

Text: John 19:36-38
Title: "What truth is"
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Place: NBBC

Introduction – The Family Policy Institute of Washington went to Washington University to ask students there some questions. Specifically, a 5'9" white male asked students if they would believe that he was a 6'5" Chinese female.

The students had trouble answering the question. The video concludes with the question, "It shouldn't be hard to tell a 5'9" white guy that he is not a 6'5" Chinese woman. But clearly it is. Why? What does that say about our culture? And what does that say about our ability to answer the questions that actually are difficult?"

The noun *truth*, the adjective *true*, and the adverb *truly* occur about 178 times in the New Testament. 46% of those times happen in one of the books the Apostle John wrote. They occur 49 times in John's Gospel, 12 times in 1 John, and 10 times in Revelation. Those three books are the top three when it comes to using these words. No other New Testament book makes it into double digits. So John's writings are a good place to look for an answer to this video's questions.

In fact, the last usage of the word *truth* in John's Gospel is in the form of a question that reflects much of the confusion the video found on the campus of Washington University. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" His question is rhetorical, of course. He asks, "What is truth?" but he means to say, "There is no truth."

Jesus answered Pilate's question before He asked it. I would like for us to notice two things together that Jesus says about what truth is.

I. Truth is something that comes from Christ, not from this world (vv. 36-37a).

Illustration: A number of years ago my family spent a nice vacation in Washington, D. C. We toured the mall and saw the monuments, and we were reminded of some of the great truths upon which our nation was founded. On the wall of the Jefferson Memorial, for instance, there were the truths that all men are equal and that the conscience of man should be free.

Where did Jefferson get those truths? His words on that wall tell us when they say, "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights" (*Declaration of Independence*); and "Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens...are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion" (*A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom*).

Application: Our founding fathers established our nation on great truths because they knew about the Source of truth that is not from this world, but from the One whom Jefferson calls "the Creator" and "the Holy Author" of Christianity, Jesus Christ.

Pilate was unfamiliar with this source of truth, and so he had no answer to his question, "What is truth?" Jesus came from another world into this world of lies and guile and deception and confusion, and in this world he testified to the truth. The entire Gospel of John points to Jesus Christ as the source of truth and as the One who does not come from this world:

John 1:9, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

John 6:14, "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'"

John 7:28, "Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, 'Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.'"

John 7:40, "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, 'Of a truth this is the Prophet.'"

John 8:28, "I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him."

John 8:40, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham."

John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'"

John 15:1, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

John 18:37, "Pilate therefore said unto him, 'Art thou a king then?' Jesus answered, 'Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I

should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

And then Pilate asks, “What is truth?” Did you notice that Jesus speaks to Pilate about “the truth” and Pilate speaks only about “truth”? For Jesus, everything that is real is the unified and universal truth. It matters not who you are, the truth is the same for everyone. For Pilate, there is no such thing. At best, Pilate would say that each of us makes up his own truth, but that is where the lie begins.

As clear as the Gospel of John is about where truth comes from – from Jesus and not from this world, he is equally clear about where lies come from – from Satan who is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”).

This world is a world of lies that murder people. The eugenics lie that told Nazi Germany that humans evolved from lower life forms murdered millions of people. The abortion lie that tells a young mother that she has the right to choose murders her baby. The homosexuality lie that tells men and women that their inordinate lust is normal murders marriage and the family. The divorce lie that convinces the spouse that true happiness can be had elsewhere murders the security of children. The transgender lie that tells a young boy that he is a girl murders women’s sport. The social media lie that tells a whole high school that protesting a new bathroom policy with a walkout is more important than staying in class and learning algebra is murdering their educational opportunities to earn an honest living someday. Stolen elections, political prisoners, tyrannical oppression, and destructive debt have come to our country through the power of murderous lies.

Our once great nation is being murdered by the father of lies, because prosperous Americans have done what the Jews of John 8 did. Very simply, when someone tells us the truth, we believe them not.

