

SERMON FOR THE 6th MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE 2020

The Warrior faces Satan's Ally – the World

John 18:38

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon tonight is John 18:38: **Pilate asked Him, "What is truth?"**

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I do not find any ground for complaint in Him."

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

What is real? We understand what is around us with our five senses. We have learned to know the shape and use of many things. We sit down on a chair because we know it is real. We even step onto airplanes that we believe will fly. But there is a limit to what we can know. Why do we gather around the Word of God in worship? We cannot see the Word Himself, Jesus Christ, yet we believe. We learn that truth from the Bible - God's Word.

Not everyone believes that. The enemy of Jesus, Satan, wants us to question that truth, and he is not alone. He has an ally in his campaign against Jesus and His followers. The world around us also challenges us to question what God tells us in the Bible, and it offers lifestyle alternatives as well as a different set of answers to questions Jesus answers. Our warrior, Jesus, faced the world's question about what is real and true. He defended the truth because He knows that you and I depend on it. Jesus faced Satan's ally, the world.

This part of the conflict is important for us because it is crucial that we understand that we are living in a world where God's own truth is under attack.

Jesus had been standing in front of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who had to decide whether to have Jesus crucified as the Jewish leaders wanted or to set Him free. Pilate had asked Him whether He was a king, which would make Jesus a direct threat to the Romans. Jesus answered, "*You are correct in saying that I am a king. I have been born for this reason and have come into the world for this reason, that I may testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice*" (John 18:37).

Did you catch Jesus' reference to "belonging to the truth"? On one side is the truth; on the other side is the lie. A lie can be an outright, blatant lie and denial of the truth altogether, or it can contain some truth mixed in with fake truths or some other shading of the truth. But on that side is the liar, Satan, and he has an ally, the unbelieving world.

The world around us accepts Satan's lies and challenges anyone who does not agree with it. The lies it trusts pretend to have answers to big questions of life but spout nonsense. John warns us, "*For everything in the world — the sinful desires of the human nature, the sinful desires of the eyes and pride in one's possessions — does not come from the Father but from the world*" (1 John 2:16). The enemy, not the Father, stands behind those lies.

The world in which we live is damaged and sinful. Not the earth, or dirt, but the people who parade ungodly ideas as the solutions to all the things that are wrong in the world. We shouldn't be surprised, because the world thinks that Jesus and His Word are just so much foolishness. As the Apostle Paul writes, "*However, an unspiritual person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually*" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The world wants nothing to do with Jesus. Sometimes, surely we too, have to admit that we've bitten into and half swallowed some of the lies of our anti-Christian culture. Sometimes we pick up stuff from movies, books, music, and television shows that portray immoral lifestyles and values that go against God's Word. Those influences cause us to let down our guard at times. Even children's programs and movies too, often convey that life is based mostly on feelings instead of what's real. **"What is truth?"** Pilate asked. Our world says that it is whatever you want it to be. Its ultimate goal is to undermine and even destroy God's truth and our need for Jesus.

John went on to write, *"The world is also passing away with its sinful desires, but the person who does the will of God remains for ever"* (1 John 2:17). We are designed for something far better and far bigger than just this earth: we are designed to be in an eternal relationship with our Creator, our Saviour, our faith-giving God! But Satan and the world want us to concentrate on what passes away and not on the truth about sin, death, and our need for salvation.

Jesus came up against a cloud of rejection by people, religious leaders, and politicians. The whole world was ganging up against Him. Yet every day, He calmly and strongly faced them all. Our warrior is ready. He spoke the truth. We just heard Him tell Pilate: *"You are correct in saying that I am a king. I have been born for this reason and have come into the world for this reason, that I may testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice"* (John 18:37).

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. Those are the words of a trapped man. Pilate voiced the words of his world and our world as well. Most of his truth was whatever had come from the point of the spear. Our truth comes from distorted values and whatever makes us feel good. Trapped in a world of lies, Pilate couldn't even recognise the truth when he was staring it in the face.

