

04.06.2025

John 18:33-40

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- Good morning. Please open to John 18. The next few weeks we'll be in John's gospel as we prepare for Easter. Today is sometimes known as Passion Sunday. Next week is called Palm Sunday and the following week is obviously Easter Sunday.
- This week, we'll look at a pericope, a pericope is a section of a text that provides one complete thought, so we'll look at a pericope from Christ's trial. Next week, we'll look at a passage dealing with his crucifixion and then, as you can guess, on Easter we'll look at a passage concerning His resurrection.
- If you want to prepare, then just read John 18-21 a few times over the next few weeks.
- Or if you want to be a valedictorian Bible nerd, then just read the entire gospel of John a couple of times.
- And if you do, one of the themes that you see throughout John's gospel is the theme of misunderstanding.
- Jesus often speaks in terms that could seem ambiguous, especially if read on a superficial, literal, physical level. The gospel is full of wordplay...almost like riddles, which is interesting in that John never uses the word parables unlike the synoptic gospels. He instead uses ambiguity to express the mystery of the kingdom.
- If you're familiar with the book, then many of these should resonate with you.
- In chapter 2, Jesus says: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." How does the crowd respond? Nuh-uh...it took decades to build this temple, you might be a carpenter, but you aren't that good.
- You all remember that 90s phenomenon by the comedian Bill Engval where he'd say here's your sign. Anytime someone would ask a really dumb question, he'd say, here's your sign. That's what these examples remind me of.
- A chapter later, when Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus and says one must be born again, how does Nicodemus respond? But how can you climb back in your mother's womb? Here's your sign.
- Then a chapter later, Jesus is talking to a Samaritan woman and says that He has eternal water to offer and what does she say? Then where's your bucket? Here's your sign.
- Let's keep going. One chapter later.
- In chapter 5, Jesus says that He has food to eat that they don't know about and the disciples are like, well who brought you food? Why didn't we get any Chick-fil-a?
- Then in chapter 6, Jesus tells the crowds that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood and the crowds like, ooh gross, Dr. Lecter. How can we eat his flesh?
- There are over 20 of these in John's gospel. And we'll see one in our text today.
- But my hope isn't just to rail on Pilate or the Jews or the disciples or whomever else misunderstood Christ. I want us to actually reflect on whether or not we have misunderstood the kingdom. If we've received the truth. If we know what it means to call Jesus Christ king and lord.

- So let's pray and we'll dive in. Self, others, me

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" (John 18:33-34)

- Jumping into a text without any context is challenging. John's been building a story for 18 chapters & we're just going in blind, like trying to understand the show *Lost* by starting mid-way thru season 3.
- Thankfully, it being one of the gospels, most of us are pretty familiar with the context. If we tried this in Numbers 18 or something, everyone would be lost.
- So let me try to set the scene.
- The first thing to know is that each of the gospels devote a disproportionate amount of their writing to the last week of Jesus' life. For example, the synoptic gospels, that's Matthew, Mark, and Luke, called synoptic because they tell the same story through a similar lens. See the word optic in the word synoptic. So each of the synoptic gospels devote about 1/3 of their writing to the last week of Christ's life.
- John devotes about 40% of his gospel to the last week. Nearly half of the book devoted to describing less than a tenth of a percent of Jesus' earthly life.
- Those statistics tell us something about how significant the events of that last week really were.
- That final week, Holy Week in church tradition, begins in the 12th ch of John with the triumphal entry. It includes the cleansing of the temple, the cursing of the fig tree, & the Olivet Discourse in the synoptics, but in John, the main focus is the Passover meal, the washing of the disciples feet, the farewell discourse, the high priestly prayer, and then the events of the night of His arrest.
- And in John's gospel in particular, the trial of Christ is thick with irony. The light of the world is tried in the darkness of night. The truth incarnate is betrayed by false accusation and lies. The King of Kings and Judge of Judges is judged by lesser rulers.
- By the time that we get to our passage this morning, Christ has already been betrayed by Judas and arrested by the Jewish leadership. He has stood before Annas and Caiphas, the former and current high priests, Peter has already denied him, and he is now standing before Pontius Pilate who is the Roman governor.
- Normally Pilate lived at his cushy home in coastal Caesarea near modern Tel Aviv, but at Jewish festivals he would reside in Jerusalem to help keep the peace as the Jews had a somewhat fair reputation for insurrection. In fact, that's why Barabbas is in jail as we'll see later.
- At this point Pilate has already heard the prosecution's opening statement. The Pharisees and Sadducees have made it clear that Jesus is an alleged threat, not just to their influence, but to Roman rule. Now, Pilate wants to examine the accused so we pick up the narrative there.
- The Jewish leaders had stayed outside as Jewish tradition maintained that entering the home of a Gentile rendered one ritualistically unclean.
- Now, there is some irony here. Remember when Jesus accuses them of tithing their mint and dill, but neglecting the weightier matters of justice and mercy? Well, that's evident

