

## What is Truth?

Texts: 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Revelation 1:4b-8 (Series B, Christ the King) Psalm 132:1-13 (14-19)

John 18:33-37

Prayer:

Today we have arrived at the Last Sunday after Pentecost, celebrating the feast of Christ the King. Its' colour is White, festive day of the Lord. The theme of the day is *Eternal Truth*, and it stresses the *Parousia*, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as King of the universe.

Coming next week we begin the Season of Advent, a time of anticipation as we prepare our hearts and souls for the birth of the Child in whom the fullness of God is pleased to dwell and the One who becomes our Redeemer.

I would like us to transport ourselves in mind to the residence of the Roman governor Pilate. A great contrast took place between Pilate and the prisoner, Jesus. Pilate shuffled back and forth as he listened to what the accusing priests and people had to say.

Outside his ears were picking up the chanting of the crowd crucify, crucify, crucify, crucify him. All the cries catapulted around him, and Pilate became a figure of bewilderment. He was losing control of himself and the situation.

Pilate asks Jesus: "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" In essence Jesus replies that he is, but not in the sense in which Pilate uses the word. His kingdom is not a dominion over people's bodies, but over their minds and souls.

This kingdom is not maintained by force but by the persuasion of *love* and *truth*. Pilate is baffled so he cries out, "*What is truth?*" Pilate becomes a picture of a man who is unsure of himself.

Pilate had no guiding principle is him. He was guided only by convenience and the fear for his own position. This Roman ruler was spinning around in the ring like shadow boxer. Confidence was waning. In striking contrast, Christ stood calm and collected before him.

He was unafraid. In spite of the denunciation Jesus' dignity was never darkened. He knew that for which he was born; his mission was well defined; his loins were girded with truth. His words to Pilate were simply, *"for this I was born ... to bear witness to the truth."*

*What is truth?* A parade of past philosophers would give us different answers. Some would say that truth is a statement that agrees with the facts. Others would inform us that something is true only when it is compatible with a system of other truths.

Still, some would tell us that truth is more pragmatic / logical. If a statement is acted upon and the results are good for you, then it's true. *(The two professors from the University of Heidelberg, Germany were trying to define the truth as they walk along banks of the Reine river, one professor asked "was ist die Wahrheit"), when a seagull's drop in his opened palm.* Trying to define truth is no easy task.

In Scripture Jesus says, *"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free"* (John 8:31-32). God's Word is thus authority and truth. As a boy I remember the preachers always using the phrase, after reading Scripture, *"These are thy words, Heavenly Father. Sanctify us in the truth, for thy words are truth."*

There is another kind of truth that I believe is more important than philosophical or theological statements. It is the truth of the person. John says, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14) Truth was wrapped up in a person. Jesus said, *"I am ... the truth"* (John 14:6). Truth is something we should be.

Jesus was the embodiment of all truth. Truth as absolute honesty and perfect integrity – the kind of truth we are called to be – was contained in the very core of Jesus' being. Paul Tillich said, *"In (Jesus) the true, the genuine, the ultimate reality is present, unveiled, undistorted in his infinite depth, in his magnificent mystery."*

William Temple made this declaration, *“The ultimate truth is not a system of propositions grasped by perfect intelligence but a Personal Being apprehended by love.”* Jesus is the source of all truth. In that truth comes our freedom to be. In relationship to the grace and truth of Jesus we are set free from guilt, sin, insecurity, and legions of fear.

There are two main words in Scripture used for truth. In the New Testament the word is *aletheia*. The basic meaning is *“non-concealment”* or *“unhiddenness.”* Truth is open to view.

It is expressed rather than suppressed. It is the opposite of a cover-up. Jesus talks about this aspect of truth when he said to his disciples, *“All that I have heard from the Father I have made known to you”* (John 15:15). Jesus did not have a hidden agenda. He made no fake passes.

Falseness is an intent to deceive. It can be done by words that mislead, by the glance of an eye, by an expression of the countenance. Satan is the chief deceiver. Jesus is the light in whom there is no darkness of deception.

The person of truth walks in the light. There is no fear of being transparent. But when we failed to make friend with the truth, many folks stay buttoned-up. We want our flaws and faults to remain under wraps. We forfeit closeness with anyone, because we are afraid of being exposed.

So, games of deception continue to be played. If a boss does not want to talk with a disagreeable client, he merely tells his secretary to tell him that he is not in. Expense accounts are exaggerated to accumulate a little more pocket money. If we identify with Christ and let him free us, we will be given the courage to be open and honest to family and friends.

We will not have to baby-sit our reputation. We will be able to accept either failure or success in stride. The honest person does not have to love on cloud nine every day and pretend that everything is just dandy. He or she can admit it openly when something is botched up.

In the Old Testament the word for truth is *emeth*. It comes from a verb that means, “*to be firm, solid and sure,*” and its basic meaning is “*reliability*” or “*faithfulness.*”

Ellen G. White the founder of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist wrote: “*The greatest want of the world is the want of men – men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is a true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for right though the heavens fall.*”

Reliability sometimes means speaking up and sometimes will mean keeping the mouth shut. The reliable person is a dependable person. Truth is not tucked away in a safe place. It takes on flesh and gets up and walks around.

You can bank on Jesus. What he said, he would do. Standing before Pilate, listening to the angry mob was not easy. He could have run for his life. He could have called in the legions of heaven to deliver him. But Jesus refused to escape. He said he came to give his life as a ransom for many. Nothing would sidetrack him from completing his mission.

Scripture depicts our God as one whose word will stand forever. The psalmist sings, “*Thy faithfulness endures to all generations*” (Psalm 119:20). Paul says, “*If we are faithless, he remains faithful*” (2Tim. 2:13). Someone wrote these words in a prison walls in German concentration camp:

*I believe in the sun – even when it does not shine.*

*I believe in love – even when it is not shown.*

*I believe in God – even when he does not speak.*

That is faith in the faithfulness of God at its finest. For you and for me truthfulness means that we will try to be the kind of people who others can always count on. We finish what we promised. When we give our word, there will be no backing out.

Truth will be our rudder, so that we will not be subject to every shift of wind or tide. Just as God’s grip won’t slip, we too, will give permanence and security to those around us. May our words and life be just that.

At the end of another church year let us thank King Jesus that he had the power to produce everything he has promised. Paul shouts: *“For all the promises of God find their, Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God”* (2 Cor. 1:20)

For me, the crux of this Sunday’s lessons come together in John’s Gospel... when Jesus tells Pilate that *everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice (John 18:37b)*. Are we listening? Do we hear it? Even more interestingly to me, is what comes out in verse 38: *Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”*

How do we answer? For we who try to follow, Christ is our only King who shows us the way to the true and everlasting Kingdom. The question for each and every one of us is: to what truth do we listen and choose to belong? The “easy” answer is: *Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to [Christ’s] voice*. How then do we live it?

Let us *“continue in his Word so we shall know the truth and the truth will make us free.”* Let us see that truth is something we are. If Pilate had sat at the feet of Jesus, he would have found the truth. Then he would not have been a pawn pushed to and fro on the day he delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Conclude with the hymn “Beautiful Saviour” LBW # 838

**Beautiful Saviour, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!  
Truly I’d love thee, Truly I’d serve thee, Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.**

**Beautiful Saviour, Lord of the nations, Son of God and Son of Man!  
Glory and honour, Praise, adoration, Now and forevermore be thine!**

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. ***“These are thy words, Heavenly Father. Sanctify us in the truth, for thy words are truth.”*** Amen.