The answer to Pilate's question is and has always been: Jesus! He had earlier told His disciples, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

Jesus is the truth. In other words, He is the only way to understand reality - what is real and true. He's the only way we can possibly make sense of life. Anyone or anything else cannot do that job. From the beginning of time and the human race to the very last day of the earth, He is the only One who will ever be able to help us see straight.

Everybody has questions about reality. What can I know and how can I know it? How can I ever understand suffering and evil? Who am I? Why am I here? What can I hope? The world, of course, has millions of answers to those questions. The world's guesses and wishes and "I thinks" all fail the test of truth.

Jesus never said, "I'm guessing" or "I wish" or "I hope" or "I think" or "possibly" or "maybe." He always spoke with complete authority. He often said, "Truly, I tell you..." He was certain about truth: *"Therefore, Jesus said to those Jews who had become believers in Him, "If you remain 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).

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

Our world is broken. We all see it and know it. People hate. Nature kills. Storms damage. Death stalks us all. I think, say, and do the evil I know I shouldn't. I fail far too often to do the good I should.¹ Many have tried to come up with something to fix this mess. All have failed, except one: Jesus Christ!

¹ Romans 7:14ff

One sparkling, pure, perfect, holy, and huge Life has come into our world. Our triune God has loved us so much that He planned to rescue this sin-damaged world. The Son has come to tell us the whole truth and to be the Truth that would battle sin, death, Satan, and a 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, and hold dear because it means the solution for the world's sin and for our own personal sin. Our truth-telling Jesus gives us the certain conviction that He will take all those who trust Him to live with Him in heaven. *This is the only reality there is.*

His promise puts everything else into perspective. It gives us a worldview that is bigger than our eyes can see or what we can know. It's an amazing window into eternity! As children of God through faith in our Saviour Jesus, who now lives in us by that same faith, look at this great promise: *"You are from God, little children, and you have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

Jesus came from above with absolute truth from heaven. Here He has battled through all the world-perverted ideas of truth in order to give us the truth He came to share. That truth has changed us. We are on His side, the side of truth. We see reality - eternal reality - in the cross and the love of God for us sinners.

Our warrior Jesus calls us to be His warriors in this world. We don't use a sword as Peter tried to do in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead, Paul tells us how to wage our battles against Satan and the world: *"For, although we are living in sinful human nature, we do not wage war according to the sinful human nature. For the weapons with which we wage war do not belong to the sinful human nature but have God's power to tear down fortresses"* (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

The weapon He gives us is His own powerful Word. That has given us a Christian worldview far superior to any other worldview. The Word has changed us. We have a Christ-centred common sense and faith to use that Word well so we may bear witness to the hope and joy we have in Jesus.

Our world goes from experience to experience, seeking some form of happiness before moving on. That is very much like people walking through the woods at night, lighting a match to find their way. The match goes out and they light another. But they find no happiness, true joy, or real peace. Just read the news!

So our high privilege is to grow deeply in Christ through His Word, to live with consciences that are bound by that precious, good Word, and then to show and share the beautiful faith He has given us. When you get out of bed in the morning, think, "Jesus." As you choose what to spend your time, energy, and money on, think, "Jesus." Let Jesus and His Word be the GPS for your entire life!

Sometimes we are tempted to think this world is so bad that we need to just withdraw. So we throw out the televisions and computers, forbid anyone in our household to use a smartphone, and just read the Bible all the time at home. But keep in mind that Jesus gives us some direction. He told His disciples in a prayer during Holy Week, *"I do not ask You to take them out of the world but to keep them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world, as I do not belong to the world. Make them holy by the truth! Your Word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world"* (John 17:15-18).

So consider this: After being exposed to a godless worldview - whether through entertainment media, the news, or even a Facebook quote on a friend's page - turn to your Bible and spend some personal and family time discussing how Christ gives us a far more truthful view of the world and life! Use those opportunities to equip yourself and your family to be confident of the real truth!

Jesus has overcome the world and given us the treasure of His truth. Let us go out there and live, play, and work in God's marvellous truth, and always be ready to share it. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.