

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: John 18:33-38

"Why I Believe" (part 3)

A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION

We continue our series on *Why I Believe*. What are the reasons why one should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? On Easter Sunday we looked at seven main reasons all found in our liturgy on p. 55 in the prayer book. Last week, we looked at the first reason, creation. Nature - its laws, its complexity, its beauty - all convey the work of a Creator.

This week we will look at the second reason and that is truth. What is truth? It is objective reality. It includes facts, but it is more than just facts. It is what is really real. Everything in life is based on truth, whether it is truths about ourselves, about nature, or about various subjects in life. Truth is the basis for all life. The problem is that when it comes to spiritual and moral truth people like to say that such truth is not just relative but that it can't really be known, because everyone has different truths. In fact, recent polls have shown that over 80% of college age youth believe that truth is relative and simply based on one's own circumstances.

Well, we're going to see that not only how this is preposterous this is, but we will see how God of the Bible has set forth clearly, not only the reality of truth, but its origin and its nature. But first, I want to ask a question, "Why was Jesus born?" "Why did He come to earth?" Actually there are many reasons. Some would say, "to save us," others would be correct to answer, "to reveal God to us," and still others "to do the Father's will." There are many reasons why Jesus came to earth, all very profound, but there is one reason that encompasses them all. And that reason is found in John's Gospel, chapter **18:33-37**. Please turn there with me and let's read it together.

JESUS ON TRIAL

"Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" [34](#)Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" [35](#)Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" [36](#)Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." [37](#)Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Why was Jesus born? To testify to the truth. Now if I said to you that I had to leave early today because I had to testify, what would that mean? It would mean that I am going to court, right? But not just to court. I would be going to a trial because I am going to be on the witness stand. Why was Jesus brought before Pilate? He was on trial. But you see it wasn't just Jesus who was on trial. Truth was on trial.

THE TRUTH OF CHRIST

And when we look back at Jesus' ministry do you know what we find? Truth was at the very heart of everything He said and did. In the gospels, He said, "***I tell you the truth***" seventy-five times. In John's gospel alone, He said, "***Truly, truly, I say to you...***" twenty-five times.

In **Jn 1:17**, the apostle writes, "***For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.***"

In **Jn. 14:6**, Jesus said, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life...***"

In **Jn. 17:17**, Jesus prayed to His Father, "***Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.***"

He told the Samaritan woman in **Jn. 4:24**: "***those who worship Him (God) must worship in spirit and truth.***"

In **Jn. 8:32**, He declared to those who follow Him, "***You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.***" What does Jesus mean here? What are we being set free from? that which holds us captive. What ultimately holds us captive? Belief in lies. Trust in lies. It is the truth that comes from Christ that really sets us free from a life of falsehood.

But Jesus says more. In **Jn. 14:16-17**, He tells us, "***I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.***"

In fact it will be this Spirit, the Holy Spirit, Jesus says in **Jn. 16:13**, who will guide us in to all truth: "***But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth;***"

We see in **I Tim. 2:4** that truth has a close link to salvation when the Apostle Paul writes that God "***desires all mankind to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth***"

And when it comes to spiritual warfare, the Apostle Paul tells us in **Eph. 6:14** that the first piece of spiritual armor that we are to take up is the "***belt of truth.***" And the last piece of equipment? Paul tells us in v. 17 - "***The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God***" which is in and of itself is the truth! Recall what Jesus said in **Jn. 17:17** – "***Your word is truth.***"

MANKIND'S RESPONSE

We find that the prophets of the Old Testament lamented when God's people strayed from the truth. We hear in **Is. 59:14**: "***Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; For truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter.***"

The Lord declares in **Jer. 7:28**: "***truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.***"

And again from **Is. 59:15**: "***truth is lacking***"

So how does the majority of mankind respond to the truth? What is our tendency?

We suppress the truth: **Rom. 1:18** - *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*

We distort the truth: **Acts 20:30** - *"men will arise, speaking perverse things,"*

We reject the truth and follow evil: **Rom. 2:8** - *"who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,"*

We exchange the truth for a lie **Rom. 1:25** - *"For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,"*

So do you see what the real trial in life is? It is about the battle between what is true and what is a lie. Jesus said before Pilate, *"For this I was born, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth."* And then he said, *"Everyone who is of the truth, hears My voice."* In other words, everyone who is on the side of truth listens to Me.

And so what is the implication of that statement. There are other sides, there are other voices, but they are not true. They're false. They're lies. This does not play well in a tolerant world, does it?

