

Christ the King Sunday
John 18:33-38
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November 25, 2018
Haven Lutheran Church Hagerstown MD

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."³⁷ Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Today we celebrate Christ the King Sunday.

The feast of Christ the King is a celebration of the fact that Jesus Christ is truly King.

In 1925, Pope Pius XI instituted a new liturgical observance, the Feast of Christ the King.

The Pope felt the followers of Christ were being lured away by increasing secularism in the world, they were choosing to live in the "kingdom" of the world rather than God's kingdom.

God calls us to live in God's kingdom, In Matthew 6:33 "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you"

To seek God's Kingdom means to seek truth, God's kingdom is where truth reigns.

In our reading today we see the encounter between Pilate and Jesus.

See Just before Pilate asks to see Jesus, he is confronted by the Jewish officials. They tell Pilate that Jesus is a criminal and hand him over, but they never say why he is a criminal. Pilate senses their lack of honesty...

So, Pilate asks to speak with Jesus. Pilate is attempting to get to the truth. But what truth is he seeking?

Pilate asked, "Are you King of the Jews"

Jesus answered “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over...”

This is political rather than a religious charge, Pilate would not care if Jesus was anointed God, but he would care if a new political ruler was coming, one who might challenge the current Roman rule.

Pilate replied, “So you are a King then?”

Jesus answered with, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

This brings us back to Pilate, what do you think Pilate said next? He answered Jesus with “Whatever”

Ok, so that was not his exact words, in verse 38 Pilate asks Jesus “What is truth” But his spirit, his demeanor can be captured in the word we hear so much today. “Whatever”

“Whatever” has become verbal shorthand for a particular response to life. It is a denial of meaning and purpose.

When a person offers you a response of “whatever,” they are essentially saying that the topic doesn’t matter, the response doesn’t matter, or perhaps you don’t matter.

We are living in a whatever world -- a culture in which truth has been stripped of its meaning and replaced with personal preference.

What does a whatever world look like? It’s an age, a culture in which all ideas, all lifestyles, all behaviors are considered of equal value.

You cheat, I don’t. Whatever – what’s valid for me isn’t necessarily valid for you.

Some call it postmodernism, but the relativism that seems so characteristic of our age isn’t all that new.

It’s as old as Pilate, playing politics.

Or as old as the Romans, who didn’t care if those early Christians worshiped Jesus, so long as they also worshiped Caesar.

It’s even as old as Eden, where a smooth-talking serpent convinced the residents that one tree is pretty much the same as another, no matter what God may have said.

Yet never has the spirit of “whatever” been so pervasive and destructive of an age and a culture. As one commentator has observed, “Reality isn’t what it used to be.”

That’s the idea behind Walter Anderson’s example of the three baseball umpires.

One says with certainty, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and I call ‘em the way they are.”

The second umpire, with a bit less assurance, says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and I call ‘em the way I see ‘em.”

The third umpire, who is boastful and authoritative, says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and they ain’t nothin’ until I call ‘em.”

So, reality is boiled down to what “I” perceive it to be, and nothing more.

Today many people sound like Pilate and want to know “what is truth”

There was a group that conducted a survey a few years ago, on what Americans think “truth” is. The question asked was “What is absolute truth?”

66% of adults said “There is no such thing as absolute truth, people define truth in conflicting ways and are still correct.”

Some of these definitions given for truth were:

“The truth is whatever you believe”

“Truth is that which is true for all times, across all cultures and for all people.”

“A statement is true only if it corresponds to or agrees with factual reality”

Because our culture has rejected the concept of absolute truth, all moral claims have been reduced to the level of personal opinion. No one’s views are right or wrong – they’re just subjective expressions of personal preferences.

In the 14th chapter of John’s gospel, Jesus made a most astonishing statement when he said: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” It is one of the most daring statements ever made -- unless it is true. And if it is true, then it makes all the difference in the kind of world in which we live. If Jesus is Himself truth, then it changes everything.

John 1:14 “And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth”

John 1:17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 8:32 “..and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

So, truth as revelation, what God has revealed to us about Jesus, Jesus is the Truth.

We must seek to know the truth to know Jesus. Truth is a stimulant for faithful living and witness. Truth can be transforming if we seek it through discerning obedience that asks us to look deeply into who we are and what we have become, to try to live into what we should be. This means we must challenge ourselves to look beyond what we perceive is the truth and see what is the truth, The truth found in Jesus Christ. The truth that Jesus represents is found in God, who is love and grace. The truth that is Christ the King.

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