



SERMON ON LAST SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT | 21st November 2021

JOHN 18:33-37 | SUNNY SCHWARZ – CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

Reflections can be ever so powerful and beautiful.

And by saying that I do mean it in a double sense.

Let me share a reflection with you. Every Sunday, when we sit down for Readings and intercessions, I bow my head....

And right there in front of me, on the floor.... Is the reflection of that cross in the window. The floor as a mirror, with a tiny bit of Jesus for my eyes only. It makes me smile. It moves me. It's something I give thanks for every Sunday.

Looking into the mirror sometimes leaves us wondering who we really are.

As Christians, we would want to be like Jesus, reflecting him in all we say and do, and also in all we do not say or do.

Maybe we aren't too bad, but we are not like Jesus. Not at all.

So how can we be content with what we see? How can Jesus be happy with us.

Hope is what we do not see. Hope is what we trust in.

Pilate did not have a mirror but if - what would he have seen after he condemned Jesus to die on the cross? A happy and confident ruler or a man full of remorse?

Pilate is one of those who dislikes domestic disputes, but the people expect him – their leader - to fulfil his role as Prefect of Palestine.

Quite obviously he was struggling to believe what he heard about Jesus, and then he meets him in person as the appointed prosecutor.

In today's Gospel, we witness Pilate interrogating Jesus.

Very straight-forward he asks: *"Are you the King of the Jews?"*

He wants to know whether Jesus had committed treason against Rome.

Jesus replies, *"Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"*

Now the one who should be answering suddenly is interrogating.

Something about Jesus makes Pilate wonder who's really on trial.

The judge feels like a defendant and it is Pilate who offers a rather defensive response: *"What do you think I am, a Jew? Your people are angry with you, so tell me what it is that you've done to make them so mad."*

But Jesus simply replies, *"My kingdom is not from this world. I'm here to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."*



Even though our Gospel text ends here, let me share with you the next verse in chapter 18. Pilate responds to Jesus, *“What is truth?”* And Jesus says nothing. The only answer that Pilate gets is Jesus himself—the truth that is Jesus.

We can almost feel how Pilate is changed by Jesus, how he is strangely moved by this man who wanders around teaching, preaching and healing!

In chapter 19, Pilate then tries to discharge Jesus.

He tells the crowd that he finds no fault in Jesus. But they want him dead.

Pilate then goes back to Jesus, trying to convince him to admit a minor crime.

“Don’t you know I have the power of life and death over you?”

→ Give me something, anything, just help me placate the mob.

Yet Jesus says nothing.

Oh, Pilate knows how wrong the entire situation is, he doesn’t like what he sees or what he is about to do - but he is in too deep already.

The people expect and request a bloody spectacle, they want Jesus crucified – and they shall get it.

It’s no different in our lives. There are times when we are too paralysed, too busy or too tentative to act as we should and stand up for what we know deep within is right; whether it is expected of us or whether we do not give enough attention to it – but whatever the reason, we have to live with the outcome.

Jesus is a mirror to Pilate and to all others to see the truth. He is the truth.

His Silence speaks. Looking at Jesus is overwhelming. It must have been for Pilate – and he couldn’t know just how great a King was standing before him.

We stand in awe of his integrity – and our pretence is a shortfall.

His courage is out of this world compared to ours, and we cannot love our enemies like he did, we do not give a fair share of what we have to those in need, we are jealous and ignorant. We do not forgive as quickly and wholeheartedly as he does, and our kindness is nothing compared to his selfless giving.

Look at how he loves and how we love.



So when we look into the mirror and compare ourselves to Jesus,
we see our own shortcomings and failures.

But not looking at Jesus – is that the answer?

The good news: He loves us and does not expect us to be 100% like him
– it is impossible.

But we should try to come as close as possible. It is His truth that sets us free.
That challenges us, motivates us, encourages us to be better. Every day.

Then we can see a tiny bit of Jesus in our reflection.

And “We hope for what we do not see”... that is rooted in our faith and that is
true for ourselves as well. We aren’t there yet – but we become!

No need to be afraid. Jesus protects us and loves us like no one else – he accepts
our shortcomings and wants us to look in the mirror, to turn our eyes on him and
see a friend looking back at us.

Consider Jesus to be your best friend.

The one you accept to make you more conscious of your behaviour and attitude.

The one you never want to disappoint. The one that changes you, and me - all of
us.

Mistakes we make, but our friend Jesus reminds us not to repeat them.

Pilate was not offered a second chance – to act according to what HE believed
was the truth. But we are forgiven through the cross, our imperfections are not to
hold us back but to challenge us to become... more like Jesus.

Looking into the mirror will gradually change us.

And isn’t that a transformation to strive and live for?

We hope for what we cannot see – yet, but we will be face to face with him one
day. We are not hopeless! We are becoming. On our way.

Jesus was on his way for quite a long time.

So let us not be too hard on ourselves but keep believing.

Jesus is working in us and on us. He is changing us if only we trust him.

Our Post communion hymn today will be “*Jesus, you are changing me*”.

The Revd Stan Evans

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I want to invite you to listen to the words with all your heart, trust in the process of becoming and then the next time you look into the mirror, smile at that tiny little bit of Jesus in your own reflection, and know just how much He loves you.

AMEN