here. They are scrupulously attempting to avoid ceremonial uncleanness at the very time they're burdening themselves with the moral guilt of condemning an innocent man. They don't have a proper taxonomy. It would be like taking off your shoes as a sign of respect before entering someone's house even though you plan to kill them.

- And to make things even worse, the ceremonial uncleanness isn't even directly from the law. There is nothing in the Mosaic Law that says that going into a Gentile's home would render one unclean. Rather, that comes from extrabiblical Jewish tradition. So, from the perspective of the OT, they wouldn't actually have been defiled by entering the house. But they've built a wall around the law, a wall of hypocrisy and self-righteousness and misplaced priorities.
- As Calvin writes of this verse
 - "But these hypocrites, though they are so full of malice, ambition, fraud, cruelty, and avarice, that they almost infect heaven and earth with their abominable smell, are only afraid of external pollutions. So then it is an intolerable mockery, that they expect to please God, provided that they do not contract defilement by touching some unclean thing, though they have disregarded true purity." (John Calvin)
 - They think they're pleasing God even while attempting to murder His Son.
- In addition to that, it's somewhat ironic that they won't enter a Gentile's house, but have no problem with asking a Gentile to do their dirty work by ridding them of their supposed problem.
- And they suddenly care that Rome doesn't allow capital punishment. As they say in vs. 31, It's not lawful for us to put anyone to death. By lawful, they don't mean Jewish law. Jewish law not only allowed, but even commanded capital punishment. But they were prohibited by Roman law.
- We can see some hypocrisy in this when we remember that they didn't seem to care about that when they tried to stone Jesus earlier or when they stoned Stephen in the book of Acts.
- But now, given the crowds and the Passover festival, it is expedient for Rome to take the blame for the death of the King so they say, we would do something about it but we can't.
- So, the overall effect of noticing these inconsistencies and hypocrisies and ironies of this kangaroo court is that we see that this is a gross miscarriage of justice.
- In the passion narrative, there are a lot of unjust villains. The Jewish Sanhedrin, Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers, & so forth. All of them arrayed against Jesus in fulfillment of Ps 2:
 - *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed...* (Psalm 2:1-2)
- And all of this is taking place not as a surprise to Jesus or His Father. He's already said He came for this very purpose. Look at John 12:27
 - *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.* (John 12:27)
- And Luke makes it clear in Acts that all that is occurring is simply fulfilling God's sovereign purposes. Look at Acts 4:25-28

- *And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’— for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (Acts 4:24–28)*
- Notice the collection of names. Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, all doing their will, but also carrying out the divine plan.
- So, once Pilate is finished hearing the charges from the Jews, he re-enters his headquarters, the underlying Greek is praetorium which is basically the governor’s palace in the city.
- Once inside, he speaks to Jesus for the first time. He does so by asking the question, are you the king of the Jews?
- Now, John’s record of the conversation with the Jewish leaders doesn’t mention anything about His being the alleged king of the Jews. For whatever reason, John’s just left off that part of the conversation. Luke mentions a larger context to his convo with the accusers. Look at Luke 23
 - *Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” (Luke 23:1–2)*
- Now, the whole book has been structured to answer the question: who is this man? As Ed preached a couple of months back, the narrative crescendos with Thomas’ confession of my Lord and my God in chapter 20 and the book focuses on the various I am statements that call to mind God’s revelation of Himself as the great I AM.
- So now Pilate’s trying to figure it out. He asks, are you the king of the Jews. He doesn’t ask for philosophical or theological reasons, he’s asking for political reasons. Is this man a threat to Roman rule? That’s the question. You could see from Luke’s gospel that the Sanhedrin has prejudiced the waters in that direction.
- And Jesus’ initial response is somewhat cryptic. In fact, it wasn’t actually an answer. In the synoptics, Jesus says yes, but John wants us to see something else.
- In essence, we have a showdown. Pilate is testing Jesus to figure out if he’s is a political threat. Meanwhile Jesus is testing Pilate to see if there is any spiritual sensitivity in Him. Is He just parroting what others have told him or is he actually spiritually curious?
- That’s a common theme we see throughout John’s gospel in particular. Unlike most modern pastors today who do their best to avoid any offense, Jesus actually intends to offend at times in order to test the waters of someone’s spiritual perception. In effect, Jesus is turning around and asking, who’s asking? Why do you want to know?
- Furthermore, answering the question directly might not actually answer the question. After all, the epithet “king of the Jews” can carry a number of different connotations depending on your cultural, political, and religious background and different presuppositions of Romans and Jews.

