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John 18:28-40 – “Rejecting the Truth”

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“What do you make of Jesus?”

This is the question we’re considering this morning.

The whole Gospel up to this point has been about Jesus...

Who he is as one sent from God...

And how people respond to him.

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. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?”

³⁰ “If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”

³¹ Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” they objected. ³² This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

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. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.³⁹ 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’?”

⁴⁰ They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

“What is truth?”

Truth is God’s reality. (Bultmann)

There is nothing with more authority...

If we want to know truth, we look to the Creator of all things...

Who knows more/best about the creation than the Creator?

If you’re I-Phone breaks where do you take it?

Back to Best-Buy or Walmart where you bought it?

No, you go back to the source...

Back to the manufacturer...

You take it to Apple...

They made it...they know the most about it.

Truth in John’s gospel is not a proposition...

It’s not some nebulous, hazy concept; it is not speculation...

Truth is a person...

It has skin and bones.

Truth is *the* person standing there in front of Pilate.

“What is truth...?”

Jesus Christ is truth.

“I am the way, *I am the truth*, and I am the life.” (John 14:6)

Jesus Christ is truth because he reveals God...

Jesus Christ reveals the Creator.

In John 14 one of his disciples says to him, “Lord, show us the Father.”

And Jesus says, “Anyone who has seen me *has* seen the Father.” (14:9)

Anyone who has seen Jesus—

Anyone who has interacted with Jesus—

Has been in the presence of the ultimate truth...divine reality.

They’ve beheld the presence of God...

In whom is all life and truth.

If we just drop ourselves into the middle of this story...

What we read is that Jesus is on trial before Pilate.

The Jews take him to the Roman governor because they want Jesus dead.

In their eyes, Jesus has been making blasphemous claims—

Saying that he comes from God and that God is his Father—

And for this, they say, he deserves to be executed.

This is the story as we read it on the surface.

But there’s another level at work here:

A deeper level...

And it’s asking the question: “what do you make of Jesus?”

On the surface, Jesus is on trial before Pilate...

But at a deeper level, Pilate is on trial before Jesus.

And in *this* trial—

When Pilate is confronted by the person and claims of Jesus—

Pilate rejects Jesus...and Pilate rejects the truth.

We know this passage for the now infamous question asked by Pilate:

“What is truth?”

It's easy to get lost in this question and read it out of context—

Forgetting the rest of what's going on here.

This question comes in response to something Jesus just said:

“The reason I'm here is to testify to the truth.”

“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Don Carson, respected New Testament scholar, says:

“In these words there is an implicit invitation from Jesus.” (Carson, 595)

“See me for who I am.”

“Hear what I'm saying...align yourself with the truth...follow me.”

Jesus tells Pilate who he is:

He is a king.

But his kingdom is not from this world.

Essentially Jesus is saying, “Pilate, you don't need to worry about me overthrowing Rome...”

“That's not why I'm here.”

“My kingdom is the kingdom of truth.” (Carson)

“I'm here to witness to God's reality.”

The whole book up to this point has been about Jesus making himself known...

Making himself known, and making the Father known.

He revealed himself to the Jews saying, “I and the Father are one...” (John 10:30)

But obviously many of them didn't believe.

In fact, they're trying to have him executed.

And now Pilate gets *his* chance...

Pilate, what do you make of Jesus?

“Not much.”

Pilate sees nothing special about this man standing in front of him:

“You, are you the king of the Jews?”

“Me, am I a Jew?”

“Does that make me your subject if you're the king of the Jews...HA!”

Pilate rejects Jesus...

And in doing so, he rejects the truth.

Today we're all asked the same question:

“What do you make of Jesus?”

The truth is standing here, right in front of us—

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14)—

So, “What do you make of this truth?”

Today, claiming that Jesus is the truth...

Is not acceptable in our society.

Any claim of truth in religion, morals, and politics is tenuous at best...

You're allowed to have your own beliefs...

But don't try to make them authoritative by saying they're the truth.

In 2016 Oxford Dictionary put out their “word of the year”:

Post-truth.

They use this word to describe our current reality...

We are living in a post-truth world...

Truth is dead...it no longer exists...

There is no ultimate authority when it comes to certain spheres of life.

We don't put the same value on objective facts anymore.

Instead, we base our decisions on our emotions, convictions and our personal beliefs.
(Cambridge Dictionary)

We are living in what people are referring to as the post-truth era.

And we see it being played out all over the place.

A few years ago (2013) Belle Gibson from Australia made global headlines.

