

The Truth About Truth ~ John 14:23-29

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ May 5, 2013

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.



Grace, mercy and peace are yours through our risen Savior,

Isn't that a neat event that happened in our First Lesson for this morning? The servant of Elisha is afraid of the advancing Aramean army upon Jerusalem. But for some strange reason, his master, Elisha, is not afraid. Elisha prayed to God that he might open his servant's eyes. And low and behold, when the servant opened his eyes again he saw **"the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."** Things were not as they seemed in that Judean countryside several hundred years before Christ walked on this earth. But things were still in the Lord's control.

Sometimes we can act like that servant of Elisha and get worried at the advancing armies of human sin and immorality bearing down on us, both from the outside influences, and also from our own inner nature. We may think that being a Christian isn't worth it, or that in order to survive we must change in some way. And that lesson can provide a nice reminder to open our spiritual eyes. Eyes that are opened when we crack open the Bible, God's Word, and see who really is in charge, who really is in control and that we don't need to change anything. THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH is that

1. It's found in Holy Scripture
2. It's not found anywhere else

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Once again we return to the time in Jesus' life just before he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and crucified unjustly. It's no wonder then that Jesus is making the most of his last few hours with his disciples. In these seven verses of our gospel reading for this morning, Jesus packs a punch. There is so much that we could look at, and it certainly is valuable information. But instead of chasing all these different trails that we could chase, I want to go back to the foundation, or the head of the trail, where all of these trails start from. Last week we heard Jesus talking about love, but not just any love, but the love of a believer, the love that a believer shows because he believes in Jesus. But believing in Jesus is more than just saying the words, it is a complete lifestyle change. It is a lifestyle change that is based on one thing – truth.

But what is truth? That's the question that all the philosophers have been asking since the dawn of time. Our postmodern world will tell you that there is only individual truth. Truth is whatever the individual wants it to be, truth is whatever the individual believes. And while that sounds good and fine, sometimes there is no denying absolute truth, things that are true whether you believe them or not. Take gravity for example – I could believe that gravity doesn't exist, but that wouldn't change the truth of gravity. Or another simple truth – that Washington DC is the capital of the United States. It doesn't matter if I don't believe that, it doesn't change the truth that Washington DC is the capital of the United States. The same applies to God's Word, it is true, whether people believe it is true or not.

And that is THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH. It's found in Holy Scripture. One of the three pillars of the Lutheran reformation in the 1500s, one of the three truths that Luther had was *Sola Scriptura*. A Latin phrase that means "In Scripture Alone." As Luther continually studied God's Word and was immersed by it, he came to this realization. It was not a realization that he just decided was important so he wanted to follow it, but he discovered the truth of God's Word. Not only does the Bible claim to be the truth, Jesus says it is the truth too. Look at the first words Jesus spoke in our gospel, **"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching."**

Last week Jesus gave a new "command," Jesus expands upon that and now says to obey "his teaching" – in other words – you must follow everything I have taught you. Because everything I have taught you comes from God, everything I have taught you is the truth, not just a truth, the truth. It is truth whether we want to admit it or not. We have this truth before us in Scripture, if this is truth and nothing else is, then why wouldn't we want to take our truth from Scripture alone?

Because sometimes Scripture alone isn't enough for us. Sometimes we let our emotions and our reason rule the day. This happens when we don't hold our emotions or reason in check with God's Word. We let the tail wag the dog, we put the cart before the horse. Our emotion tells us that God is a loving God who would not have made me this way if it wasn't OK. Or since God is a loving God he wouldn't want me to deprive myself of something I want to do. Our reason rejects whatever doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense that babies could believe, so why baptize them? It doesn't make sense that Jesus gave us his actual body and blood in the Lord's Supper, so maybe it's just symbolic.

This goes against everything that Jesus is saying in this gospel. He says, plain and clear, **"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching."** This is truth. We will subject our emotion and our reason to God's Word and what it says, even if it doesn't make sense to us, even if we don't want to hear it because it is truth. It didn't make sense to Elisha's servant why Elisha was so calm, but then his spiritual eyes were opened and he saw. When our spiritual eyes are open we see sin for the disgusting, rotting carcass that God sees it for, and want to get away from it. We see the only way we get away from it is by having Jesus take it from us and pay for it.

Our spiritual eyesight is continually refocused by God's Word, and God's Word alone. Everything else starts to blur our spiritual vision. THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH, it's found in Holy Scripture alone.

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You want to know another TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH? It is found nowhere else. This may seem like an obvious point, if God's Word is the truth, then why would we look anywhere else for it? It makes no

sense. But let's go back to what Jesus said. He was preparing his disciples for when he wasn't going to be around, and there was a lot of stuff he was throwing at his disciples. How do we know that they would remember everything and take it down accurately for us? Jesus said, **"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** The Holy Spirit was promised to Jesus' disciples, to confirm the words he spoke.

And what a wonderful thing that is to remember. It is not like God the Father has one message, God the Son has another message, and God the Holy Spirit has a third message. They are all talking about the same message. And it was the apostle John who wrote in his first letter, **"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."** There's a difference between the Holy Spirit and other 'spirits' The Holy Spirit brings truth, the other spirits don't. And there are many other spirits and ideas that sound convincing, even sounding Scriptural, but even the devil masquerades as an angel of light.

Now how does this all relate? Surely someone wouldn't say something that's against God's Word. Don't be so sure about that. Have you ever heard someone say, "God spoke to me and said?" "I just had this feeling that God was telling me." "I was praying to God and he said to me." Now I'm not saying that people didn't hear something, but that isn't the way that God has promised to talk to us. God has promised to talk to us in his Word, and nothing else. I would rather rely on what God has spoken in his Word than in what someone has said God said.

If we allow ourselves to be pulled in different directions by anyone who wants to say something, we have no sure foundation, we don't know what to believe, and then you do have as the post-modernists think, individual truth. But that isn't the case. Paul wrote in his inspired letter to the Galatians, **"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be eternally condemned."** St. Augustine, a great, early church father said this, "Let us not hear in the church: I say this, you say this, he says that; but: Thus says the Lord." This is his teaching, this is his Word, there is no other. And when we come to realize this what a transformation it makes, what a weight off our shoulders. We no longer have to wrestle with God.

Because what God says to those who love him and obey his teaching, is that they will have peace. A peace that surpasses understanding. A peace of knowing that despite our sins God still loved us. He didn't love us and forget about them, but he paid for them. We can live in peace knowing our sins are forgiven. We can go in peace, leaving those sins behind. It is a peace that God promises. So even when we don't "feel" peaceful, God says it is there for those who by his grace believe. We do not need to be afraid of anything the world can throw at us, we don't need to be afraid of what our conscience says. This is the natural conclusion of loving Christ and obeying his teaching.

Don't get me wrong, loving Christ and obeying his teaching is not how we are getting to heaven, Christ did all that, but this is our response to him. Sometimes we wish that God would just open our spiritual eyes just like he did with the eyes of Elisha's servant. We wish that God would just come and show everyone he's boss, and since we're Christians we should be revered. But that isn't the way it is. But that doesn't mean that God doesn't open our spiritual eyes. Our spiritual eyes are opened in his Word. Our spiritual eyes are opened when he comes to dwell with us.

As a Christian, it means taking on a servant's attitude anytime we open God's Word, it's taking a humble approach, whether we are confessing our own sins, or confronting someone with theirs. This is so contrary to what the world thinks life should be like, what the world thinks truth should be like. But things are not what they seem. THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH. It's found only in God's Word, and it's found nowhere else. Amen!