And in a time and place like this, Jesus still testifies to the truth. He calls us to repent, to hear His voice, and to believe that He is our Savior. He asks us to truly follow Him, because truth is something that comes from Christ and not from this world.

II. Truth is something that comes to those who listen, not to those who refuse (v. 37b-38).

Illustration: A stark contrast to the great truths of our founding fathers in the memorials of Washington D. C. was a presentation we saw in the Evolution Theatre of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. There was no reference to Jesus Christ in that presentation, as it told us that we as human beings came from an extinct rodent called "Morgan."

If that video is true, then the great truths of our nation's founding are not. You cannot have it both ways. We are either endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, or we are advanced relatives of rodents who were lucky that the dinosaurs were wiped out by a meteor 60 billion years ago. We cannot be both.

Application: That video in the Evolution Theatre reminded me of the video of the Washington University students. In both cases, the lie of the world crowds out the truth of Jesus Christ, and the results are devastating for a person's ability to think clearly, let alone apprehend the truth that is not of this world.

Paul describes what happened to them, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (Rom.

1:25). Paul tells us the reason why they did so was “the lusts of their hearts” (v. 24).

In the end, only one thing makes this world such a dark place of confusion and lies - the desires of the human heart. The natural desires of hearts like your heart and my heart makes this world a dark place of confusion and lies. Jer. 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” When someone rejects the truth of Jesus Christ, why do they do so? They do so because they want to follow their own heart instead.

Illustration: Antony Flew, at the time a renowned atheist, wrote something similar to the prophet Jeremiah in a book he wrote on logic: “A prime cause of our being deceived is, for all of us, always our own desire to be so deceived. . . . all of us constantly need to be asking ourselves what it is which we want to believe to be true, and whether our desires so to believe are stronger than our desires to know the truth, however uncongenial to us that truth may be” [*How to Think Straight: An Introduction to Critical Reasoning*; 1998].

Nine years later, Flew wrote a book entitled, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. He became a theist because his desire to know the truth finally became stronger than his heart's desire to be a renowned and respected atheist.

Application: Whether or not we know the truth will depend on whether or not we want to know the truth more than we want to follow the desires of our own heart. Jesus makes this truth clear in the Gospel of John: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

By nature our hearts' desires are always stronger than our desire for truth, until Jesus changes our heart. We have no

natural capacity to live for truth rather than our sinful desires. Only the Holy Spirit can make us people of truth.

When we are saved from our sin, our heart is changed, and we become the kind of people that are “of the truth.” It is only then that we hear His voice. Truth is something that comes to those who listen, not to those who refuse, and only the saving power of the Holy Spirit can make you someone who listens. Do you listen, or do you refuse? Has your heart been changed, or are its desires still in charge?

Perhaps the most tragic of the example of the passages about truth in the Gospel of John is John 8:45, “And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” In our passage Jesus explains, “Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice.” And in John 8 He says to others, “Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” Into which category do you and I fall this morning? Do we hear His voice because we are of the truth? Or do we disbelieve the truth when we hear it, choosing rather to believe the attractive lies of the enemy?

Conclusion: The video concluded with the slogan, “If you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything.” That is certainly correct, but it does not begin to describe the severe consequences of a failure to listen to the truth of Jesus Christ.

In our passage, Pilate refused to listen. He had such a wonderful opportunity, but instead He rejected the truth. Truth be told, he likely regrets doing so to this day in hell. When Jesus came into this world and testified to the truth, He gave Pilate a choice, and Pilate’s choice was tragic.

He has given you and me that same choice this morning. Will we listen and believe that Jesus is the King of a kingdom not of this world, the testifier to the truth, crucified to be our Savior, risen and coming again someday? Or will we reject Him in favor of the desires of our own heart? Will we leave this

morning with Pilate's question still on our lips, "What is truth really anyway?"

Eternal life is at stake as we answer that question for ourselves. John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Do you know the truth, the true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent? If not, turn from the desires of your own heart, repent of your unbelief, and accept Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching