

John 18.28-19.22 – Who has the power to save?

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Main point – Meet Jesus – powerful to save you from weakness and ignorance

When I started high school, for over 2 years I was bullied by 2 boys(**SLIDE**) – physically and verbally, with daily intimidation & put downs.-----

It seems some people like to squash others to feel good or powerful.

I wonder if you know what it's like to be squashed by someone with power?

Maybe someone at school or work; a judge, politician; or family member?

Maybe you've experienced someone using their power selfishly, and they squash, control, hurt or abuse you.----- It's horrible.

We don't like to feel weak. We prefer to feel powerful.

Many of us would **like to be powerful**.-----

Yet if we're trying to come to God or get to heaven, we so often think that we're powerful enough to get there.-----

Today we'll think about weakness and power.-----

And whether you feel weak or powerful, I hope you'll keep listening.-----

If you've come along for the first time today, we're in this 6 week series through one of the biographies of Jesus, written by the apostle & eyewitness John.

In the last 4 weeks we've seen different people meeting Jesus.(**SLIDE**)

And in our passage, we'll be introduced to Jesus, on the day of his death.

He talks with a powerful politician, Pontius Pilate.

And we'll think about who's weak and who's powerful.

How we can find relationship with God?-----

And is Jesus really the King we should trust?-----

But first, let's **set the scene**.(**SLIDE**)

Last Sunday we read about the powerful and loving Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, and it's maybe a few weeks later.

The start of John ch18 recorded what happened the night before, when one of Jesus' friends, Judas Iscariot, betrayed him to the Jewish authorities.

Jesus has been arrested, and abandoned by his friends.

Overnight he's been interrogated by the Jewish ruling council.

And been abused, beaten and mocked.

The Jewish leaders have accused him of blasphemy, claiming to be God, and so deserving of death.

But they need to get the Romans to approve a formal execution.

That brings us to my **first point**.(**SLIDE**) **Who has the power?** And to John ch18 **v28**.

Early on that Good Friday morning, Jesus is brought to the governor, Pontius Pilate's headquarters.

Pontius Pilate(**SLIDE**) had ruled the Roman Empire province of Judea, for about 4 yrs.

He has contempt for the Jews and is known for his brutal acts and cruelty.

Pilate asks the Jews what the charge is against Jesus?(**SLIDE**)

They answer in an ambiguous way, but make clear they seek the death penalty.

Another biography of Jesus, the Gospel of **Luke** (23.1-3,**SLIDE**) reveals they did say Jesus had claimed to be a king.

Jesus didn't go around saying he was the Christ or Messiah, meaning God's promised King, but he was.

However, if you claimed to be a king, it'd make you a rival to the Roman Emperor and you'd be killed.

That's why Pilate asks in **v33**.(**SLIDE**) 'Are you the King of the Jews?'

And in **v37**, 'You are a king then?'-----=

Jesus cannot honestly give a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

As he says in **v36**, my kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus is not the sort of king, Pilate would picture.

He's not amassing an army or seeking territory.

He's no rival to Rome, and not rebelling against Caesar.-----

But in speaking of a kingdom 'not of this world', Jesus is admitting he's a king in different sense.

He is God's appointed king, and the King of God's kingdom.

And the rule of King Jesus is firstly over the spiritual life, and over people's hearts.

Though it certainly impacts life in this world, in every way.

When you follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour it impacts every part of life.-----

Jesus says, as the King from heaven, he has come to **testify to the truth**.**(SLIDE)**

And everyone on the side of truth listens to him.-----

And how does Pilate respond?---- 'What's the truth?' (**v38**)-----

We find it so hard to trust politicians.

I mean how often do they break their promises, how often are they guilty of spin, deception, lies and half-truths.

I know not always, and it must be a very complicated & difficult job.

But politicians so often twist the truth, it seems to maintain their position and popularity, their power.-----

Pontius Pilate seems to cynically dismiss Jesus' claim to speak the truth.

