

Weekly Devotion March 22, 2021
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“What Truth Is”

In John 18 Jesus has been arrested, falsely accused by those who hate Him, and brought Jesus before Pilate with the desire that Pilate will crucify Jesus, which he eventually does. So, our reading this morning focuses on this conversation.

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

³⁶ 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.”

³⁷ “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.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” retorted Pilate.

What is truth? By the time Jesus stood before Pilate Jesus had been betrayed by Judas for thirty silver pieces to men who are blinded by their hatred for Jesus. The Temple, a place meant to worship had become a cesspool of corruption, greed, and exploitation by the same men who hate Jesus. Caiaphas may have known the job of High Priest but he did not know God. Jesus is falsely accused of blasphemy at the Sanhedrin—a charge that the religious leaders would count worthy of death. And then these same men changed the charge to be more suitable for a Roman Governor. They falsely accused Jesus of trying overthrow Caesar as king in a made-up rebellion when he is before Pilate—a charge any Roman governor would count worthy of death on a cross. They just kept updating their tactics to ultimately get what they wanted until finally Jesus was crucified. And truth be told, Jesus’ enemies got away with nothing even after all of their power-hungry jealousy so carefully plotted and schemed to murder Jesus. Jesus was innocent, sinless and yet He died for the sins of these terrible men who in many cases never believed in Jesus as Messiah.

What is truth? What happens when the truth of the religious leaders does not match up with the truth of Jesus? What happens when the truth of the Gospel conflicts with our personal passions--when morality, money, humility, and love conflict with our truth about morality, marriage, pride, and priorities? Do we redefine the truth to fit a worldview or do we adapt our attitude to the truth of the Word?

Is truth adaptable? My computer on which I type this now is a Windows based PC. Updates for Windows now come regularly and update my computer even when I haven’t invited the update. Recently, an update was sent to my computer that hobbled my computer. After the update downloaded if I tried to send a document to a printer the screen went blue and all kinds of problems began to develop which were very unpleasant. Thankfully Ryan knew what to do and informed me that I was about the 30th person that he had helped with this particular update problem. We can understandably say, that not all updates are always helpful updates.

If it has to do with technology or comforts updates will keep coming. Every year cars get redesigned with more gadgets, and computers to run those gadgets. I was told that my latest car has seven computers in it just to make the thing work. Just to drive down the road.

Cell phones have come a long way too. I can still remember the big bag phones we would have to plug into our cars. We bought our first one for the same reason everyone else did; "...just in case of an emergency." Now we carry around hand-held super computers with six cameras on them for movie quality selfies.

Truth is we update our cars, our phones, our houses, our clothes, our appliances and much more. However, we also tend to believe that truth itself is updateable. We live in a world of evolutionary mindsets. Values tend to change toward things like money, marriage, education, race, gender. However, when a sinful mindset gets a foothold in our lives, we learn to justify our sinfulness in whatever form it takes and we miss the truth about ourselves or our world around us. That tends to lead to a belief that the Bible itself changes about the things that don't align with what we want to be true; that Jesus will accept sin and tolerate anything as long as we love something enough. The old question: "What is truth?" remains a fundamental question.

Truth if it is indeed true is timeless. In 1633 Galileo was excommunicated because he showed that the earth revolved around the sun. The church back then believed that the sun revolved around the earth and considered anything else heretical. The fact of the matter is simple: The sun does not revolve around us. The world does not revolve around elitist people of power like Caiaphas, Rome or Washington. It does not revolve around any disciple or person that thinks he is the greatest, because of wealth, education, prestige, or likes on FaceChat. It does not revolve around you or me when our emotions are high or when they are not. But that's the battle that we always face. Even for a short-term sin acts like the world revolves around us it doesn't because it is busy revolving around the other arrogant people. To win an argument; to be part of a cause; to support a certain candidate or idea; usually involve "me" winning. This is just good old fashion sinfulness being selfish. Truth about sin is timeless. Our sin is a liar and always skews a proper perspective of the world around us—namely that this world belongs to Jesus, who created it. Sin is always a problem and is always deadly. The wages of sin is always death.

But the other side of this truth is that the gift of God is eternal life. This Truth is timeless as well. Jesus teaches that His Word is truth (John 17:17) and it is timeless. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8). "For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). This also means that Jesus' cross and resurrection are timeless and true. Jesus' truth is the final truth for all of us. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Passages like 1 Corinthians 15, John 14, Revelations 7 and others that talk about our promise of eternal life are all still true. And when it comes to Jesus, He never pointed to a way of finding the truth but always pointed to Himself as the Truth, the Way home, and the Life (John 14:6). Finally we are told, "Be faithful to the point of death and you receive the crown of life." Revelations 2:10.

When Jesus stood before Caiaphas, before an angry crowd, and before Pilate they held to a lie driven by ambition and hatred, accusing Jesus of being a criminal. Surrounded by all of this the truth of Jesus was not diminished or less true just because Jesus was outnumbered on Good Friday. In fact, Jesus was completely in control and willingly went to that cross. And one day Jesus will come back to judge the living and dead. That's what truth is. And it is good news to us who believe.

We can count on the truth of Jesus. Believers in Christ can count on Jesus. We can count on Jesus to forgive our sins in repentance. We can count on Jesus raising us to eternal life in and through His resurrection. That's what He has promised to us and this is the truth we celebrate most every Holy Week. May God bless us to believe with courage in the truth of Jesus.

And now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be and abide with you always. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30