

February 26/27, 2013
John 18:37-38

Midweek Lent #3
Names of Wondrous Love- The Truth

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Lenten King. Amen.

Children are filled with questions. (Someday the cries will stop for me and the questions will begin). As someone once observed, "One child can ask more questions than ten wise men can answer." When little ones ask, "Why is the grass green?" it doesn't take long for us to answer. When they ask, "Where do babies come from?" Our answer might be slower in coming. But they want to know. Curiosity is their middle name, and asking questions is how they learn.

Take it from me, in my summers at camp, kids always ask questions, sometimes out of general curiosity, and other times just to wear in your patience. In the coming years I am sure that I will learn this even more.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, had his questions too. We remember one of them particularly, his question "What is truth?" Pilate's problem, though, was not in asking the wrong question but in not accepting the right answer. Instead of listening to Jesus answer, he turned on his heel and walked away.

Earlier on Maundy Thursday evening, Jesus had given his answer to the disciples. "I Am...the TRUTH," he told them. Listening carefully, we note He didn't say, "I am truthful." Of course, He is. The sinless Son of God cannot lie. Nor did He only say, "I'll tell you the truth." The prophets and the apostles did that. They were only mouthpieces, proclaiming truths that were given to them. Jesus is so much more. He is truth itself. What did our Savior mean? As we listen to the dialogue between him and Pontius Pilate that first Good Friday morning, we'll find the answer. And that answer points to one of Jesus'

Names of Wondrous Love—The TRUTH.

Tonight as we look The Truth we will discuss when Pilate and the world ask the question, "What is truth?" when they believe there is no truth. We will then seek out the truth, in the one whose name is the Truth.

Late Thursday evening, the Jewish court, called the Sanhedrin, has already passed the death sentence for Jesus. As a subject nation, though, they could not carry out the death penalty. Their Roman conquerors had wisely reserved that power for themselves. So early Friday morning, it was off with their prisoner to Pilate, the Roman governor. But what accusation should they bring that would stick? The religious charge of blasphemy that they had manufactured for their own court wouldn't even get a hearing in Pilate's venue. New charges were in order, and their sin-darkened and hell-poisoned hearts rose to the challenge. They charged, "We have found this man

subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a King.”

The charge Pilate had to investigate as the Jews cleverly knew. No official representative of Rome could ignore such a threat to the emperor of Rome. When Pilate accordingly asked Jesus, “Are you a king, then?” he received this answer: “I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” In response, all Pilate could muster was the jaded question, “What is truth?” With his weary question Pilate seemed to imply that there was not absolute truth especially in religious matters. Perhaps we could not have expected any other reaction from him. The Roman culture in which he was steeped had abandoned faith in religious and morality. It even laughed at its own gods and paid more attention to things like dreams and astrology. If anything, Pilate was a pagan skeptic, a practical agnostic. For him the answer was simple. There is no truth.

Sound familiar? The unbelieving world still asks the question, “What is truth?” Absolute truth in matters of morality and religious simply doesn’t exist, they insist. What seems true for one generation may change for the next. Just listen to their so-called wise questions, like: Was the world created in six days by an almighty God, or did it all come into being with a big bang? Did God make man as the crown of his creation, or did man claw his way to the top of the evolutionary ladder? Are human beings merely advanced animals who can satisfy their sexual desires any which way, or does God have specific roles for sex and marriage? Is all mankind and in need of salvation, or is there no absolute moral standard to which we are held accountable? Is salvation something people can work out for themselves, or is it a gift of God? “Truth is relative and so then is right and wrong” is their thesis. “What is right and wrong for one might not be for the other,” is their conclusion. Or to put it another way, “There is no truth.”

We know the right answer to Pilate’s question. By God’s grace, many of us from little on have known the truths of salvation found only in Christ Jesus. Perhaps for us the question isn’t “What is truth?” but “What is the truth worth?” Again this holy season it’s time to examine our response to that important question. What does my hearing of the truth, my reading of the truth, my studying of the truth, my sharing of the truth show about its importance to me?

Did you hear how Jesus answered Pilate’s question even before it was asked? “I came into the world, to testify to the truth,” he said. Truth was standing before Pilate that day in the person of the Son of God. Truth always confronts us in the person of Jesus. He shows us what we are—sinful and condemned. He shows us what we can become—forgiven and righteous. When it comes to salvation, there’s no need for speculation or searching.

JESUS Christ is God’s living word of salvation. He is truth in person! If this were mathematics we’d say, “Jesus = Truth” or “Jesus = Salvation.” He is truth in action. He stepped from eternity into time, clothed divinity in humanity, slept in a cradle, suffered on a cross, shed his blood as the God-man to make himself the truth of our salvation. If

we want to know how to be saved, there is only one answer—Christ! If we want to tell others how to be saved, there is only one truth to speak—Christ. We can live without many of the “truths” the world puts forward, but we cannot be saved without Christ.

Pilate had the opportunity to learn the truth that first Good Friday. He had the truth standing before him in person, but he wouldn't listen. Today Jesus the Truth stands before us again in His Word, “From infancy, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through in Christ Jesus,” he reminds us through his Apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy. The same apostle also writes this time to the Romans, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” he who is the truth reminds us in John 8. Would we know the glorious truth of how sinners become saints, how enemies of God become his precious children, how slaves of sin become servant of the Savior, how people hell-bent become heaven bound? Then we need to listen to Jesus. We need to drink in His Word> We need to “diligently study the Scriptures...that testify about Jesus,” the Truth.

Children have a way of asking questions. They also listen to answers. God help us listen with believing hearts to Jesus' answer to that all-important question, “What is truth?” God help us to treasure Jesus' answer, “I am the Truth,” because it shows his wondrous love for sinners like you and me. Amen.