



## ENTER God's presence

**Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

**-Psalm 2:10-12**

Lord Jesus, you are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Thank you that the new life we have in you frees us from sin and from the fear of death and those who might persecute us and your church. We pray that you would bless those who lead us, and all of us now, as we gather around your Word. Amen.



## SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What is the more ridiculous case of 'political correctness' you have encountered?**
4. **Why do you think politics is still considered such a private and difficult topic to discuss?**

Aristotle once said, "Man is by nature a political animal." Wherever there is an opinion, there are politics. Whenever two people get together there are politics. Wherever there is an agenda, there are politics. Wherever there is power, there is politics. It crosses into every sector of life - Government (Left/Right. Liberal/Labour/Green/Independent, Federal/State), the Church (Liberal/Conservative), Workplaces (Management/Workers), Communities (North Shore/Inner City/West). Sports clubs. Families. Life, as the world presents, is highly political and full of power plays where our attitudes and beliefs are closely tied up with our most basic human needs - safety, belonging, identity, self-esteem and purpose, and where keeping up appearances is sometimes seen to be more important than substance. Today Jesus reveals a life beyond politics that is full of substance and purpose, gives security and identity and creates belonging and worth and gives power for everyday living.

Week beginning:  
**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021**

Worship series:  
**Life Pulse**



## VERSE for the week

**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."**

John 18:37b



## REMEMBER this week

**When it comes to Jesus, there is no way to be neutral.**



**LISTEN** attentively

**Read John 18:28-40**

- 5. What do you find challenging/confusing/comforting about this text?**
- 6. Who, in your opinion displays more power and control in this situation, Pontius Pilate or the Jewish leaders? Why?**
- 7. What sense do you get of Jesus' agenda throughout this encounter?**
- 8. Jesus says he has come to 'testify to the truth'. What 'truth' statements of Jesus have made the largest impact in your life?**

Every interaction between people includes an element of politics. Every encounter involves someone with greater power or influence and someone with less. Sometimes individual agendas align and so temporary alliances are formed. Other times agendas and motivations clash and so rivalry begins. It is simply the way humans have learned to function in a corporate, community setting. Some people lead and make the rules, others follow the rules and support those who make them. So what does it mean for the resurrection life of a Christian to live a life beyond politics? To an extent, politics is a necessary part of living in community. However, it seems that over the last few years, we have come to identify people more and more by their politics; by their stance on certain social or global issues and this seems to have created an ever widening gap between different groups of people.

- 9. What are some of the physical benefits you can see which come from Australia's democratic political system?**
- 10. In what ways have human political systems failed throughout history?**

Whatever system of government and politics people have chosen to adopt throughout history, there inevitably comes a point in time when those who are in power are faced with the prospect of losing power or control. Sometimes this happens without too much turmoil, other times it can be devastatingly destructive. This was the situation for the Jewish leaders and the Roman leaders at the time of Jesus. Until Jesus began his ministry, the Jews and Romans had an uneasy truce. Power was fairly balanced. The Jewish leaders were free to continue to promote and enforce Jewish law among their communities, as long as they also kept Roman law and paid their taxes to Caesar. This allowed the Romans the ability to maintain law and order and exercise the authority of Rome in the area. However, Jesus excited people. In Jesus, people saw another way to live. A life filled with the power to cast out demons, perform miraculous healing and many other signs and wonders. The Heavenly power of Jesus upset the uneasy balance of power in Jerusalem and so the political games began.

- 11. What would you say is the difference between managing a situation and manipulating a situation?**
- 12. How much do the opinions and attitudes of others factor into your decision making process?**



**GROW** deeper

Both Pilate and the Jewish leaders responded to Jesus politically, but each likely had different goals and motivations. The Jewish leaders stood to lose their own position as spiritual leaders if Jesus' claims about being the Messiah were believed. They acted out of pride and self assurance, they found a way to impose their will on the situation. Pilate, on the other hand, seems to have acted more out of fear. Fear of the opinion and actions of the crowd if he did not give them what they wanted. He laid aside his own conscience and conviction in order to appease the crowd. Both pride (in our power which makes us better than others) and fear (of losing power and that others might think less of us) are big issues that plague most of our decision making on a daily basis.

Yet Jesus does not seem to show any signs of fear or pride. Jesus stands before Pilate and the Jewish leaders 100% confident in his identity, and power, and authority, as the Son of God. Jesus does not try a clever ploy to manipulate Pilate or the other Jewish leaders. He simply speaks the truth. He does not defend his position or claims, he simply states the truth. Jesus did not fear the opinion of others because he was secure in the Heavenly Father's opinion of him. Jesus was not concerned about holding power on Earth because he knew all power in heaven and on earth belonged to God. As children of God living in the resurrection of Jesus, we too are now heirs of a heavenly kingdom and our Heavenly Father has given us his approval through his Son and through his Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus from death is now alive in us. We can't be proud, because all of this comes from outside of ourselves, but we also have nothing to fear because God is for us.

**13. When have you compromised speaking the truth in favour of appeasing others or improving your own standing?**

**14. What things do you know from the Bible, that God says about you as his loved and redeemed child?**



## **LIVE** purposefully

There are more opportunities than ever to express our opinions and to try and influence others to our way of thinking through the world of social media. However, Christian author, Philip Yancey once wrote, "Christian faith, is at its heart about self giving – God's self-giving and human self-giving – and not about self-imposing." Our task is the same as Jesus', not to impose ourselves, or our beliefs, or our morals on others, but simply to testify to the truth. The truth of the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, in whom we have a new life, a life in which we can be free of the fear of the opinions of others, free from the power plays and pride of the world around us.

**15. Have you ever been tempted to enter a heated online debate about a social or religious issue? Why did/didn't you get involved?**

**16. Share an example of when you have clearly communicated the truth of Jesus to someone else?**

**17. How might the distinction between self-imposing and self-giving shift the way you communicate the truth of the Gospel?**



## **PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for giving Jesus the name above all other names. Thank Jesus for giving himself for us and for freeing us from the burden of needing to impress others. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live daily in his freedom to give selflessly to others knowing that God has already given you all things.
- Continue to pray for LifeWay Cambodia and Pastor Vibol as they continue to share the life of Jesus in strict Covid-19 lockdown conditions and for the work of digging new wells for their community.
- Pray for the places around the world where political systems are corrupt and fail to adequately care for those they govern.
- For the Covid situation in India and for those who are now stuck there unable to get home.



## **BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], you belong to the kingdom of heaven. Amen.**