- In light of that a simple answer would more than likely be misleading. So rather than answering directly, Jesus takes a more circuitous route.
- And this will set up a crucial conversation about the distinct nature of Christ's kingdom and kingship in vs. 35-36.

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." (John 18:35-36)

- Pilate obviously doesn't understand who Jesus is. He thinks that the King of the Jews is just the king of the Jews.
- He doesn't see the cosmic implications of the title. Earlier we quoted Ps 2. Look at how it ends
 - *I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalm 2:7-12)*
- Pilate assumes that since he isn't Jewish, the royal pretensions of a Jew aren't of any concern to him. He assumes he has no stake in the outcome so what does he care?
- In effect, he's asking "Are you MY king?" not knowing just how apropos that question actually is.
- In reality He's everyone's king. The nations (plural) are His inheritance. We will all kiss the Son or face His anger. Whether you acknowledge it or not, there is only 1 king. All authority in heaven & earth is given unto Him. You may not like it, you may not bow willingly, but all will bow.
- The question "am I a Jew" probably also reveals a degree of underlying exasperation. Pilate is politically savvy enough to know that the Jewish leaders aren't giving him the full picture. After all, there is no love lost between Pilate and the Sanhedrin, especially after he famously threatened to kill a bunch of Jews when he was first appointed governor.
- In addition, he knows that the Jewish authorities wouldn't go to such extreme lengths simply to turn in someone who intends to threaten Roman rule...unless their own interests were at risk.
- He knows he's being used, he's cynical, but he's also curious so he asks, what have you done.
- So, yet again, there is irony here. Pilate harbors resentment and spite for the Jews based on a number of historic events and yet he'll ultimately be forced to give them what they want.
- He doesn't necessarily believe the Jewish leaders, but he assumes that Jesus must have done something to rile them up.

- Jesus responds in another somewhat cryptic way. He affirms that He is indeed a king. He admits that He has a kingdom. But He also reframes the concept of the kingdom the same way He has done with the concept of the Christ or Messiah.
- We see throughout the gospels a hesitancy, a reticence on Jesus' part to accept the title of Christ or Messiah. That restraint lasts until Jesus has a chance to redefine what those terms actually mean. He is the Christ, the Messiah, but not necessarily in the way that those terms were typically used in the first century.
- Likewise, He is king, but not in the way that Pilate means. Not in a way that would threaten Roman sovereignty...at least not yet.
- Jesus says that His kingdom is not of this world. And as proof, He points out that He willingly allowed Himself to be taken. In fact, His servants had fought to keep him from being taken. Peter had drawn a sword and cut off the ear of the high priests servant. Not only did Jesus not urge this, but Jesus actually rebuked Peter for it and healed the guys ear.
- And what does Jesus say in Matthew's telling of the story?
 - *Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?* (Matthew 26:53)
- Though Jesus has hundreds of disciples and tens of thousands of angels at His disposal, He doesn't call upon them to take the cup from Himself.
- And that is evidence that His kingdom is not from the world which he repeats.
- Now, this passage has been abused throughout history as an apologetic for pietistic pacifism and political disengagement and all kinds of other things. Its similar to how "our citizenship is in heaven" is misused as we talked about in Philippians.
- The fact that Christ's kingdom isn't from the world doesn't mean that it has no worldly affects. He isn't saying that His kingdom isn't active in this world or has nothing to do with this world.
- After all, John will write in his first epistle chapter 5.
 - *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* (1 John 5:4)
- And in Revelation we see the cosmic and worldly outworking of the kingdom as Christ returns and conquers the world in a cosmic bloodbath.
- And in Romans and Titus and 1 Peter and so forth, we see political implications of the gospel. We talked about that quite a bit last year at our politics culture and theology.
- So Christ's point isn't that His kingdom is eternally uninvolved in politics and other worldly affairs, it is rather that His kingdom finds its origin elsewhere and depends on something other than politics and human strength. It isn't ultimately brought into being or defended by the world's means and therefore it is no immediate threat to Rome's interests.
- It will eventually and ultimately threaten many of the presuppositions of Roman interest, but not in the way that Pilate can conceive of now.
- In fact, in giving Himself up to die, Christ's interests are actually aligned with the interests of the world, though the world refuses to recognize it. But God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 37-38.

Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. (John 18:37–38)

- Though Christ's kingdom isn't of the world and doesn't play by the world's rule, He is nonetheless a king as the next exchange between Pilate and Jesus shows.
- Then Jesus says, for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth.
- Now, we need to know that truth is a fundamental motif of the gospel of John. About 80% of the times that the Greek word appears in the gospels, its in John. Think about some of the more well known passages in the gospel dealing with truth:
- *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*
- *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)*
- *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:23)*
- *and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32)*
- *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*
- *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)*
- So, given the preeminence of truth in the gospel, to quote Pilate, what is truth?
- Well, in philosophical terms, it typically refers to that which corresponds to reality. Of course, that is how we have historically defined truth. According to postmodernism, rather than 1 truth, you might point to multiple truths. Think Oprah saying, you get a truth and you get a truth. Think about how prevalent it is for someone to say that's my truth. As if truth is relative and subjective.
- In fact, the only truth that can't be true today is the existence of absolutes...except of course the absolute truth that says all absolutes are false or power plays to oppress the marginalized.
- We've gotten to where we as a culture believe that holding others to external standards is arrogant, intolerant, and immoral. Even things like $2+2 = 4$ is now seen as an oppressive heteronormative example of white privilege or something.
- Now, I certainly think that we can make a compelling argument from Scripture for the historic view of truth as correspondence to reality rather than the postmodern relativistic perversion, but that really isn't what Jesus means.
- When Jesus is speaking of the truth, He isn't meaning this in technically philosophical terms. He is using the term theologically and contextually.
- To understand exactly what we mean, it would be helpful to note other uses of similar language.
- For instance, He says here that he came to bear witness to the truth. Well, look at 1:7

- *He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. (John 1:7)*
- Notice the parallelism here. He came to bear witness to the truth and the light. That suggests that there is some sort of connection between the light and the truth.
- And notice the effect, that all might believe through him.
- And then look at the phrase everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Where else do we see similar language? Chapter 10.
 - *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:16)*
 - *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)*
- There hearing His voice means being His people, being under the care of 1 shepherd.
- In the context of John's gospel Jesus Himself is the truth. So He came to bear witness to the truth, to the light, in context that means to the gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God made manifest in Christ Himself.
- The truth in John's gospel is nothing less than the self-disclosure of God in his Son, who is truth incarnate. The truth is the manifestation of the redemption of God by means of His Son & Spirit.
- This truth contains within itself the message that man's sin has so fractured the world that we need rescue and that God Himself has made provision for us in the person of His own Son who was made flesh, lived a perfect life, died for sin, rose from the dead, and is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, that's what Christ testifies. That He is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him.
- That's the truth that He came to bear witness to.
- And part of the meaning of this passage as we juxtapose his kingdom with the truth is that we have to acknowledge that as King He defines what is true. His word is authoritative. There is no yes, but when it comes to submitting to His word.
- Yes, the Bible says this, but...there is no but.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about submitting to my husband, but you don't know him.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about loving my wife, but I'll do it when she respects me.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about sexuality, but you don't know my struggles.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about community, but I'm an introvert or busy.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about divorce, but I'm so unhappy.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about giving to ministry, but I don't trust the church.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about church discipline, but I'm afraid of losing a friend.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about prayer & reading Scripture, but I don't have time.
- Yes, I know what the Bible says about participating in the church, but I really need my kid to get an athletic scholarship or make friends.
- As Christ said to the religious elite, we have a fine way of setting aside the commandments of God in favor of our own traditions or opinions or desires.
- Let me just encourage you, if there is any yes, but in your understanding of biblical authority, to crucify it, crush it, starve it, strangle it. Don't let it take root. Compromise on biblical authority is the seedbed of apostasy and apathy and drift and doubt and myriad other dangers.

