

Sermon for Christ the King Sunday
November 21, 2021 Yr B
St. Michael's Episcopal Church
The Reverend Canon Michael J. Horvath
Gospel: John 18:33-37

“What is truth?” That’s the question that plagues not only Pilate but all of us. What is truth? Isn’t this what we all want to know. Over the recent past, social media and certain people in the media have made a strong effort to subvert the truth or obfuscate facts to the point that truth has taken on a relative meaning depending on your world view. It seems no longer to be grounded on a common understanding of the reality before us.

You see, the opposite of truth is not so much falsehood as it is denial. And increasingly all one needs to do is to deny reality or disagree in order to claim a new “truth” of how things really work. As we have seen, denial of the truth has made it difficult to make significant strides in eradicating the spread of the COVID virus. Our inability to face the truth has led to an alarmist portrayal of Critical Race Theory — which is simply a way of studying systemic racism, its impact on communities of color and how it still permeates many aspects of our society. And our inability to face the truth that the proliferation of firearms and the cheap and easy way to acquire them continues to snuff out the lives of God’s beloved people without any consequence, as the disturbing acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse for the gunning down of 3 unarmed victims with an AR-15 semiautomatic.

Because we think we can manipulate truth to our own needs, there is a large segment of our society who perpetrate the belief that the Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jews, never happened. And an American Psychological Association study found that Americans perceive Black men as larger, stronger and more threatening than white men of the same size; Black and Latino boys are perceived as older and “less innocent” by enforcement authorities; and Black girls as young as 5 years old are viewed as older, less innocent and more aggressive than white girls of the same age.

“What is truth?” If we think about it, Pilate asked the wrong question. It is not “What is truth?” but “*Who* is truth?” Part of our denial and blindness, you see, consists in imagining that truth we control and can manage. We increasingly believe that truth is a solo sport. But for John, indeed, for *all* Christians, truth is not a thing but a person, one person in particular—Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. He alone, who witnesses to the truth, is truth incarnate, in flesh and blood.

We spend much of our time searching for truth, about the world, about ourselves, about our relationships. We listen to gurus and talking heads who promise to give us the truth that will lead us to a sense of wholeness, or supreme consciousness. And isn’t it a sad thing when we finally think we are close to that truth, only to be disappointed to learn that it is just a man behind a curtain pulling strings like the Wizard of Oz.

Jesus reminds us that he is the truth, if only we are willing to listen. Remember, Jesus tells us that he is the Truth, the Way and the Life. If that is so, and if we seek to live as Christians, then that should make knowing the truth fairly easy. We don't have to contort ourselves into creating truths, we don't have to be clever or a genius to recognize the truth. We only need to look to the life of Christ. So, if we ask Who is Truth, and answer that question with Jesus Christ, then what is that truth and what do we do with it?

"So you are a king?", Pilate asks. He misses the mark so much that he is essentially saying, "So, 1+1=5?" And Jesus doesn't even argue but essentially says, "Yes, you're absolutely correct. Enjoy."

The Truth of who Jesus is goes over Pilate's head, and I'm wondering if we also let that truth go over our heads as well? Advent is not just the pre-show to Christmas. Advent begins a New Year for the Christian Church and it also allows us to start thinking again who or what is the Truth of this man we call the Messiah. And if you only take the time to think about that at Christmas and Easter, like many folks do, you will only be living a faith of half truths.

Because the full truth of Jesus doesn't only exist in the fact that this King is born in a lowly stable, angels sing on high and then we're done. The full truth of Jesus isn't that on Good Friday he is crucified and is raised again on the third day and we get a basket full of colored eggs and chocolate bunnies. That's not the whole truth. And we can't deny the whole truth of Jesus as he lives it between his birth and his death. We cannot deny the truth that Jesus invites everyone to the table – regardless of race, age, social status, gender, profession, sexual orientation, education, intelligence or deepness of faith – Jesus is ready to nurture and feed everyone and anyone. We cannot deny the truth that Jesus calls us to protect, to care for, and to raise our voices on behalf of the helpless, the weak, and the marginalized, whether they are our best friends or complete strangers. We cannot deny the truth that even in our own suffering, we are not alone and that Jesus is ready and willing to carry it for us, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Finally, we cannot deny that it has always been, and it will only ever be our love for each other that will eradicate the ills of the world.

As we enter into Advent, I invite you to think about the Truth who is Jesus and figure out how willing you are to get to know the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. For he is the Truth that you can rely on, the Truth that can never be manipulated by our whims, or algorithms and social media. He is a Truth that we know deep down in our hearts. He is the truth that stands the test of time, for all time. Amen.