

## **Implications of the Drama of Jesus' Passion Story in the Gospel of John for the Ethics of the Political Elite in the Public Sphere**

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**Abstract:** The Church believed that her faith had social relevance. God, who is believed in, is responded to in concrete cultural and political situations. Therefore, the Church is no longer an isolated religious institution but integral to people's life experiences. Currently, the Indonesian nation is not only in a political crisis but also a crisis of political behavior. This crisis is exacerbated because the political elite has no shame in politics. Empirically, it is effortless to find examples of how there is no sense of shame because they have been guilty in society, and most prominently in the attitudes of political elites. It is no secret that many leaders and political elites are guilty of causing various crises, but when appearing in public, they do not show that they are guilty. Thus, this study aims to find the ethical values of the passion story of Jesus based on the Gospel of John. John presents the story of Jesus' passion for showing Jesus' empire as King through His "exaltation" on the Cross. Through this reading, leaders and public officials know and behave as leaders in front of the people. This research is a critical reading of the story of the passion of Jesus so that ethical points are found on how the political elite should act in the public sphere.

**Keywords:** Gospel of John, Passion Story of Jesus, Political Elite, Political Ethics, Public Space.

**Abstrak:** Sejak awal Gereja yakin bahwa imannya mempunyai relevansi sosial. Allah yang diimani, ditanggapi dalam situasi kultural dan politik yang konkrit. Karena itu, Gereja tidak lagi menjadi institusi religius yang terisolir melainkan bagian integral dari pengalaman hidup masyarakat. Saat ini, bangsa Indonesia tidak hanya berada dalam krisis politik tetapi juga krisis tingkah laku berpolitik. Krisis ini diperparah karena elit politik tidak mempunyai rasa malu berpolitik. Secara empiris, amat mudah ditemukan contoh bagaimana tidak adanya rasa malu karena telah bersalah ada dalam masyarakat, dan paling mencolok pada sikap para elit politik dan pejabat publik. Bukan rahasia lagi banyak pemimpin dan para elit politik yang jelas-jelas bersalah menyebabkan berbagai krisis tetapi ketika tampil di depan umum mereka tidak memperlihatkan bahwa mereka ikut bersalah, sehingga tahu membawa diri di ruang publik. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan menemukan nilai-nilai etis dari kisah sengsara Yesus menurut Injil Yohanes. Yohanes menampilkan kisah sengsara Yesus untuk menunjukkan regalitas Yesus sebagai raja melalui "peninggian-Nya" di Salib. Melalui pembacaan ini, para pemimpin dan pejabat publik disadarkan bagaimana harus membawa diri sebagai pemimpin di depan rakyat. Penelitian ini merupakan pembacaan kritis atas kisah sengsara Yesus sehingga ditemukan poin-poin etis bagaimana elit politik harus bertindak di ruang publik).

**Kata Kunci:** Etika politik, Kisah Sengsara Yesus, Injil Yohanes, Elit Politik, Ruang Publik.

### **1. Introduction**

These days, Indonesia is hit by a moral crisis in the public sphere. There is much news about the behavior of political leaders, economic rulers and public officials, and politicians who often display the characteristics of humans who do not believe in Allah. It seems to be nonsense discourse talking

about the sanctity of politics. The quality of the people's representatives is awful. Law enforcers, believed to be institutions that fight for justice and truth, do not work correctly. The people feel a gap of injustice between the authorities and the people. The results of an assessment conducted by ICW (Indonesia Corruption Watch) on the performance of law enforcement officials: the police, prosecutors, and the Corruption Eradication Commission on the prosecution of corruption cases in the first half of 2021 based on the percentage of target achievements were considered very poor (Javier, 2021). This assessment can eliminate the good name of the State, government, and even religion. As a result, in various places, many people avoid politics because they are considered dirty, cunning, and full of evil intrigues, so people distance themselves from politics (Dwihantoro, 2013).

Even though politics is basically acting inside the police (country), it means that doing politics is not to seek power, position, or wealth, but together with people of goodwill to fight for respect for fundamental human rights. Because everything related to living together, such as in the fields of law, agriculture, and the economy, is a political decision, being in politics is neither just managing state administration nor reducing the activities of political parties, but concerning matters related to living together. Then the task of the political elite is to realize the common welfare or common good (*bonum commune*) (Silalahi & Yuwono, 2018). In other words, the multidimensional crisis in this country occurred because political elites have no shame in being political. It is no secret that few leaders and political elites are not guilty of causing various crises, but when they appear in public, they do not even show guilt, so they know how to carry themselves in public spaces (Gunawan, 2012). They have the right to appear, but it offends the people that their appearance gives the impression that they have never been at fault. Nevertheless, guilt will require a person to find a form of behavior that is self-aware, humble, and maintains power. If there is no guilt, there are people who will exercise their power arrogantly, as they usually do (Adon, 2018).

Facing this problem, the Christian tradition, which is rich in interpretations and spiritual values, provides a basis and help for believers, especially Christians or anyone who wants to foster a positive attitude so that they can contribute to public life. It means that religion, through its teachings, can utilize the people/congregation to answer and provide solutions to various social problems for various social problems that occur in society (Rofidah, 2017). Because religious people, however, are also citizens, religion is not only manifested through worship, prayer, and part of it (Olla, 2017). However, tangible things must be done to overcome social problems, such as giving positive meaning to build shared prosperity, especially building a civilized public. That is the form of religious contribution expected by society, namely making operative religious ideas a source of inspiration for building the nation and State's life so that it is civilized and prosperous.

It has nothing to do with turning a country into a religious state but instead with making religion an integral part of human life. Therefore, religion should not be removed from the private sphere. However, it continues to assist people in developing their completeness, even in their socio-political dimension, as the inheritor of spiritual values, morals and a witness to the truth (Olla, 2014). Therefore, the Indonesian Catholic Church's involvement with the life of the nation and State contributes to how the living of the spiritual life of the faithful can reveal its relations in the socio-political world which includes a broader meaning than just the matter of the power struggle. Regarding the moral decadence of political elites in Indonesia, one of the ways that the Catholic Church can is to return to the foundations of the Church. The foundation of the Church is not an idea, principle, program, or norm but a person of Jesus Christ (Adon, 2016b). Therefore, a deep understanding of the person of Christ is the key to actual ecclesiology. Therefore, this research provides the drama of Jesus' passion story as told in the Gospel of John to discuss the moral issues raised by the political elites mentioned above.

The motif of Christ's kingship (regality) frames the story of passion in the Gospel of John. Through this motif, John wanted to show that it was precisely by His suffering and death that Christ was appointed as the supreme King through His "exaltation" on the Cross (Wardoyo, 2021). In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels, which relate the passion of Jesus in the light of the fourth hymn of YHWH's Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13–53:12). That is why in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is shown as a

figure who kept silent before Pilate. On the other hand, in the Gospel of John, Jesus actively dialogues with Roman officials to reveal the meaning of His legality (John 18:33-38). Jesus openly stated that Pilate's power over Him was only possible if God Himself bestowed it (John 19:8-11).

Jesus exemplified a good shepherd who did not neglect his flock and even gave His life as a ransom for humankind. This interpretive framework can examine spiritual values as a foundation and ethical direction for political elites' behavior and conduct themselves in public (John 10:11, 15). Therefore, the Evangelist John, through the drama of the passion of Jesus, wants to reveal the deep meaning of the reality of Jesus, which contains a Christological synthesis: Jesus is a king thanks to the birth and mission he received from the Father. As a human being, he was "born" for generations of humans not to rule unjustly but to bear witness to the "Truth" that is to reveal God's plan of salvation that is manifested through His actions that fight for truth and justice, especially for those who are weak and marginalized. Through His entire ministry to those who are marginalized, Jesus reveals the revelation of the Father's love in Himself as a personalized "Truth," which incarnates into a free human being (John, 8:32).

Therefore, the drama of the passion story of Jesus presented in the Gospel of John can be a deep spiritual wealth to educate and become an ethical guide for every political elite to have good political morals. Because the immoral political elite just only concerned with themselves, seeking many benefits from their power. Thus if immoral leaders hold government, social, political, and economic stability will experience a crisis, and the community's welfare will be at stake (Rofidah, 2017). A religious approach can be a solution to minimize the moral decadence of political elites because religion has a sense of faith through which it can give birth to values based on Belief in the One and Only God. Those values are imbued with the awareness that life comes from God and will return to Him. So living a political life following good and correct political morals is part of the duty of faith in Allah so that political life truly becomes the welfare of the nation and State. For Christians, this calling is a logical consequence of their calling as followers of Christ because Christ himself came to the end of his life, even in His suffering, still showing how to be a good leader and shepherd for His sheep.

Many scholars have analyzed the destruction of the morality of political elites in Indonesia. Hasibuan, Indrawati, and Hartati, in 2019, conducted research entitled *Punahnya Etika Moral Elit Politik Di Indonesia* (The Extinction of Political Elite Moral Ethics in Indonesia). The performance reports of the Corruption Eradication Commission have consistently conducted undercover operations on direct bribery transactions carried out by political elites and public officials in state government institutions and private institutions. Thus, this research determines the corruption problem in Indonesia that has reached its peak. According to Hasibuan et al., this is because the political elites in Indonesia do not have sufficient political education, so the vision, mission, and goals are not measurable and directed (Hasibuan, Indrawati, & Hartati, 2019). As a result, they do not have ethics and moral responsibility as leaders who put the public interest first.

Budiono conducted research on political ethics in the public sphere in a study entitled *Menjaga Etika Dalam Berpolitik* (Maintaining Ethics in Politics) in 2019. Based on this study, the reforms that have existed for over a decade have left behind numerous political issues. Politics as a citizen's activity to discuss the common good in the public space is only interpreted as simply hunting for power by justifying any means without regard to ethics and morals. Therefore, according to Budiono, the ethics of politicking in the public space must return to its basic goal, namely, common prosperity. It is done by maintaining and developing intelligent, clean, tolerant, polite, and respectful political behavior (Budiono, 2019). So political behavior needs guidance and reference from moral values in the public space that originate from Pancasila.

This research was confirmed by I Made Kartika in 2018 in a study entitled *Peranan Nilai-nilai Pancasila Dalam Membangun Etika Politik Di Indonesia* (The Role of Pancasila Values in Building Political Ethics in Indonesia). This research explained that it could provide behavior guidelines, especially regarding the country's political ethics (Kartika, 2018). Therefore, Pancasila can provide a normative reference for Indonesia's political ethics pattern. Research on the passion story of Jesus in the Gospel of John has also been carried out. For example, research conducted by Berthold Pareira

(2002), Silvinus Reyaan (2019), and Yulianus Niba (2021) interpreted the meaning contained in the passion story of Jesus told by the Evangelist John. Pareira (Pareira, 2002) found that the drama of the passion story of Jesus is conveyed in the story. According to him, this story was written to build faith, but all of that was not said directly. According to Pareira, listeners to this story are only asked to listen and see it, then find its meaning in life, and this story must also be heard as a mirror for the Church (Pareira, 2002). The research conducted by Reyaan (Reyaan, 2019) was motivated by his defense of insulting the Cross of Christ, so he emphasized the morality contained in the Cross of Christ (Reyaan, 2019). In addition, Yulianus Niba (Niba, 2021) examined the meaning contained in the words of Jesus, "Whom are you looking for?" "I am He." According to him, this word means that if we look for Jesus, we will definitely find him (Niba, 2021).

Thus, the uniqueness of this research lies in the rich interpretation of social and evangelical values contained in the drama of the passion of Jesus in realizing the ethics of more civilized political elites in the public sphere. It relates to how the Church proclaims the faith so that the values of the Bible, namely truth, justice, and peace, illuminate the morality of the political elite. The Church's involvement is crucial because the religious aspect of the Church, specifically its spiritual wealth, can encourage a humble attitude in its people, producing political elites with high moral principles and a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the country and State. It is because the quality of a person's faith determines the quality of their character or morals, which varies from person to person. In response to this challenge, this study uses a critical reading approach to interpret the passion story of Jesus' pain and misery on the Cross in the Gospel of John. By doing so, it discovers spiritual richness that the drama of Jesus' suffering on the Cross aims to present the legality of Jesus as a King and Great Shepherd who is faithful to His missionary duties even to death on the Cross. Through this interpretation, the faithful, particularly the political elite, can realize that, as followers of Christ, they must be responsible for their duties and services as leaders and public officials to build a prosperous life together. Christ, the Great King, has shown how to be a moral leader, namely being responsible for His mission, even to the point of sacrificing oneself. So developing a political-moral life is a basic demand and obligation of every political elite as a Christian as a consequence of their vocation as followers of Christ.

## 2. Research Method

This research is a literature study with a critical reading of the passion story of Jesus in the Gospel of John so that spiritual values can be drawn that can improve the morality of political elites who tend to forget their vocation as agents of social welfare. Therefore, by confronting the drama of the passion of Jesus with the actions of political elites in the public sphere, it can contribute to civilized political civilization (Anderson, 2006) because political elites and public leaders can learn from Christ the Great King how to be moral leaders for the people. Through this confrontation of faith with social reality, the Indonesian people, especially the political elite, are aware that faith is essentially manifested or practiced in everyday life (Christensen, 2017).

Because a genuine encounter and understanding with the God in whom one believes will inspire and guide every believer to realize moral values in real life, leaders with noble characters and who serve the people's interests will be born in this way, ultimately creating a prosperous political life. Thus, the experience of encountering God becomes essential in religious life (Culpepper, 1997). One of the ways to encounter this is by interpreting the values of faith or the main points of the teachings of faith with the concrete realities of today's society so that religious life is not a reality that is separate from the daily life of the people but rather animates and colors it. Thus, a peaceful and prosperous society is formed. Therefore, interpreting the drama of the passion story of Jesus in the Gospel of John as the suffering King makes a valuable contribution to the formation of leaders and political elites who prioritize the interests of the people or common interests above the interests of specific groups (Nishimura, 1995).

Research data sources are primary and secondary (Ibrahim, 2015). Primary data sources come from the Holy Scriptures, namely from the Gospel of John about the story of the passion of Jesus and

scientific journals about the ethical and moral phenomena of the political elite in the country. The scientific journals that interpret the passion story of Jesus in the Gospel of John and the scientific journals on recent political phenomena in Indonesia serve as secondary data sources for this study. Online reporting on the index of public evaluation of the ethics and performance of political elites is another source of secondary data. To support this research, the author also uses relevant books, especially books on the political spirituality of Christians in the public sphere.

