

What is Truth?
John 18:29-38
November 21, ,2021

When I was in seminary, I took a class called "Satan, Demons, and the Occult." We were assigned to study and write a paper on any of those topics. I choose to write a paper on an occult that had its world headquarters in Chanhassen, MN by building a temple in 1990. The group is called Eckankar.

I called them up. I told them I was writing a paper on Eckankar for a class in Seminary and asked for a tour. The man was hesitant as they had been receiving bad press lately. I assured him I would be kind, and I was approved for a tour.

My tour guide was a woman. It was a lovely building, especially the gathering place for spiritual events. The room was shaped like this one, and in the center of the ceiling was a stained glass window of a blue star.

As we talked, I asked her what Eckankarists believed. She said whatever anyone deems is true for themselves. It is the old adage: "What is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me." Even though this was 30 years ago, I still remember thinking: what if your truth and my truth contradict one another? How can they each be true? (I got an A on my paper, by the way.)



In our scripture passage today, Pilate asks Jesus: What is truth? You many have noticed that Jesus didn't answer. Maybe Jesus sensed it was a rhetorical question. Pilate did seem to walk away without waiting for answer. Maybe Jesus knew Pilate wasn't really looking for the truth; he just wanted to get out the situation he found himself in. And perhaps Jesus knew Pilate wouldn't listen.

There are times when we need to hear the truth.

(From John Ortberg) Imagine going to the doctor's office for a checkup. The doctor says to you, "You are a magnificent physical specimen. You have the body of an Olympian. You are to be congratulated."

Later that day while climbing the stairs, your heart gives out. You find out later your arteries were so clogged that you were like one jelly doughnut away from the grim reaper.

You go back to the doctor and say, "Why didn't you tell me?"

The doctor says, "Well, I knew your body is in worse shape than the Pillsbury doughboy, but if I tell people stuff like that, they get kind of offended. It's kind of bad for business. They don't come back. I want this to be a safe place where you feel loved and accepted."

You'd be furious! You'd say to the doctor, "When it comes to my body, I want the truth!"

As the church, we need to tell the truth. As Jesus stood in front of Pilate, he claimed he came into the world to testify to the truth. As followers of Christ, truth is so basic to our faith that it needs to be told.

There are different kinds of truth. There are relative truths.

Example: I can be in a room with you. I can say it is cold and you say it is just right (And believe me, this happens a lot!) The truth is based on our own perspectives. It is based on what is true for you is true for you. And what is true for me is true for me. This is a relative truth.

There are absolute truths. They are the opposite of relative truths. Relative truths are changing; absolute are unchanging. Absolute truths are true regardless of parameters, context, what we think.

The Bible teaches there are absolute truths. These truths are a necessary foundation to the Christian faith.

What are the absolute truths our faith depends on?

Absolute truth: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) This is kind of like being told your heart is bad. We don't want to hear it, but this sin separates us from God. Which leads to the next absolute truth:

Absolute truth: John 3:16 – God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

God wanted us to be reconciled to God's self.

Which leads to the next absolute truth: John 1: 14 – the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is what we will be anticipating and celebrating for the next month. God came to be with us so we would know God.

Absolute truth from Jesus: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus was the way God came to us. Pilate wanted to know what was truth, and it was standing right in front of him. So maybe the question is not "What is truth?" but "Who is truth?"

Absolute truth from Jesus: abide with me and I will abide with you. Truth is not simply an idea that you agree with. Rather, Truth is a relationship that you belong to.

Absolute truth from Romans 8: - nothing can separate us from God's love

The truth is that because of Jesus Christ you are forgiven. The truth is that because of the work of the Son of God you are righteous in God's sight. The truth is you are a dearly loved child of God. The truth is nothing can separate you from that love.

So when you sit down at your Thanksgiving meal this week, be thankful for these truths that are absolute and never change. You can count on it.

Christians in our past have worked hard to write this truth down. We find it in the Apostle's Creed. Let us stand and affirm these truths together.