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH VS. THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

I Jn. 4:6: *"We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."*

There are only two spirits in this world when it comes to truth. And these two spirits reflect the cosmic battle going on between good and evil, between the truth and the lie. The battle began in the garden, with the words *"Did God really say?"* It began with a lie that countered God's truth. And it continued with another lie – *"You don't need God...you surely shall never die."*

Now we don't know when the angelic host were create, but they may in fact may have been created before the present universe and world. And so when God created mankind, He undoubtedly had an audience. And Lucifer being the chief angel in charge, may have asked God after He created Adam and Eve, "Are they mine?" "Can they serve me?" And God undoubtedly would have said, "No, they are not yours, they are created to serve and love me." And Satan probably replied, "Let's see if they really will serve you. Give them a choice like you gave me." And all the angelic host were held in suspense to see what would happen when the truth claims of God were challenged and Adam and Eve were given a choice. Well, we know what happened. They chose and they chose poorly. So too, we choose and we choose poorly, and as a result, the rest of the story, this cosmic battle is played out in this book (the Bible), its played out in human history, and its played out in the lives of every man, woman and child.

The truth is there is only one choice between two fathers: Jesus said it plainly in **Jn. 8:34-46**. Either we follow God, His Father, the One who sent the Son, who is the very voice of truth and who sets free from sin those who listen to His voice, or we follow the devil, who Jesus says *"was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

When Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders for not believing, He also described our sinful nature. He revealed why we want to do the things of the flesh, the world, and the devil. You see every sin that besets us is the result of believing in a lie. It first starts with a deception. Let's look again at what the Word of God says.

Rom. 7:11: *"for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me."*

2 Thess. 2:10: *"and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."*

Eph. 4:22-24: *"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

Heb. 3:13: *"But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."*

And so there is the choice between reality (truth) and that which is an illusion (lie). What does the world say about our universe and world: we are an accident. What does God say about life? I created it and it has a wonderful purpose and plan. What does the world say about human beings? We are highly evolved animals. And we wonder why our young people act like animals! But what does God say? You are made in My image! What does the world say about the nature of man? We are basically good and perfectible. Just give people enough education and money and they will be ok. Really? When did Adam and Eve fall in the garden? When they were poor, naked and afraid? No. They fell when they had all that anyone could ever wish for. So what does God say about our nature? We are sinful and fallen and need a total transformation of character. What does the world say about our purpose? Do what you think is right, be all that you can be on your own, and get as much out of it as you can out of life for yourself. What does the Lord say? *Love God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love one another as I have loved you. Seek first my Kingdom and my righteousness and everything you need will be granted!*

If you got dropped off on deserted highway and a man came to you with his hand in his shirt and said, "I am Napoleon," and another pulled up to you in a car and rolled down his window and said, "I am from Mars" what would you think? Those folks are insane. They have lost touch with reality, with truth. What is insanity? It is being out of touch with reality. And that is what happens when we turn from the truth of God. When we look at human history we see the insanity that results when truth is ignored, suppressed, and rejected!

The truth is our actions reflect what is really our reality. Truth is reality but believing that a lie is real, that is making our own reality. You see the problem with falsehood is that it is illogical, it has holes and it leads to death. It creates a false reality. Truth on the other hand is logical, it makes sense, it works and it will lead to peace, prosperity, and happiness. Why? It comes for the One who is THE Truth. Therefore, all truth comes from God and as such is defined by God.

After Jesus spoke such profound words of truth, do you know how Pontius Pilate responded? Look at **John 18:38**. Pilate said, "***What is truth?***" I wonder how he said it. Did he say it inquisitively as "What *is* truth?" or did he say it sarcastically like "*What* is truth?" I think he responded with the latter. For if he truly understood who was standing before him, He would have never let the trial go forward. As leading Christian apologist and teacher. Ravi Zacharias said, "Here was the greatest question posed to the greatest authority and at that moment when Pontius Pilate turned his back on Jesus, he committed the greatest crime."

So how should we respond on an everyday level to the reality of truth? We need to not fall into the deception of a false reality where our choices are based on what we feel or think rather than on what God has revealed in His Word. Moreover, we have an obligation, now that we know the truth in Christ, to share it with others by what we say and how we live. We are not to look down on others in a spirit of arrogance or pride but we are to reach out in love and humility. Listen again to how God's Word tells us how to respond.

2 Tim. 2:24-26: *"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."*

Col. 4:5-6: *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."*

We are called to be the light and life of Jesus to others. When we do so we are not only pointing people to the truth, we are living the truth! In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, AMEN!