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John 18:36-38

In 2015 a Texas state trooper named Brian Encinia pulled over Sandra Bland. Encinia was perhaps not a great officer, but he had a knack for one thing. He was very good at pulling people over for minor infractions, which allowed him to dig into people's backgrounds or cars and find more significant violations. He had done it more than 1,600 times in the last 12 months. That might be an abuse of power. He was also enforcing the law and demanding that other people do the same.

The traffic stop escalated quickly. Encinia demanded Bland put out her cigarette and shut off her phone. Bland resisted. In the end, he arrested her for resisting arrest. She was jailed and unable to post bond. 3 days later, she committed suicide.

Both the FBI and the Department of Public Safety investigated the event. Newspapers across the United States chimed in. Can you imagine working as part of those investigations? How would you ever know what is true? And by that I mean, how would ever figure out not only what actually happened – the facts of the case - but also say something accurate about good and bad, right and wrong, and what should have happened?

The section of God's Word today is just this question. It's one brief passage from John. Jesus has already been arrested. He has stood trial before the Jewish religious leaders. They have decided he was guilty of blasphemy. They intend to charge him for inciting a rebellion. So by this point, the evidence is compounding against Jesus. It's piling up. And so as Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate he says (and I invite you to read these words with me, whether you're here or at home), **John 18:36-38 "You are a king then! Said Pilate. Jesus answered, "you say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" retorted Pilate."**

### **Discover/adventure**

Jesus had no problem stepping onto the world stage. He was not just battling in the spiritual world, he was also battling in the physical world. He invited Pilate to join a side in the battle.

He wants you to do the same thing. He asks you to pray the same thing every time he calls you to pray the Lord's Prayer. We explain it this way: "God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh."

Some of us love the battle in this world, maybe a little bit too much. Other people aren't part of the battle at all. And I'm not saying the spiritual battle. I'm even saying the physical battle. Jesus says, pick a side. Get in the fight. We've got to work out what exactly that fight looks like.

**Let's pick a side in the battle for the world.**

## Part 1

If you look at the life of Jesus, he clearly battled four things

1. spiritual evil and the devil, including demons
2. false religiosity, often represented by the Jewish religious leaders
3. the effects of sin, like sickness, blindness, lameness, and death
4. our desires, like our sexual desire, money, power, and family.

The first thing I want us to see is this: **Jesus didn't reject the world or embrace the world, but worked within it.**

The way he dealt with spiritual evil and false religiosity is not the same way he dealt with the effects of sin and our desires. This is kind of a hard thing to demonstrate, but let me highlight some of the ways Jesus dealt with spiritual evil and false religiosity

- Mark 2 – temptations, “get away from me Satan”
- Mark 5 – drives out the demon
- Mark 6 – heals the sick person. In our Western mind, we think, of course, what else could he have done? He could have walked on the other side, like religious leaders who walked past the Jewish man beaten on the side of the road.
- Mark 7 – calls the Jewish religious leaders hypocrites
- Mark 8 – do you still not see to his disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees
- Mark 10 – whoever wants to be great among you

When he deals with the effects of sin and our desires, he deals with us differently

- Mark 6 – feeds the 5,000
- Mark 10 – the rich young man – go sell what you have and give it to the poor
- Luke 19 – I'm coming to your house today

“My kingdom is not of this world”. He intends to bring his rule and his reign into our lives.

**Jesus didn't reject the world or embrace the world, but worked within it.**

**“My kingdom is not of this world”** (verse 36)

## Part 2

See, friend, what Jesus has here is an invitation for you to go into battle in a very different way.

Researcher Timothy Levine is probably the world's leading researcher on truth and lies. He says two important things about trusting people for the truth. First he says we are wired to trust people. Second he says we can't tell when people are lying.

“the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37)

He presents the truth to Pilate.

He doesn't ram it down his throat.

He calls or invites Pilate to know the truth.

This is what it sounds like when you've got a champion, you've got a Warrior who says, "I'm the truth."

He never says go there for the truth or go there for the truth. He doesn't even say that is truth or that is the truth.

He says, "I am the truth." If he said that is the truth, that would be more convenient. Some principle, some idea could be true for a while. And if it turns out

We can tell that an idea is more likely to be true if someone dies for it.

And what happens with Jesus is so much more because it happens to him.

God's Warriors don't have to fight for truth, they are filled with truth.

Gene Veith -

"I probably never really believed in the vague, domesticated spirit of niceness that I had constructed for myself and found in my humane liberal theology. The real universe, with its danger and consequences and hard edges, such as cancer, shows no trace of having been created by such a sentimental deity. I probably knew, deep down inside, that I was making up a private little religion to make myself feel better, and that atheism made far better sense. But this God I was reading about in the Bible had hard edges. He was absolute, utterly mysterious, and despite all appearances, radically righteous. I began to see God in a completely differently light, the light of holiness. And I saw myself in the rebellious children of Israel: ungrateful, inconsistent, and idolatrous.

And yet, I saw while I was reading that when God's children were nearly absorbed – and enslaved – by the pagan cultures they wanted to emulate, God kept sending them deliverers: Moses, the judges, the prophets, and the good kings. He also gave them the temple and the curious rites in which their sins could be covered by blood. By the time I got to the New Testament, reading the life of Christ, it all came together, and the Epistles of Paul made the fact of my salvation vividly clear.

I did not know the terminology at the time, much less the theology; but what I was experiencing in reading the Bible was the Law, which was convicting me of my sinfulness and awakening in me the knowledge of my lost condition, and the Gospel, which assured me of my forgiveness in Christ." (Gene Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross*, 52)

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