

Throughout John, Jesus has talked of his hour to come. Now it arrives with his judgment, mockery, scourging, condemnation and rejection by his people. The first half of this scene (John 18:28-40 – last week) focused on truth. This section focuses on power. Pilate asks Jesus about both. He answers, but not in a way that Pilate either expects or understands. Earlier in the gospel (in John 11:45-53) we heard that the Jewish leaders feared the power of the Romans who might wipe out their nation. Ironically in this passage it's the reverse: Pilate, the Roman Governor, is afraid of the power of the crowd: the Jewish nation. Jesus has been accused of seeking power: first political - to overthrow Rome (18:30-32) and here religious - imagining himself as the chosen Messiah-Son-of-God (19:7). Yet it's all of the other characters around him that are actually seeking power.

**flogged::** Flagellation (Latin flagellum, "whip"), flogging, whipping or lashing is the act of beating the human body with special implements such as whips, lashes, rods, switches. Outlawed in Western countries, it's still used in some parts of the world, particularly in countries using Islamic law. It's typically imposed on an unwilling subject as a punishment. The strokes are usually aimed at the unclothed back of a person. In the Roman Empire, flagellation was often used as a prelude to crucifixion. It was reserved for non-citizens. Whips with small pieces of metal or bone at the tips were commonly used. Such a device could easily cause disfigurement and serious trauma, such as ripping pieces of flesh from the body or loss of an eye. In addition to causing severe pain, the victim would approach a state of hypovolemic shock due to loss of blood. There was no limit to the number of blows inflicted— though the victim was normally not supposed to die in the punishment. Hence was it was often referred to as "half death" by some authors of antiquity.

**Purple:** this color was the most expensive to produce in the ancient world. That's why it was only worn by royalty.

**Where are you from?:** He already answered this in John 18:36-37 <sup>36</sup> 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." <sup>37</sup> 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."

**from above:** Jesus used this expression earlier in the gospel in John 3:3-7, and 3:31 in his encounter with Nicodemus. --- <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

<sup>31</sup> **The one who comes from above** is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

## SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAY 3.18.2018

John 19:1-16  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him **flogged**. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a *purple* robe. <sup>3</sup> They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" <sup>6</sup> 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." <sup>7</sup> The Jews 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."

<sup>8</sup> Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. <sup>9</sup> He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "**Where are you from?**" But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered him, "YOU WOULD HAVE NO POWER OVER ME UNLESS IT HAD BEEN GIVEN YOU **from above**; therefore the one who handed me over to you

YOU WOULD HAVE NO POWER OVER ME UNLESS IT HAD BEEN GIVEN YOU:: Jesus already has talked with this same expression about his power in the Good Shepherd sermon of John 10:17-18 --- <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

*Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon ::* Among the gospel writers, John alone specifies that this day is *both* a sabbath *and* the day before Passover. They Israelites were commanded to slaughter the Passover Lamb the day before Passover (the day of preparation). Is this the hour? We believe that up to 10,000 lambs were slaughtered in Jerusalem on this day, which would mean that they would have begun the slaughter as early as possible, which according to Exodus 12:6 would be at noon (the time in which the scholars believed that twilight started as the sun no longer rose). And so Jesus would be crucified as the city was filled with the cries of lambs being slaughtered to keep the covenant made between God and the Israelites. It's at this time that the people kill the "lamb of God" (as John the Baptizer has identified him in John 1:29), rejecting him as their King, preferring Caesar to be their king – rejecting their obedience to God alone as Isaiah proudly sang in Isaiah 26:13 "O Lord our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but we acknowledge your name alone."

Rather than seeing the power of Jesus as one of salvation and love, they condemn him....echoing back to the words of John 3:16-17 <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Scholars of John's writings point to this "hour", related here, as pointed back to from 1 John 1:5-7. <sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

is guilty of a greater sin." <sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup> *Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon.* He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" <sup>15</sup> They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." <sup>16</sup> Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

### Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- **What shimmers for you in this story?**
- **Imagine yourself in this scene, in which the "hour" has come for the word through which the world was created, which came into the world, and was not recognized. What do you hear?; see?; smell?; feel?**
- **In the story it's the servants, or followers, of the leaders who do the condemning and killing. It's the soldiers, not Pilate, the crowd, not the Pharisees and Sadducees who advance the death of Jesus. Their actions show to whom their identity belongs. How do your words, deeds and relationship reflect your citizenship in an alternate kingdom from above, where servants of the Beloved are nonviolent, vulnerable lovers of friend and foe?**
- **The famous French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) focused in vast studies on how knowledge of human beings is inextricably connected to power over them. He's famous for concluding that "power is knowledge." He understands Power to be based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions. Jesus seems to have power because he understands himself and knows the world, while the other actors don't. How can we understand our deepening 'knowledge' of God in Christ to be a power from above? How do you "use" it?**