- One of the many implications of this passage is that the King of Truth, the king who is truth, defines what is true, what is just, what is fair, what is good, what is right, what is sin, and so forth. He is the king. The kingdom isn't a democracy. It isn't even a democratic republic. It is a monarchy and His word is absolute.
- That's who Christ is. That's what He's come to proclaim.
- But Pilate is unimpressed. You might even say he's disillusioned and frustrated at this point. He rather flippantly responds, what is truth, but its rhetorical. He doesn't stick around to hear an answer. He doesn't really want to know the answer. After all, he doesn't think this poor peasant prisoner can offer any real insight on the matter.
- While the words are still echoing in the halls, he's out the door back to the Jews and admits that he doesn't find anything worthy of Rome's involvement. If Christ is guilty it is over Jewish traditions and not Roman law and he doesn't really care about technical religious minutia. He'll actually reiterate this not guilty verdict multiple times which makes the subsequent events even more unjust.
- And that should have been the end of it. The governor exonerates Him. He's found not guilty. A pardon should have been proffered, Jesus should have been released and that's that. But it doesn't end there. Look at vs. 39-40.

But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. (John 18:39-40)

- If Pilate were a good and just man, his verdict would have led to Christ's release. But, for whatever reason, maybe to help the Jewish leaders save face or to humiliate them assuming that the crowd would choose differently or to save his own skin or something else, for whatever reason he decides instead to offer the crowd a choice.
- Jesus or Barabbas.
- Barabbas by the way isn't a personal name, it is a patronymic which means a name derived from a father. Like when Peter is called Simon Bar Jonah, his dad's name is Jonah. Bar as in Barabbas or Bar Jonah, bar in Aramaic means son. And abbas means father, as in abba father. So Barabbas means son of the father.
- But nothing is known of him apart from the gospel accounts. We know from the gospels that he was a lestES (ληστής) which is translated as robber here, but that could be misleading. The word could also mean revolutionary or insurrectionist or guerilla (like a war lord, not a primate).
- So there is yet another irony here. After determining that Jesus isn't a threat to Rome, Pilate offers up one who is guilty of just such a threat. We know that not only from this one word that could be translated insurrectionist, but from Luke's gospel where he writes of him that he was:
 - *a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. (Luke 23:19)*
- Not only that, but in John's gospel, Jesus, the true Son of the Father, is rejected for the sake of this other "son of abbas." To make that contrast even more profound, some manuscripts list Barabbas' first name as Jesus. He was Jesus Bar Abbas. So again, notice

the irony. Two Jesus'. Two sons of a Father. One true and good, the other a liar and insurrectionist.

- And which does the crowd choose?
- And really that choice recapitulates the entire story of redemption which is man's desperate attempt to choose anything but God. The crowd's rejection of Christ just shows why He was necessary.
- This story plays out time and again not only in biblical history, but in our own hearts. Every yes, but is a rehearsing of the same narrative. Every sin, every idol, every compromise is our choice of something other than God.
- As Romans 1 says, we exchange the truth for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the creator.
- So what do we do with this passage? Well, I want to read it in light of John's overall purpose. For those who are coming to the weekly 1 John Bible study, you are already familiar with this, but John is unique among the gospels in that he gives a purpose statement. He comes right out and says why he has written this book.
- Flip forward to John 20:30-31
 - *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*
- This story of Jesus and Pilate, and next week's story about the cross, and the following week's passage about the resurrection are all part of the same story, the same message, they all have the same overarching goal, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed, the greater prophet, priest, and yes King.
- And that by believing, we might have life in his name.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- As we prepare to partake, I want to take us back in the book of John to Christ's final meal. Interestingly, John records the Passover meal, but doesn't mention the institution of the Lord's supper. Rather, He records the washing of the disciples feet.
- For something of the theology of the supper in John's gospel, we have to go back to chapter 6.
- *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:51-58)*

- So what does it mean to feed on His flesh and drink His blood? Well, considering that the wooden literal meaning of Christ's words are often misunderstood in the context of the gospel, we can assume that He isn't commending cannibalism.
- Unlike the Roman Catholics and Lutherans, we don't believe that Christ's flesh and blood is physically present in this meal, but it is spiritually present.
- To feed on Him is to believe. To receive. To be nourished by the truth of the gospel. That's what it means to abide in Him and have Him abide in us.
- So, as we prepare not only for communion, but also for Easter in a couple of weeks, I want to just encourage you to consider Christ this morning.
- Consider His betrayal, consider the injustice done to Him, consider His sufferings for you and your sake.
- Consider the grace and mercy and love.
- And let's partake with grateful hearts.
- The body of Christ...