But Jesus is saying, if you don't listen to and believe the truth he speaks, you will remain in ignorance,**(SLIDE)** remain in the **darkness**.-----

Pilate was in the dark about the truth of who Jesus was, and his true Kingship.---

Jesus is the saving King who came to speak the truth about God, and the way to find relationship with God, which is through Jesus.

But will people listen?-----

In **v38(SLIDE)** Pilate says he finds no grounds for charging Jesus.

Jesus is not deserving of death, he's innocent.

And surely Pilate is thinking, if Jesus is a king, he's not powerful, not in control.

Even his own people would choose to free the criminal Barabbas, over him.-----

By the end of ch18 Jesus does not seem powerful.

To Pilate he likely seemed pretty pathetic.

But let's consider next, **Who is weak? (SLIDE)**

In ch**19v1** Pilate has Jesus flogged, that is whipped in a horrible way that would cut your back open.

The Roman soldiers put no crown of gold, but a crown of thorns on his head.**(SLIDE)**

They clothe him in the royal colour purple, slap him and mockingly say, 'Hail king of the Jews!'

When bleeding & beaten Jesus is brought before the crowd, he'd have looked more like a clown than a king.

He certainly would have seemed weak, to Pilate and the Jews.-----

And as an aside, can I say that if you have experienced abuse, **Jesus knows what it is to be abused, and shamed**.

He is one you can turn to and trust. He understands.-----

It seems that this flogging and shaming was Pilate's strategy to satisfy the crowd.-----

But it doesn't work. They cry, 'Crucify! Crucify!' **(SLIDE)**

In **v6** Pilate for the 3rd time declares Jesus not guilty.

Surely Pilate feels infuriated by his helplessness, unable to hand-ball responsibility.

The Jews believe Jesus is guilty & deserving of death, for he claimed to be the Son of God.**(SLIDE)**

But the notion that Jesus may be divine, makes Pilate very afraid.(v8)

Can you see that Pilate here, is too weak to do what's right?-----

And can you see that Jesus is not afraid?-----

Jesus has this calm confidence, while not even defending himself, or trying to escape the death penalty.

In **v10** Pilate declares that he has the authority the power, to release or crucify Jesus.

But look at Jesus' answer – you'd have no authority, no power over me at all, if it wasn't given to you from above.

And Jesus is not talking about Caesar, but God.-----

Ultimately the Lord God is in charge here.

But what's implied is that Jesus is in charge too.

Jesus knows what's coming, he accepts and submits to his crucifixion.

Jesus seems weak, but actually he is not.

Pilate seems powerful, but actually he is... not.-----

I mean look at **v12,(SLIDE)** Pilate keeps trying to release Jesus, until the Jewish leaders play their trump card.

'If you release Jesus you are no friend of Caesar.

Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar'.

At that time in 30AD, Pilate was actually in a vulnerable political position.

If the Jews complained to Caesar, or there was a riot and Pilate lost control, he could lose his governorship. He fears losing his position of power & prominence.

So what does Pilate do in the end?

He hands Jesus over to be crucified.(v16)

Even if Pilate's power was God-given, he was still responsible for his choices, as are we.

And he condemns an innocent man to death.----

Power is often born out of fear, and then it gives birth to more fear.

For people fear losing the power they have.

And people don't want to admit how weak they feel.-----**(SLIDE)**

We don't like to feel weak, we wanna feel powerful.-----

October 19th 2014 was a day **Paul's life changed**.

Paul went to hospital with severe groin pain, and as he arrived he went into a full-body spasm, 'with a pain I never knew existed'. Every two or three minutes I screamed... I screamed for 36 hours.'

And as I screamed I couldn't understand why someone didn't help me... why they didn't relieve my pain... I cried in despair, 'God help me!'

His son said, 'Dad they're not worried about your pain right now, they're worried about saving your life.'

It turned out Paul was in acute kidney failure.----

Paul Tripp would later write[**Suffering**,p20. **SLIDE**]

Physical suffering exposes the delusion of personal autonomy and self-sufficiency.

If you and I had the kind of control we fall into thinking we have, none of us would ever go through anything difficult.

