



Someone to Believe In

Session 3 When common sense tells you not to believe

Worship songs:

Film clip 1:08:00 to 1:32:00

Bible passage

John 18: 28-40

Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, 'What charges are you bringing against this man?'

'If he were not a criminal,' they replied, 'we would not have handed him over to you.'

Pilate said, 'Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.'

'But we have no right to execute anyone,' they objected. This took place to fulfil what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'

'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?'

'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied. 'Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?'

Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'

'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. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, 'I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release "the king of the Jews"?''

They shouted back, 'No, not him! Give us Barabbas!' Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

In the trial of Santa Claus, the prosecution is influenced by the opposing store owner who can see an economic advantage in discrediting Kris Kringle To suit their purposes, having the old man declared insane get him out of the way. However, Bryan Bedford sees a friend in whom he believes in trouble and uses his skill as a lawyer to challenge the validity of the prosecution argument. Indeed he follows the legal version of CS Lewis's mad, bad, or true approach to the person of Jesus. Mr Bedford reminds him that power, money and influence are at stake. The judge, representing the people of the City of New York, remarks that only a miracle can change the course of the case.

Ed Collins, the prosecutor, wants to use rationality as the means of unseating Kris Kringle and having him committed to a mental institution. Bringing in a military advisor with experience of the North Pole, he points to the lack of evidence of toy manufacturing or distribution facilities. Memorably, bringing in a reindeer, he gets KK to say that of course the reindeer doesn't fly it, only does so on Christmas Night, leaving the impression of a deluded old man.

Bryan Bedford's witnesses attest to Santa Claus's goodness and gentleness and as a force for good over commercialism. The battle becomes one of whether Santa Claus exists rather than the sanity or otherwise of Kris Kringle. Using the fact that many parents talk to their children about Santa Claus and assert that he delivers their Christmas presents, Mr Bedford tries to suggest that the evidence points to belief in Santa Claus even in the face of other loud objections. Even the prosecutor is shown by his wife to encourage their children to believe in Santa Claus.

Susan brings the judge a Christmas card to the judge on the bench as he begins to deliver his verdict. Inside it a \$1 bill has the words "In God we trust" circled in red. Having already admitted that he wanted to dismiss the case, the judge grasps the argument that Mr Bedford has been making and draws the link between believing in Santa Claus and belief in the US Government, mandated by the people of the USA, to guarantee the value of the currency. Reminder that our own British "paper" money has the words "I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of £XX" and signed by the governor of the Bank of England or the Chief Cashier. We take this on trust when we hand over money in return for goods or services.

Discussion questions

1. Have you ever done something when common sense told you not to? What happened?
2. CS Lewis suggested that there were 3 possibilities about Jesus – that he was mad, bad, or right. What did the Roman and Jewish authorities think of Jesus' claims? What did Jesus ask his disciples and how did they reply?
3. How do we introduce ourselves to others? Can we prove that and if so how?
4. How does Jesus identify himself as recorded in John's Gospel?
5. What does it mean to have our identity in Christ for our daily lives?"

Prayer

Dear loving Father, thank you for the common sense that you give us in our daily lives. But, Lord, increase our faith so that when you ask us to do something, or believe in something, that doesn't fit in with our comfortable worldview, we are willing to believe and trust in you and act as you direct.

Amen.

Worship Song: Trust and Obey

Blessing and departure