

Today, we continue our “Up Close and Personal” sermon series, traveling with Jesus through the Book of John. Just before our reading in the book of John, Jesus has spoken words of love and peace to his disciples, commanding them to love one another as he has loved them. Jesus tells them he is returning to the Father and promises to send an “Advocate” - a helper - the Spirit of truth - to come to them. Then, Jesus prays, and retreats with the disciples to a garden. Judas - Jesus’ betrayer - comes with soldiers and police who arrest and bind Jesus, and take him away before the high priest Caiaphas. In the meantime, Peter - warming himself by a fire - denies Jesus three times.

Our scripture reading for today from John 18 & 19 picks up as Jesus is brought away from Caiaphas to the official residence of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church:

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28 Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters.[a] It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters,[b] so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” 30 They answered, “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” 31 Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.” The Judeans replied, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death.” 32 (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters[c] 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 Judeans. 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.” 38 Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went out to the Judeans again and told them, “I find no case against him. 39 But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” 40 They shouted in reply, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a bandit.

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.” 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Here is the

man!" 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." 7 The Judeans answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

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The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.