Mar. 11, 2018 Jesus and Pilot John 18:28-40 (Psalm 145:10- 13) Liturgical color: Purple

PRAYER OF THE DAY God of truth, Too often we bend truth to fit our needs. Show us how to recognize and follow your truth, shown to us by the love and life of your son, Jesus. Amen. HYMNS Jesus calls us; o’er the tumult ELW 696, H82 549, 550, UMH 398, NCH 171, 172 Change my heart, O God ELW 801 Come to the table ELW 481 CHORAL Lead on, O King Eternal, Diane Bish

Psalm 145 (extended reading)

8 The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

 9 The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

 10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you.

 11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,

 12 to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

 14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

**Prayers Announcements**

Gerry Z surgery went well, Dick L home; Bowl a thon today (donations)

Eileen R hospitalized (doing better)

Roma U fell, healing at home

Madeline Bea baptized yesterday

Yesterday, a cloud of witnesses filled the Chapel here for the baptism of Madeline Bea ~~xxxxxxxx~~. The many who had been making candy in the kitchen with Joy, came in with a faint scent of chocolate and together we heard the sweet Word of God, we sang to praise God, we celebrated the cleansing way in which Jesus leads us through the waters of death into rebirth and new life as children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of God. And we prayed together including the part about thy kingdom come and thy will be done.

Madeline smiled and took it all in with her big wide trusting eyes. A very far cry from that week on earth that enabled her baptism, and yours and mine. Our readings this week and next are from that day when Jesus is in bondage because of human sinfulness. Jesus is on trial, by then end of today’s reading he is on the brink of being plunged into a sentence of death and the prayer is not thy kingdom come… no Pilate has yielded to the will of the religious leaders, and the people who are shouting ‘MY will be done!’

When this passage starts we are in the part of the kingdom that belongs to Pilate. … no, not a pilot on an airplane. This Pilate is in town because of Jesus. This is the first time we encounter Pilate in John’s gospel, usually this Pilate lives in his beautiful palace on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in a city called Caesarea… but he came to this part of his kingdom in Jerusalem around the time of this Passover because he wanted HIS will to be done. HIS will was that everyone would stay quiet… not happy, not peaceful, after all the people in Jerusalem were under Roman occupation, the rules of the Roman kingdom applied, the will of the emperor was done whether anyone liked it or not… and if a person did not follow the will of the emperor in this kingdom of the emperor, the penalties were very harsh, including torturous death.

An historian named Josephus noted that even among the oppressive leaders of the Romans; Pontius Pilate was so incredibly violent and cruel that he eventually was removed from this territory that he governed! But for now, Jerusalem is in his kingdom, and under his will. And Pilate had heard that there was trouble, crowds were being stirred-up. There was unrest because of a man named Jesus, from Nazareth. Pilate was the Roman authority second only to Caesar… so anything Pilate decreed, became true, any command he handed-down would be followed whether people liked it or not. Unrest while thousands of Jews made their Passover pilgrimage into Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices at the Temple; was not in the will of Pontius Pilate… that’s why he moved himself, the center of his kingdom to Jerusalem, to keep his will done.

But this trial was not something Pilate handed-down… it was the Jewish religious leaders who were handing-over THEIR will which was a mess! Along with hints of truth. When Pilate asked, the representatives of the Jewish faith community for an official accusation, they could only hint at their version of truth “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” (Jn 18:30)

But Pilate was not ready to accept the will of the Jewish leaders handing-over Jesus; 1st Pilate says judge Jesus yourselves if he broke a law!

The religious leaders were being very careful not to sin… they did not enter Pilate’s Roman headquarters because they wanted to stay ritually clean for the Passover dinner. And, the religious leaders did not want to sin by putting Jesus to death… so they handed-over this unclean, sinful act to Pilate. They wanted Pilate to do their will in his kingdom.

Pilate went inside, inside his temporary fortress, taking Jesus with him into the ritually unclean space, rendering Jesus ritually unclean, defiled so that Jesus could not participate in the Passover meal… ironic isn’t it? Inside this part of Pilate’s kingdom, Pilate’ questions seem to indicate that Pilate has heard the truth… Pilate seems to know something about the reputation of Jesus; and Pilate wants to know the truth, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

The answer that Jesus finally gives is confusing, yes he has a kingdom, so this makes Jesus a king; but no, his kingdom is not from this world. No he does not have followers fighting for him to keep him from being betrayed… that’s what this term handed-over literally means, betrayed. With this answer handed-over to Pilate, comes a little more, “I came into this world to testify to the truth.” Then as Pilate listened to the voice of Jesus, who was bound tightly in front of him heard Jesus say “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate was listening, he wanted to hear the truth there in his piece of the kingdom where his will was done… in fact Pilate left Jesus there and went back out-side, handing-over the truth and the commands and his will to the authority to the people… “I find no case against him.” Do you want me to hand-over Jesus back to you, Pilate asked? Saying essentially to the crowd, Your will be done.

No! They shouted. No, we do not want the truth. We want the bandit! Can you imagine?! The people’s will was to have a kingdom where convicted criminals go free.

The truth is… that’s remarkably close to God’s will. We humans are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves; we sin against God in thought word and deed, sometimes by what we have done and sometimes by what we have left undone. The truth is that Jesus frees us from this bondage to sin. More than that… Jesus is the truth WHO frees us from sin. Jesus is the truth whose life is given so that we get a second chance at life; free from bondage to sin. Jesus explains in Jn 14:6 “I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

This is the will that is done, truly.

John in his Gospel of relationships has yet again used a powerful contrast very subtly to make a profound point. Even here as Pontius Pilate is introduced bringing in his Kingdom and expecting to impose his will…

Jesus enters HIS kingdom on a young donkey. (Jn 12:14) Jesus does the Divine will handing himself over to the authorities. Jesus does the divine will answering not only what is truth; but being the Truth that has come into the worldly kingdoms. And although this divine will has begun… it is not complete yet.

Pilate travelled less than 100 miles to bring his kingdom to Jerusalem.

Jesus travelled far enough to be fully divine and fully human; giving-up his armies, giving-up his powers, giving-up his freedom, giving-up his dignity, giving-up his honor… to introduce us to the truth, the life and the way to the kingdom of God… embodying the will of God, to free convicted sinners, who (truth be told) do not deserve that freedom.

Pilate imposed the rules of an oppressive and torturous Roman kingdom… Jesus went inside that kingdom, became ritually unclean to bring about a new Passover, a new freedom for an even wider segment of society… Jesus brought the kingdom of God right into Pilate’s palace… Jesus brought the kingdom of God right into Jerusalem. Jesus brought the kingdom of God to earth… and then Jesus will bring the convicted criminals, to be washed in his blood, drowned in his death by baptism, and fed by the very bread of life… into the fold, into this divine kingdom, to be workers together in the kingdom of God, here on earth… and one day, in eternal life. That’s the Truth.

May His kingdom come and his will be done. Amen.