Text: John 18:38

“¿Qué es la verdad?” Pilat preguntó. Con esto, volvió otra vez ante los judíos y dijo, “No encuentro base para imputarle nada.”

Lent 2020

In the last couple of weeks, our sense of reality has been stretched to the extreme as we have been forced to come to grips with a new normal. Daily life has changed – a lot! Evolving ideas about stopping the spread of the Covid-19 & flattening the curve (terminology that less than a month ago would have been foreign-sounding) - all of it has left us off balance. There is panic, as evidenced by empty store shelves. There is also prudence, the urging to be extra diligent in our hygiene - something that makes sense. We would like more solid information, but there is much that is unknown, because we have never gone down this road.

Still, Someone knows how & when this will end, & it will end. He has a full grasp of the truth - not just the truth about the Covid-19, but the real honest-to-goodness truth. This Someone is in the truth business.

Tonight we see our Warrior-Hero stand up against an ally of the Evil one, that ally being the unbelieving world. We may not readily recognize our 21st century society as hostile toward God, but it is. It is arrogant. It boasts about its accomplishments - its look at me, I can do anything! attitude - until it is humbled by a microscopic bug. But the unbelieving world is an enemy of Jesus & his people. It wants us to question the truth. It challenges us to doubt what God tells us. It offers a different set of answers to the questions only Jesus answers. Tonight we see Jesus face Satan's ally, the world & defeat it soundly.

This part of the conflict's important because it is crucial we understand we live in a world where God’s own truth is under attack.

The Jewish leaders had dragged Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor. He was the one who would decide Jesus' fate, whether he would be crucified or be set free. Pilate had asked Jesus whether he was a king, which would make him a threat to Roman authority. Jesus replied: You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born & came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

Did you catch that reference to being on the side of truth? We are talking about sides: truth as opposed to lie. Now, a lie can be an outright & blatant - a denial of the truth altogether, or it can be a half-truth. The unbelieving world, Satan’s ally, is expert in promoting this idea - that there are various shades of truth - all equally valid.

The unbelieving world challenges anyone who does not agree with it. It pretends to have the answers to life’s big questions, but its lies only spout nonsense. The apostle John warns in his first letter: Everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, & the boasting of what he has & does - comes not from the Father but from the world. John warns not be fooled by this enemy.

We live in a sin-infected world & no amount of hand-sanitizer or bleach can change that. Corrupted because of the sinful nature with which they are born, the people of this world put forward all kinds of ungodly ideas as solutions to what is wrong. We should not be surprised, because the unbelieving world thinks Jesus & his Word are foolishness. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, Paul wrote.

The world wants nothing to do with Jesus, & sometimes we too swallow its lies. We sometimes pick up unhealthy stuff (spiritual viruses, if you will) from movies, books, music, & TV that portrays immoral lifestyles & values that go against God’s Word. Those influences cause us to let down our guard. What is truth? Pilate asked. Our world says that it can be whatever you want it to be.
Yet John also wrote: The world & its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. We are designed for something far better & far bigger than just this earth: we are designed to be in an eternal relationship with our Creator-God & our Savior Jesus. Satan & the world want us to concentrate on what passes away & not on the truth about sin, death, & our need for salvation.

Jesus was opposed by the fickle people of his day, the callous & self-righteous religious leaders, & the wishy-wasy politicians. The whole world ganged up on him. Yet he calmly & forcefully stared them down. He spoke truth to power, telling Pilate: You're right in saying that I am a king. I came into the world...to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

What is truth? Pilate asked - words of a trapped man. Pilate was no more able to see things as they really are than a rhinoceros. Most of Pilate's truth was whatever came from the point of the spear. Influenced by society our truth as well often comes from distorted values & whatever makes us feel good. Trapped in a world of lies, Pilate could not recognize the truth when he was staring it in the face.

The answer to Pilate's question is & has always been: Jesus! He had told his disciples: I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except thru me. In other words, Jesus is the only way to understand reality. He is the only way we can possibly make sense of life. No one or nothing else can do that. Jesus is the only one who will ever be able to help us see straight.

Everybody has questions about reality. What can I know & how can I know it? How can I ever understand suffering & evil? Who am I? Why am I here? What good, if any, is going to come out of the mess that we are in right now?

The world has its answers to those questions. Yet its guesses & wishes all fail the test of truth. Jesus never said: I am guessing or I wish or I hope or I think. He spoke with authority, often saying: I tell you the truth. He said: If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, & the truth will set you free.

In other words, God’s Word - the Bible - holds everything we need to know for life, to live freely without guilt & death’s curse - without the fear of God’s punishment - & especially, to live forever free in eternity. That is because every Word in the Bible, in one way or another, points to Jesus. And that is why it is so important that my eyes see & my ears hear the powerful Word of God! All other messages come from the Father of lies & flow through the distorted filter of the world around us.

Our world is broken. We see it & we know it. People hate; viruses kill; storms damage; death stalks us all. Many have tried to come up with something to fix this mess. All have failed - except one, Jesus!

One sparkling, pure, perfect, holy, & huge life came into our world. Our Triune God loved us so much that he planned to rescue this sin-damaged world. The Son came to tell us the whole truth & to be the truth that would battle sin, death, Satan, & this world that hates him. Throughout his entire life he remained holy so that he could trade his life for ours at the place of God’s judgment. This is the sacred truth that we believe, confess, & hold dear because it means the solution for the world’s sin & for our own personal sin.

Our truth-telling Jesus also gives us the certain conviction that he will take those who trust him to live with him in heaven. This is the only reality there is. This fact puts everything else into perspective. It gives us a worldview bigger than anything our eyes can see. It is an amazing window into eternity! As a child of God through faith in Jesus, we have this awesome promise: Greater is he that's in you, than he that is in the world.

Jesus came from above with absolute truth. He battled through all the world’s perverted
ideas of truth to give us the truth he came to share, the truth that changes us. We are on his side, the side of truth. We see reality - eternal reality - in the cross & the love of God has for us sinners.

Finally, our warrior Jesus calls us to be his warriors in the world. We do not use swords as Peter tried to do in Gethsemane. Paul tells us how we wage our battles: The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. on the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

The weapon Jesus gives us is his own powerful Word, meaning we have a Christian worldview far superior to any other worldview. We have a Christ-centered common sense & faith to use that Word well so we can bear witness to the hope & joy we have in Jesus.

Our world goes from experience to experience, seeking some form of satisfaction & happiness before moving on to the next great thing. That is like someone walking through the woods at night, lighting paper matches to find his/her way. The match goes out so the person lights another & another. But he/she finds no lasting happiness, no true joy, or no real peace. Our high privilege is to grow deeply in Christ through his Word, to live with consciences tuned to that precious, good Word, & then to show & share the beautiful faith our Savior has given us.

Sometimes we are tempted to think this world is so bad that we need to withdraw - practice social distancing from the people around us who are not like us. Yet, these are the very souls for whom Christ died & who our Lord Jesus wants us to reach! Think of Jesus’ prayer to his heavenly Father on Maundy Thursday: My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

Jesus has overcome the world & given you the treasure of his truth. Go out & live, play, & work in God’s marvelous truth. And above all share it! There are all kinds of anxious people needing the reassurance which only the Word of God, the message of salvation in Jesus, can give! Amen.

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