as the entrance, Jesus knocks at the door. It is for this moment that Jesus was born. This very moment with Pilate. This moment with you and me.

In all our created kingdoms, there comes a Pilate moment. A moment when we are asked why we believe what we believe, who told us about truth, what titles we have accepted as truth.

Until I began losing beloved clients to overdoses, I thought I was chaplain of the world. As a pastor, I was shepherd of my sheep. As a performer, I was king of the courts.

In this moment all that Jesus cherished – his friends' groups, his large following, his ethnic identity – he claimed no kingship. He let the names others tagged him with die, that he might testify at this place of mockery and judgment of another kingdom, a kingdom of unquenchable love to which he is a witness.

Whatever title we have been tagged with we share with our brother Jesus, who was witness to a different kingdom. If we've been touched by this kingdom within and beyond, we are a witness to its ineffable presence.

Amen

Opening Songs

Be Still

(London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

You Lord Are In This Place

(Keith Duke)

You Lord are in 1)...this place.
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.
Your presence fills it.
Your presence is peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Lead Me, Lord

(Discovery Singers)

Lead me, Lord. Lead me in thy righteousness.
Make thy way plain before my face.
For it is thou, Lord, thou Lord only, that makest me to dwell in safety.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Taizé Reflections)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(National Lutheran Choir, Peter C. Lukin)

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord lift his countenance upon you.
And give you peace.... The Lord make his face to shine upon you.
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord be gracious unto you. Amen.