She was an attractive 23-year-old girl living with terminal cancer...

But Belle saw a miraculous healing of her cancer because of an alternative diet and natural therapies she was using.

Belle's story spread all over social media...

Hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram.

She appeared in magazines and TV shows...

She started her own wellness app...

And became an inspiration to all those facing terminal cancer...

“If she can do it, why can't we.”

A few years down the road though it was discovered that Belle's story wasn't true...

Not that her cancer wasn't healing...

But that she never had cancer...ever.

How many people believed and shared her story?

How many people placed their hopes in Belle's miraculous experience?

I don't know what's more startling...

That she would lie so boldly;

Or that people believed her—put their hope and trust in this woman for years!

Nobody cared to check the facts—

Her story aligned with what they wanted to believe—

So they bought it, shared her story, and it spread.

We also see this idea of post-truth being lived out in politics.

Who here has heard of 'fake news'?

It's not just false news anymore...

Non-factual information.

No, if the news is unfavorable to someone...

It is undermined—no matter how factual—and called 'fake news.'

Washington Post says that from the time of President Trump's inauguration to May 2018...

They counted over 3,000 false or misleading claims...

And he's still in office.

He still has supporters...

Because objective truth isn't valued any more today...

We are living in a post-truth era.

People will believe what they want to believe no matter (and in spite of) the objective facts.

Is this really *new* though?

What happened in the Garden, way back in Genesis?

“Did God really say that?”

“Sounds like fake news to me.”

The Serpent questions the truth of God's words...

He questions reality as it's defined by God.

And Adam and Eve go against what they heard God say (the objective facts)...

“Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom...”

In this moment, they traded the truth for a lie.

They traded a relationship with God, for the deception of something better.

Adam and Eve were in the presence of God—

In the presence of truth...

All meaning and fullness of life was theirs—

And then they willingly gave it up.

And we've been lost ever since.

Ever since that famous encounter, we've been searching.

Searching for God and searching for truth...

Ultimately searching for the meaning of our existence.

Deep down we know we're broken people...

And we're trying to find whatever it is that will put us back together.

But where we've gone wrong is that we continue to look in all of the wrong places...

Because we look within ourselves;

“Wherever my heart leads me...”

But we do not have the ability to make our own truth.

Truth is something that comes to us from the outside...

It’s a gift that we’re given.

We cannot reach God by ascending to heaven.

Heaven has to come down to us.

And this is what happens in the person of Jesus Christ:

“I am a king, but my kingdom is not from this world.”

God himself comes to us in the flesh.

We are a couple thousand years removed from this conversation between Pilate and Jesus...

But the point remains the same:

Jesus Christ is the truth.

He is the only way that this broken relationship will be fixed.

Real meaning and fullness of life are only found in him.

God loves us so much that he came down to us to make things right.

This is the reality of things—

Whether you believe it or not doesn’t make it any less true—

So the question again is, “What do you make of Jesus?”

Is Jesus who he says he is:

He comes to us saying that he and the Father are one.

He comes to us saying that he was sent from God.

He comes to us saying that he is the *only* Way to the Father...

That he is the Truth, and the Life.

He is “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (1:29)

The one who dies for his people...

Who dies for you, and dies for me.

This is what has been revealed to us...

The truth has been made known to you.

So, "What do you make of Jesus?"

Are you like Pontius Pilate who rejects Christ...

Rejects the truth staring him in the eye?

Or do you accept Christ as he comes to us today...

The Son of God...the Savior of the world...full of grace and truth?

I'd like to challenge everyone here this morning to consider this question:

What do you make of Jesus?

If you accept him at his word—

Who he's revealed himself to be—

Then listen to him...

"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me..."

"Everyone who is of my kingdom listens to me."

I challenge you to take a step of obedience in your relationship with Christ...

Because accepting Christ always goes hand in hand with following him.

I don't know the next step he's inviting you to take—

Where he's inviting you to follow—

But you probably do.

Maybe he's inviting you to spend more time with him.

Maybe he's asking you to give something up:

Fear over an illness;

Anger over a situation in your life;

Regret over a missed opportunity.

Maybe he's asking you to take a step toward mending a broken relationship.

What would it look like for you to take a small step of obedience...?

Listening to him...following his voice...

If you are someone who hasn't accepted Jesus at his word—

Maybe you've never really considered who he is...

Or maybe you've rejected him—

I invite you to consider his love for you...

This man who went the way of the cross so that you could have life...

This man who's offering meaning and fullness of life.

So may you find all truth in our Lord Jesus Christ.