Physical suffering does force you to face the reality that your life is in the hands of another. It reminds you that you are small and dependent, that whatever little bits of power and control you have can be taken away in an instant.

Independence is a delusion that is so quickly exposed by suffering.

My weakness enabled me to see and admit things I had never faced in myself before.-----

Paul is Christian pastor, and he says, much of what I thought was faith in Christ, was actually confidence in my physical condition and pride in my ability to produce. Suffering has the power to expose what you've been trusting in all along.-----

Have you experienced a suffering that exposes your weakness?-----

Coming back to John's biography and my next **point,(SLIDE) Why does Jesus die?-----**

We might say, firstly, because the Jewish leaders, demanded his execution.

And because Pilate in **v16** gave permission for his **crucifixion**.

Pilate shows some strength to resist the Jews, and keep the sign above Jesus' head

- 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'.**(SLIDE)**

And Jesus is the King of the Jews.

But more than that, the truth is that Jesus is **the King of the world**.-----

The Messiah, the Christ, is the promised King, but it's effectively the title for the one who is the King of the Universe.

There's verses in the transcript to support this [Psalm 2, Isaiah 9.6-7; Daniel 7.14; Rev. 19.11-16]

Like **Revelation ch19(SLIDE)**, which describes Jesus as the 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'.

Jesus is the King and Lord of all, who has come to save people from all over the world, from every nation and language.----

As Jesus hung there, naked, ashamed n' bleeding on that cross, that Good Friday, he looked completely weak and beaten.**(SLIDE)**

Crucifixion was designed to make people feel powerless & humiliated, weak & degraded.

Jesus experienced that.-----

But actually, he was also showing incomparable strength & power.

For he was choosing to go to the cross, choosing to stay on the cross,[Matt 26.53]

choosing to suffer the weakness and humiliation.

Dying on the cross was Jesus choice.-----

Pilate was not strong enough to keep his position, not powerful enough to free Jesus.

Pilate, deep down, was weak.

Jesus, from the outside seemed weak, but in actual fact, he was powerful.

The most powerful human being who ever lived.-----

So many people want power and to feel powerful.----

But as **Lord Acton** famously said in the 19th century,**(SLIDE)** 'Power tends to corrupt
[and absolute power corrupts absolutely].'

When we have power, usually our selfish hearts use it to control others.-----

But in actual fact, like for Pontius Pilate, **we are weak**.

Suffering reminds us of our weakness, as Paul Tripp experienced.-----

We are all weak.-----

Our culture says,**(SLIDE)** 'you can be anything, or do anything you set your mind to'.

But it's cruel to say that to a five-foot tall 18 year old who wants to play NBA basketball.

It's cruel to say that to a 10 year old uneducated girl, living in a slum beside a rubbish dump in Jakarta.**(SLIDE)**

We can't be anything we want to be.-----

So often in life we feel our weakness and inadequacy.

And even successful n' powerful people usually feel fearful, of losing it all.-----

And when it comes to relationship with God, and gaining eternal life, we are not powerful enough to get there either. Not good enough.

We are all too weak to bring ourselves to heaven and relationship with God.**(SLIDE)**

As **Linh** shared in her testimony, when it came to living by her own standards, or Jesus' standards, she was inconsistent and failed.-----

It is IN our weakness, and darkness and ignorance, that God sends his Son Jesus to **save us, by dying for us**.

You see we all ignore God and reject his authority over us.**(SLIDE)**

Saying 'No' to God, is what the Bible calls 'sin'.

And the Bible says, that the wages of sin is death. [Romans 6.23]

The consequence for our sin is death.-----

And we are not powerful enough to deliver ourselves from death.-----

But thank God that there is one who can.

The innocent who died in the place of the guilty – Jesus!

(SLIDE)Just before Jesus died, **v30** says he cried out 'It is finished!'