The steps of this research are three steps. *First*, looking at the moral decadence of the political elite in Indonesia and *second*, interpreting the passion story of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John with a critical reading method so that one can see the legality of Jesus as a leader who shows good moral ethics as the great King. *Third*, presenting how the passion story of Jesus in the Gospel of John contributes to the formation of good ethics for the political elite in Indonesia, especially the Catholic political elite.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### *Moral and Ethical Decadence of Political Elite in Indonesia*

Lately, the mass media, either printed or electronic, have never been quiet with reports of political elites who do not display the attitude of a good statesman. Their behavior creates commotion in people's lives, so they neglect the people's affairs. They spend most of their time in conflict with matters relating to momentary political interests (Siburian, 2017). For example, behaving and acting full of tactics like a politician and party partisan in which people get treatment of fun and purely sensory things. Society gets empty hopes and promises without realization. This behavior is as if they were chosen and entrusted to hold public office only to gain power so that people only become tools to achieve power (Rofidah, 2017). This appreciation of political ethics triggers the emergence of an even greater moral decadence of political elites, namely corruption.

In other words, the chaotic political life in this country is inseparable from the morality of the political elite, who interpret politics as a means of seeking power by justifying any means, including using money politics to obtain a position (Budiono, 2019). Corruption is an illegal act because it is detrimental to state finances and causes delays in infrastructure development for the community, resulting in hampered people's welfare. Elsewhere in Indonesia, corruption cases have become commonplace. Even though the Corruption Eradication Commission continues to carry out hand-catching operations against the perpetrators, it has not had a deterrent effect. The presence of the Corruption Eradication Commission is not a trend for corruption cases to decrease but continues to increase. The fact that high-ranking government officials, whose education is beyond question, committed this crime is what shocks people the most. The cases of Nazarudin, the Representative budget agency mafia, the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, the athletes' house of the Secretary to the Minister of Youth and Sports, the e-KTP, the fake letters from the Constitutional Court, the checks for travelers for the election of the Deputy Governor of BI, and 17 Governors and 140 Regents and Mayors were involved in corruption crimes are many of those criminal cases (Budiono, 2019).

These facts show that the ethics of the political elite and public officials in this country have experienced acute moral decadence. The philosophy of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution that serves as the nation's constitutional foundation, the TAP MPR No. XI/MPR/1998 concerning State Administration that is Clean and Free from Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism, and other laws to restrain the corrupt behavior of political elites and public officials have all been made to uphold the ethics of state officials. However, corrupt behavior is increasingly prevalent (Yunus, 2018). This fact indicates the low political morale of the leaders and political elites in Indonesia. Ironically, the laws and regulations that contain ethical provisions for state officials they designed tend to be violated (Djamil & Djafar, 2016).

The many corruption violations within the political elite and public officials show that the duties of the office and calling to serve the public interest in political life are no longer a noble calling but an

opportunity to make as much wealth as possible. So when politics is in the hands of corrupt political elites, the welfare of society will continue to decline. This political ethics is very contrary to the nature of politics as a citizen's activity to talk about the common good based on good moral values. Because basically, politics is a community service activity based on the general will for the common good by putting aside individual and group interests (Dwihantoro, 2013). Therefore, the ethics of state officials in administering government have a vital position in administering the state to create justice, welfare, and public benefit because political morality determines a clear direction for public policy and accountability.

Destruction in political life is caused because political elites have no shame in politics. Shame is related to guilt that requires people to find a form of self-assured and humble behavior and maintain power. Nevertheless, this awareness of guilt is rarely found in the political elite these days. For example, when the public criticizes the political elite's depravity, such as corruption and other immoral behavior, they still do not care (Yunus, 2018). In fact, they portray themselves as unethical people in public. When the Indonesian Parliament was discussing the evaluation of the e-KTP program at the Parliament Complex, a member of Commission II of the Representative from the Democratic Party faction was playing a card game on his smartphone. Other examples include members of Commission V of the Indonesian Parliament from the PKS Fraction who were watching pornographic movies during the Indonesian Parliament Plenary Meeting in 2011. In addition, several other unethical behaviors occurred, including sleeping during plenary sessions and skipping meetings, as was the case on Monday, May 13, during the plenary opening session of Session IV 2012–2013. As many as 233 of the 560 members of the Indonesian Parliament skipped classes, even though previously they had a full month off. When the Indonesian Parliament Commission X was holding a working meeting with the Executive Board of the Indonesian Teachers Association and the West Java Honorary Teachers' Struggle Committee, many clouds of smoke in the meeting room. It was the most embarrassing thing that happened. The most unexpected thing was fighting with other Indonesian Parliament members, as demonstrated by the Democratic Party member of Commission III and his PPP party colleague, who nearly got into a fistfight. Thus, the actions of the political elite in Indonesia appear to be far from the ethical and moral frame of the right politics and do not even show the attitude of a moral leader.

