

## Names of Wondrous Love—THE TRUTH

John 18:37,38 *“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”*

Children are filled with questions. As someone once observed, “One child can ask more questions than ten wise men can answer.” Children just naturally **want to know**. They are curious about anything and everything and asking questions is how they learn.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, had his questions too. We remember one of them in particular, 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. He told them, *“I am the way, the truth and the life,”* (John 14:6). Listening carefully to his words, *“I am...the **truth**...”*, 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 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 Jesus and Pontius Pilate that first Good Friday, we’ll find the answer. And that answer points us to one of Jesus’ **Names of Wondrous Love—THE TRUTH (I. No truth II. Know truth)**

Late Thursday evening, the Jewish court, called the Sanhedrin, had 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, they took their prisoner to Pontius 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. *“We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king,” they charged* (Luke 23:2).

The Jews very cleverly set things in motion. They knew Pilate had to **investigate** such a charge. No official representative of Rome could ignore such a threat to the emperor of Rome. Little did Pilate realize the opportunity and privilege that he had been given: **meeting** the Son of God, the Ruler of all things, face to face; **hearing** the great saving truths from His divine lips. In the blindness of unbelief he treated Jesus with contempt.

When Jesus explained that His kingdom was not of this world, that is, not a physical, earthly kingdom, Pilate just scratched his head saying, *“Are you a king, then?”* When Pilate asked that

question of Jesus, “*Are you a king?*” he received this answer: “*I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this 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 **no 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 religion 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.**

Does that sound familiar? It clearly does! The unbelieving world still asks the question “*What is truth?*” Absolute truth in matters of **morality** and **religion** 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 **sinful** 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?

So in matters of morality and religion we know how the unbelieving world answers all these questions. “Truth is relative and so then is right and wrong” is their thesis. They conclude and loudly proclaim, “What is right or wrong for one might not be for me or you.” Or to put it another way, “**There is no truth.**”

Fortunately 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 Lenten/Easter 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 by nature**—**sinful** and **condemned**. He shows us what we **become by faith in Jesus**—**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.

Christ is **the** Truth. He has, by his **sufferings** and **death**, secured salvation for all sinners. That’s the TRUTH! In Christ God has **reconciled** the world to himself. That’s the TRUTH! By God’s **grace**, through faith in Jesus, we have forgiveness of sins, life and eternal salvation. That is the TRUTH! That’s the truth he bids a share with a world lost in sin and unbelief.

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 faith in Christ Jesus,*” he reminds us through his apostle Paul (2 Timothy 3:15). “*Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ,*” he also reminds us through the same apostle (Rom. 10:17), “*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 truth himself reminds us in John’s Gospel (John 8:31-32). Would we know the glorious truth of **how sinners** become **saints**, **how enemies** of God become his precious **children**, **how slaves** of sin become **servants** of the Savior, **how people hell-bent** become **heaven-bound**? We know only when we **listen** to Jesus in his Word. We need to “*diligently study the Scriptures . . . that testify about [Jesus],*” the Truth (John 5:39).

Children have a way of asking questions. They also listen to the 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.