

Dear Heavenly Father,

### *Praise*

Jesus told Pilate, “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” (John 18:37). I praise you today as the God of truth, the One who sends light into the darkness and deceit of this wretched world. I worship your Son as the incarnate Truth, and I exalt his name forever! Hallelujah!

### *Today in Your Word*

Today you told me about Jesus’ civil trial before Pilate and Herod. Pontius Pilate had been appointed governor of Judea in AD 26, and in the seven years he had been in office, there had been three major confrontations with the Jews. The people hated him, and he was on shaky ground with Rome. The emperor Tiberius had already given him one formal rebuke, and he could ill afford another. The chief priests and elders knew this, and they were confident they could use him to get rid of Jesus. As I studied Pilate’s life, I discerned several qualities that contributed to his downfall: (1) *He insisted on doing things his own way.* In his first altercation with the Jews, Pilate reversed the policy of his predecessors and marched his troops into Jerusalem carrying standards with images the Jews viewed as idolatrous. When they protested, Pilate ordered them to disperse on pain of death, and when they called his bluff, he was forced to back down and remove the offending standards.<sup>1</sup> He made the same mistake again and again, until when Jesus finally stood before him, he was in such a precarious position that he was unable to take a stand for justice. This teaches me how important it is to follow your leadership in all my decisions, for my past mistakes can undermine my ability to do right when it really counts; (2) *He was cynical and sarcastic.* Pilate had spent much of his adult life in the halls and palaces of power. He was very familiar with the lies and deceit that swirled through such places, and he had come to scorn those who claimed to speak the truth. Indeed, he knew the chief priests and elders were lying to him about Jesus, and he had become so hardened that when the Truth-in-Person stood before him, he dismissed Jesus’ claim with a sarcastic question: “What is truth?” This teaches me to cultivate a love for the truth, for if I scorn your Word, the day will come when I can no longer tell the truth from a lie; (3) *He put political ambition above personal integrity.* Pilate was a native of Seville, Spain, and he rose to power when, after joining the Roman legions, he married Claudia Procula, a granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. The governorship of Judea was to be a stepping stone to greater things, maybe even Rome, and Pilate desperately wanted to succeed politically. He wanted it so badly, that when the pressure was on and his back was against the wall, he chose politics over principle. This teaches me the danger of ambition, for if I care more about success than integrity, I will end up sacrificing what is most precious—the Son of God. What a contrast of men! Jesus gave up his glory while Pilate clung to his. Jesus laid down his life while Pilate saved his. And on that fateful day, when Jesus stood before Pilate, Pilate stood before Jesus, and he failed the test of his soul. (God, help me not to be like Pilate!)

### *Reflection*

In a last, supreme irony, the Jews refused to enter Pilate’s headquarters for fear of being defiled, while at the same time they were preparing to murder the Lamb of God. How twisted and perverse! Yet if I substitute my own ideas of right and wrong for the truth of your Word, I’m standing right there with them in their wickedness.

### *Request*

Father, give me a principle within of jealous, godly fear. Help me to be a person of integrity, always standing for the truth and the right. Give me the grace I need to say ‘No’ to the world and ‘Yes’ to the Spirit.

### *Thanksgiving*

Thank you for the gift of your Son! Pilate asked the clamoring crowd, “What shall I do with Jesus?” I say with all my heart, ‘Praise him as the King of kings and receive him as your Lord!’ Praise the Lord!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Suggested Hymn: “What Will You Do with Jesus?” – Albert B. Simpson.*

*Meditation Verse: Luke 22:70.*

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<sup>1</sup> Finding Purpose Ministries, *Gospel of John*, Lesson 15, Online: <http://www.findingpurpose.net/gospel-of-john.aspx>.