The impact of the behavior and mentality of the political elite like this makes people no longer believe in political talk because political life is full of hidden desires and conspiracies. As a result, the notion appears that politics is dirty and full of evil intrigues. Even the basic goals of politics are essentially good because moral matters are studied and developed rationally, fairly, and honestly (Siburian, 2017). As Plato said, politicians and other political elites are statesmen who, with their virtues, can give birth to brilliant ideas and provide enlightenment on problems that occur in society. So, according to Plato, Parliament and other public positions are a place for brilliant thoughts and the exchange of genius ideas by carrying out the main mission of realizing the common good through the formulation of state policies (Yunus, 2018).

Religious intervention is needed to see the actions of the political elite that have destroyed public civility because religion, through its spiritual-religious dimension, can touch every person at the most basic level (Adon, 2016a). The poor morals of council members indicate their poor understanding of their religion. Therefore, through a touch of religion, the political elites can have solid moral foundations for developing a just and prosperous society. With a touch of religion, the political elite can make the government's vision, mission, and goals good and prosperous through their capabilities and capacities. Thus, the following section will describe the contribution of the Catholic Church in improving the civility of the political elite in Indonesia. This contribution lies in critical reflection on their faith so that it is more in line with the needs of the times. This contribution is the education the Church provides to its members so that they might live and work following the principles of the Kingdom of God. This unique method applies the Bible's message to contemporary societal issues and the surrounding circumstances to find ethical values that help restore the damaged public civilization, especially the ethics of political elites experiencing moral decadence. The following

section will explain how to read the story of Jesus' passion and disclosure the fundamental early Christian faith.

### *The Story of Jesus's Passion in the Gospel of John*

The passion story of the Lord Jesus is the very first part of the Gospel to be told and written. In the preaching of the early apostles, the news about Jesus' death and resurrection became very important. This proclamation is the essence of the apostles' faith that Jesus had to suffer and die so that the final thing would be the redemption of humankind. From a literary point of view, the story of the passion of Jesus is extraordinary because the portion of this story is enormous in the four Gospels. In the Gospel of Mark, the news about the passion of Jesus takes up 1/3 of the entire Gospel. So it is not surprising that the story of the passion and resurrection of Jesus has a long introduction (Pidyarto, 2014). It shows God's great love behind the passion events and suffering of Jesus. Jesus clearly expressed this love of God before His crucifixion, "Greater love has no one than this, laying down his life for the one he loves" (John 15:13). This sentence identifies that the suffering and death of Jesus occurred voluntarily because love for humanity (Bach, 2004).

That is why the entire Gospel is an introduction to the story of the passion of Jesus. This introduction relates to the way and model of Jesus' ministry. He must give His life to bring about humankind's salvation since He is the Father's messenger and will ultimately serve as the great shepherd. Therefore, by this viewpoint, the entire Gospel seeks to portray Jesus as the leader and shepherd of the people who instructs verbally and demonstrates how to behave as God's children to gain welfare and security. However, the Bible also presents Jesus as a leader who is not afraid to defend truth and justice even though his life becomes the guarantee (Tatilu, 2021). John presents the long passion story of Jesus starting from John. 18:1–19:22, which tells of Jesus' process and punishment up to the fulfillment of Scripture (John 19:23-42, especially v 28-30). Therefore, scholars of the Scriptures agree that the events of Christ's death and resurrection were the centers of the writing of the Gospels. However, John did not have more attention to the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ's death and resurrection flow from the prologue and the entire evangelical story from beginning to end because John's purpose in writing his Gospel was to build faith in the mystery of God's passion. According to Berthold Pareira (Pareira, 2002), tribulation stories are no reports of what happened but are faith interpretations of these events. Because we indeed do not need reports, but we need to see those events in faith. For this reason, stories are needed so that we know how to find our own life and experience of faith (Pareira, 2002).

In the Gospel of John, all events are worked on continuously and continue to develop. John defines important lines in his interpretation by dramatizing each event. In this way, John intends to develop the theological aspect of the event. In order to communicate the secret of salvation that Jesus delivered as a result of His exaltation on the Cross, the drama element in the story of Jesus' passion is crucial (Bach, 2004). Henri Nouwen expressed this by saying, "The secret of God's love is not that He takes our sufferings, but first of all He bears them with us. Because with this kind of solidarity, a new life will be born" (Kaufman, 2013). In other words, the death of Jesus on the Cross is a way to believe that what makes us most human is when we serve, love, and share feelings with others. It is the way that brings healing and peace. It is the path God uses to lead to justice and peace among humankind. Therefore, the crucifixion of Jesus is a form of exaltation as King.

The fact that Jesus is revealed to be the Son of God gives the early chapters of the Gospel of John its distinctive atmosphere. The Evangelists place the Pharisees as antagonists who are always at odds with Jesus (Kantohe, 2020). In front of his opponents, Jesus tried to explain himself as the Son of the Father. John's goal was to use Jesus' argument with the scribes concerning His power and teachings as a springboard for the event of the Cross. John 13–17, which discussed the exalted Son, was followed by John 13–21, which spoke of the death of Jesus. Christ's death, therefore, served to demonstrate His identity as the truth, the way, and the life (John 14:6).

In the Gospel of John, the chief priests are synonymous with Jesus' enemies, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem. In the Gospel of John, Judas is not shown as the one who shows Jesus to

them as the Synoptic Gospels tell, but as the head of the people who arrested Jesus. It is probably because the kissing scene does not match the context of the theophany/appearance of God in the Gospel of John. In the dialogue between Jesus and the soldiers, John. 18:4-9 does not describe Jesus' surprise at what was happening, but He already knew all that would befall Him. Jesus must go forward bravely to face the people who want to arrest Him, asking, "Whom are you looking for?". Jesus came forward and immediately revealed His identity by saying, "I am Him!" or *Egō-eimi*. "I am Him" is an expression of confession with theological meaning. Compare it with Ex. 3:14, that God reveals His name to Moses. When Jesus said, "I am He," the soldiers backed away and fell to the ground. The Gospel writers describe Jesus' divinity as a source of terror for those who came to arrest Him in this incident. "I am Him" is the formula commonly used to denote auto revelation in the Gospel of John (cf. John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). In this case, it was not Jesus who was arrested, but Jesus who arrested them.

In the Synoptic Gospels, this event is told that the disciples fled, leaving Jesus. However, in John's Gospel, the opposite happens; Jesus is the one who sends the disciples away. To the soldiers, Jesus said, "If it is Me you are looking for, let them go!" Here the Evangelist wants to emphasize that as a person who has power, Jesus did not try to save himself but thought about the safety of his disciples. In other words, Jesus appears as a good shepherd who does not leave His flock alone (John 10:11, 15). For Himself, he said, "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your servant; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28).

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, in this fourth Gospel, Jesus is brought before Pilate to be tried. With this, the Evangelist intends to develop the theological aspect of this event. The Evangelists also highlight the elements of drama from the story of Jesus before Pilate. The doctrinal content of Jesus' proceedings before Pilate is marked by the motif of the kingship (regality) of Christ (Ong, 2020). Therefore, Evangelist John places this theme in Jesus' ministry as King, and it is the main theme in the whole story of the passion of Jesus, where His crucifixion on the Cross is a form of His exaltation as King. The fourth Evangelist emphasizes the innocence of Jesus three times through the mouth of Pilate, who seeks to stop the Jewish authorities' false accusations against Jesus (18:33-38). Also, through the mouth of the Jews was discovered the true motivation of their accusation against Jesus, namely because He considered Himself the Son of God (John 19:7). In this way, John wants to present Jesus as a king who is willing to die for his people (Umbara, 2020).

The next is the scene of Jesus' trial in the courthouse. This section focuses on the meaning of the legality of Jesus. The phrase "king of the Jews" contains the primary motivation and cause of Jesus' punishment which was a false accusation from the Jewish leaders. Regarding Pilate's question, according to the Synoptic version, Jesus answered ambiguously, "You said it." In contrast, the Evangelist John reports a dialogue between Jesus and Pilate for apologetic and Christological purposes (Bora, 2020). Jesus himself in John. 18:36 implicitly confirms His legality, that His Kingdom is not of this world but not in the sense of time and politics. Therefore Jesus does not need an army to defend Him. Jesus' actuality comes from above, specifically from the will of His Father's salvation, where His strength overcomes the emperor (Wardoyo, 2021). Therefore, Jesus negatively answers Pilate's first question (v. 33) but does not answer the second, "What have you done?" (v. 35).

In the passage, John. 18: 38b-39, the scene is told, which takes place outside the courthouse. Pilate understood that Jesus was not a rebel. Therefore, for the first time, Pilate declared that Jesus was innocent before the Jews. Verse 40 reports the alternative liberation between Jesus and Barabbas, considering the listeners' knowledge. Barabbas means "son of the father": the Jews chose the Son of "the father of lies" (cf. 8:44) over Jesus, the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father. Pilate fell as a coward when he released the "robber," even though he knew that Jesus was innocent. John. 19:1-4 describes the scene of the scourging and crowning of thorns. John interpreted this event as a foreshadowing of the actual reality of Jesus. In this incident, the soldiers unknowingly proclaimed Jesus king for the sake of a joke, pretending to make him emperor. However, without realizing it, they proclaimed the legality of Jesus as the Son of God, who had become human to save the world. Thus,



Evangelist John substitutes the story details that are too demeaning to Jesus, such as spitting and inappropriate kneeling, to show how people have rejected the Messiah. John also ascribes symbolic significance to Pilate's proclamation that Jesus is "king of the Jews," the wearing of the "mantle," the cheering of the soldiers, and the incident in which Jesus is crowned with thorns (18:39). This also holds true when the soldiers hold up signs that proclaim Jesus to be "the king of the Jews" in-joke (19:3).

Finally, v. 12-16a shows the final scene where Jesus is executed. Under pressure from the Jews, Pilate did not want to risk losing his career to an ordinary Jew. The story of Jesus' trial reaches its climax when Pilate ironically exclaims, "Here is your king!" (v. 14). This appeal to the Evangelist represents a formal statement of the legality of Jesus. In other words, Pilate's expression of "Here is your king!" intends to ridicule the Jews, but Evangelist John interprets it differently. For him, this expression is an official statement of the reality of Jesus. In v. 15, The Jews tried hard to reject the title of Jesus as their King, and they loudly asked Jesus to be crucified. Those who are called kings are the Roman emperors. This confession is ironic because they are waiting for the Messiah, their savior (Reyaan, 2019). However, they killed Jesus out of lust and recognized the emperor as King. Since God did not abandon His omnipotence in the death of Jesus but instead acted with powerful love, the story of Jesus' passion in the Gospel of John seeks to reveal the nature of God. The omnipotence of love, according to Kierkegaard, "demands to be permitted to feel suffering without being governed" because God, who is omnipotent and not omnipotent, is no longer God" (Moltmann, 1993).

On this basis, John deliberately worked on the story of Jesus' crucifixion accurately and personally and dramatized his Gospel to show the essence of God's love. That God not only fully felt the fragile and frightening condition of humanity but also experienced the most humiliating and horrible death--the death of the Cross because this is the way to the poor, the suffering, the marginalized, the prisoners, the refugees, the lonely and the hungry (Adon, 2016a). Here we see the meaning of God's mercy, that mercy is not a look down on those who have privileges towards those who are destitute; not a helping hand from above to those who are less fortunate below. Conversely, compassion means going directly to the people and places with the cruelest suffering. That is why Evangelist John does not present Simon of Cyrene for theological reasons: Jesus, from the beginning, freely gave himself up when he was arrested, and now he faces his death by carrying his Cross.

In v. 19-20, we find the inscription on the Cross of Jesus written in three languages. For the Evangelist John, it is an acknowledgment of the legality of Jesus. Pilate had earlier proclaimed that Jesus was "the King of the Jews (19:14); now he reaffirmed it by formal action, that is, in a statement written in three languages: Hebrew, the sacred language of the Jewish people; Latin, the language of the rulers of that time, that is, Roman; and Greek, the language most widely spoken in the Mediterranean region. The Evangelist John notes that many Jews read the "title" by which this event was recorded in world history. In v. 21-22, Pilate is adamant that he does not want to change what he has written about Jesus. In this way, without realizing it, Pilate has become a spokesman for God (like Caiphas, cf. 11:51) by recognizing the legality of Jesus. Meanwhile, "Caesar" was the King of the Jews (19:15). Jesus declares the completion of the mission committed to Him by the Father, who raised Him as King of the Universe on the Cross. His final words, "It is finished!" do not convey the sorrow of a person who has realized their failure, but instead victory.

#### *Improving the Morale of the Political Elite by Reflecting on Jesus's Passion in the Gospel of John*

The important role of religion is urgently needed to correct the moral decadence of political elites who no longer have moral virtues as statesmen. Religion can form human beings with noble morals to have a sense of responsibility because the quality of one's faith determines each person's character and moral quality (Rofidah, 2017). The ambiguity of the attitude and behavior of the political elite has resulted in the collapse of public civilization. The destroyed public civilization will damage the face of the law, culture, education, and religion. The destruction of the joints of life will destroy the nation's future. Realizing it or not, the political elites who make public policies determine future welfare (Hasibuan et al., 2019). So the important role of the Catholic Church as a religious institution in the

country is to guide the political elite. One of the ways the Church can do by returning to Jesus, the Great Teacher who taught not only by words but also by the example of His life.

Reading and interpreting the story of Jesus' passion in the Gospel of John in the context of a leader's ethics and morals is one way to use Jesus' life as inspiration for improving the ethics and morals of the political elite in the country. As a leader, Jesus dared to face His suffering. The noise of His arrest that occurred at night (John 18:1-11) in no way gives the impression that Jesus was agitated or afraid. On the contrary! Jesus appears, greets them, and unexpectedly reveals His power. The soldiers who came fell to the ground (cf. Ps 27:2) because they did not have the slightest authority over Him. They must know that the Cross He will accept, a sign of His love for the Father. He must do everything the Father commands (14:30-31) (Pareira, 2002). It is the meaning of the passion story of Jesus.

John deliberately dramatized the passion story of Jesus to show His legality as a King who devoted his whole life to the benefit of many people. John presents Jesus as a leader who bravely fights for truth and justice without fear of moving forward as a shepherd who lays down His life so that everyone can be saved (Setiawan & Yulianingsih, 2019). In other words, John tells the story of the passion of Jesus in a lively drama so that all readers are aware that as a leader who came from God, Jesus was aware from the beginning of the suffering He would endure. Jesus was not cowardly but, with a calm and gallant heart, accepted the Cross, "If it is me you are looking for, let them go." Jesus is responsible for His task and mission. It requires the political elites to have a different perspective on His death that His passion story is the wisdom of life. Jesus' arrest in the olive grove represents his continual struggle with the evil powers.

In the Gospels, the reason for His arrest is unclear; Is it because of his teachings that he should be arrested? Even though Jesus taught in public, they did not arrest Him. There is also no secret in His teachings. Everyone can bear witness to His teaching, whether His teachings endanger the safety of the nation or not. In this way, listeners are invited to reflect on the significance of Jesus' sacrifice in His passion story. That sacrifice is not death but life. So Christians, precisely political elites, were invited by Jesus to fight for the general welfare without considering profit and loss. Even if for the sake of truth and justice, do not hesitate to sacrifice their life. This choice is a consequence of his decision to open his heart to accept Jesus and thereby have a heart ready to deny himself (Lee, 2002).

So faith in the suffering of Jesus requires political elites not to prioritize their interests or those of their group but to prioritize common interests first. Therefore, this tribulation story was not designed to be read simply because the language says it should be; instead, it is to be heard and read aloud in a congregation. The listener is the Church, and the interpreter is the entire congregation and not limited to individuals (Pareira, 2002). In this way, people then see and find meaning in life. In other words, when this story is read to improve elite political morale, there is a message that the political elite and public officials are called to fight for the survival of the nation by promoting honesty, trust, exemplary, sportsmanship, discipline, tolerance, shame, responsibility, maintaining honor and dignity as citizens of the nation (Dwihantoro, 2013).

Politics is not just a matter of pragmatism; it is an effort to realize common welfare based on law, ethics, morals, and norms to create justice, welfare, and public benefit. When the ethics of honesty and sportsmanship are put forward, when the political elite violates the law contrary to the values of faith and Pancasila, they must humbly resign from public office (Yunus, 2018). Jesus explicitly expressed this in the image of the "cup" on the eve of the Last Supper, declaring His readiness to carry the Cross. So all the sufferings of Jesus are seen and understood in terms of the logic of this grace. Although it was not explicitly stated, everyone was urged to pay attention and consider how the story related to their own lives, particularly, in this case, the political elites. The goal is for the political elite to form good manners, not pretend, not be arrogant, be far from being hypocritical and not committing public lies, not being manipulative, and various other dishonorable actions (Dwihantoro, 2013).

As a result, the Gospel of John's story of Jesus' death and pain is a religious interpretation rather than a description of what happened. The Evangelist John wants to see the meaning of those events in faith (Pareira, 2002). Because this story was written in faith, it must also be heard in faith. So it is very

good if this story is used to educate the faithful on acting as good citizens. Specifically how to become a leader and hold public office because this story was written so that every leader can learn from the leadership of Jesus, who was willing to sacrifice himself (Yonathan, 2019). In other words, the story of suffering was written to demonstrate how the faithful might be a real sign of God's salvation presence by fighting for justice, truth, and peace in political life in this nation rather than to evoke feelings of piety or compassion for Jesus' suffering.

#### 4. Conclusion

The lives of the political elites who have lately not displayed a culture of politeness and a sense of appropriateness for democracy, as can be seen when they appear in public spaces. They do not show guilt after committing acts of corruption and others. Asking religious institutions for help, especially religions, can overcome this problem by educating their adherents to grasp their purpose in the public arena to realize the common good and prosperity. A relationship with God is a powerful foundation for building good political morality. In other words, a good understanding of God will make someone realize that a calling to politics is noble because it serves the public interest. Honesty, sportsmanship, and self-sacrifice result from a relationship full of trust in God, acknowledging God's power, and having full awareness of oneself so that one is not hypocritical, manipulative, and fraudulent. So religion with a religious-spiritual dimension has an excellent opportunity to build public civility, especially the mentality of political elites who tend to corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Thus, the Catholic Church is required to assist its adherents, particularly the political elite, by considering and interpreting the story of Jesus' passion, particularly the story of Jesus' passion in the Gospel of John, which serves as the center and pillar of the Christian religion.

The Gospel of John presents the drama of the passion story of Jesus not primarily as a historical report but as a story so that the faithful can contemplate and reflect on their life experiences in the light of the passion story of Jesus. John presented the story of the passion of Jesus to show the omnipotence or legality of Jesus precisely through His elevation on the Cross. Jesus is a servant of God who suffered for His great love for humankind. So reflecting on the life of faith in this way, the life of the political elite will be a pure expression of Jesus' self-sacrifice because they are political actors who determine the nation's welfare. Therefore, the attitudes and ethics of the political elite no longer put their interests first but are like Christ, who gave himself for the salvation of all people when the political elite's life. In this way, political leaders' lives will truly demonstrate God's presence and will refrain from acting haughtily, haughtily, and greedily. In the end, the presence of political elites is a wonderful blessing for the country and state because of their humility and willingness to serve the public interest.

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