Him bearing the punishment for people who'd rejected God's rule, was finished.----

In CS Lewis' Narnia, **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**,(SLIDE),
 the little boy Edmund is a spiteful & mean-spirited boy.
 He becomes greedy for the Turkish delight the White Witch offers.
 Really Edmund is corrupted by a desire for power, and by lavish false promises.
 But he repents, he turns back to Aslan, but then faces a death penalty.
 The lion Aslan, who is like Christ, cannot for all his immense power, rescue the enslaved
 boy.
 Aslan must acknowledge the "Magic", or law, that has given the witch power over the boy.
 But there is a 'deeper magic from the dawn of time' that enables one who dies willingly for
 someone else, to take the person's punishment and let them go free.
 So Aslan allows himself to be executed, and Edmund is freed.-----
 Yet Aslan comes back from the dead. And so does Jesus Christ.-----
 Like Aslan, Christ dies to set others free.
 It's the death of Jesus Christ that sets us free from the darkness of an eternal death, in
 separation from God.-----[Rev 20.14-15]
 It's the death of Christ that enables us to be accepted, not condemned.-----
 For as Jesus says in **John ch10 (v11,17-SLIDE)**, I am the good shepherd, who lays his life
 down for the sheep, his people.-----
 Just like Aslan did for undeserving Edmund.-----

So Why did Jesus die?

Ultimately, to save us from eternal death, and reconcile us to God.(SLIDE-Rom 5.10)
 Everyone who trusts him.----[
 So because of what Christ has done, in his sinless life, his substitutionary death and rising,
 we gain a forgiven relationship with God.--- [1John 2.2; 5.12]]
 Everyone who will trust in him as Saviour, and yield to him as King,(SLIDE)
 will be saved.-----[John 3.16; Romans 10.9-13]
 Do you believe this?-----
 When we meet Jesus, by trusting him, we meet God.
 And it's life changing, forever, but even now.
 For Only by admitting our need, our sin, our powerlessness,
 and by casting ourselves on Jesus' mercy,
 will we finally become secure in his love,
 and therefore empowered to live in a selfless way that does not oppress others.
 The insecurity is gone, the lust for power is cut at the root.
 [Timothy Keller, Counterfeit gods: When the empty promises of love, money and power let you down]

Trusting Jesus saves and changes everything.
 But most people don't want to have Jesus as their Lord and King,
 The Jews that Good Friday, in v15(SLIDE) rejected Jesus as their King.
 And really there they also rejected God as their ruler and King.
 But the question is, will we reject **Jesus as our King**?-----
 Pilate met Jesus, but did not trust & follow him.
 Sadly, Pilate remained in darkness.
 What's your response to King Jesus?
 Is Jesus your King?
 Is he the Lord who can save you & bring you to God?-----
 Please trust in him, and come under his good and loving rule today?-----
 If you want to do that, you could pray a **prayer like this...(SLIDE)**

God, I am sorry for ignoring and rejecting you.
 I trust in Jesus, as my Saviour and Lord, who died and rose again.
 Thank you that I have salvation, life, and relationship with you God now.

Help me keep following Jesus as the King of my life
Amen

Please don't feel you have to pray that.

You may want to do some more research, and if so you might like to read all of **John's Gospel** with someone.(**SLIDE**)

Or you may have lots of questions, and you could chat with someone at the Meet Jesus table in the foyer, or sign up for a **Christianity Explored** course.

Or maybe you're ready to trust and commit to him right now.

If you are, I'm going to pray that prayer again, and pause after each line, and give you time to say it in your mind after me.

So if you'd like to pray that now, please do that.(**SLIDE**)

...

Remember how **Linh** shared of meeting Jesus at uni, and in the Bible.(**SLIDE**)

And how she came to accept Jesus as her Lord & Saviour, and everything changed
– a home in heaven, a new family now.

The punishment for sin - paid, and she is accepted.

Linh couldn't save herself but Jesus did.-----

And if you've trusted in Jesus then he's saved you too, and welcome to God's family.

We are weak, honestly, we are. But Jesus is strong to save us.

Stop striving to be powerful, stop denying your weakness.

Trust Jesus – He is powerful to save.

Let's pray.