

Christ the King 2009 [PR 29] John 18:33-37

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. The end of the church year is not like the end of the calendar year where we focus on ourselves and make grand resolutions for the year to come. Rather, we focus on Jesus Christ as the King of Glory and what he has done for us. What does a king do? A king rules, judges, dispenses favors, grants clemency and pardon. A king sets the agenda for life, leads and protects his people.

Jesus is our good and great King. Jesus came to save us. As our king he did battle with our ancient enemies, sin, death and the devil. He fought on our behalf. He defeated these enemies and he gives his victory to us. Jesus won this battle **not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood, his innocent suffering and death**. In the battle with sin Jesus gave up his life on the cross. But then God raised Jesus from death and promises that all who believe in him will also rise to new and everlasting life with God. This is the Christian message. It is a powerful message of hope. It is a message of victory and joy. We live in the hope and expectation of this kingdom to come in its fullness.

Here at the end of the church year we sum up the teaching of the Christian church. Jesus is **the way, the truth, and the life**. He is the way of salvation. In his trial before Pilate, Jesus said, **“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world...”** Jesus is the truth. Jesus said, **“I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”** Pilate asked Jesus, **“What is truth?”**

The truth is not some esoteric philosophy that we debate ad nauseum. The truth that sets us free is a person, and that person is Jesus. He speaks the truth. Jesus reveals the truth about God's love and God's plan and provision for the earth. Jesus is the truth.

That truth could be a person seems weak when compared to the powers of the world arrayed against the truth. We live in a world where the power of truth seems weaker than the power of a lie. Yet truth is powerful and stands the test of time whereas all lies are eventually exposed and lose their power. Jesus, as the truth, has stood the test of time.

Jesus stood before Pilate and Pilate asked, “**What is truth?**” (18:38). In asking this question Pilate revealed that he did not recognize “The Truth” standing right before him. We might excuse Pilate for not figuring this out. After all, Jesus looked just like any other man that Pilate had executed on a cross and that was the end of it. But it would not be so with Jesus. Jesus would go to the cross and die but he would not stay dead. But his resurrection was 3 days away so how was Pilate to know who it was that was standing before him? And Jesus talked in strange, veiled language. “**My kingdom is not of this world**”, he said. “**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.**” Pilate, a man schooled in the duplicity and deception of palace intrigue answered, “**What is truth?**” “The Truth” stood before him and “The Truth” stands before us in Jesus Christ who is, “**the Word of God who became flesh and lived among us...**” (1:14).

We live in a world filled with truth claims. Advertisers claim that if you use a particular brand of toothpaste your teeth will be whiter. If you wear a particular brand of athletic shoe you will be a better athlete. If you drive a certain model of car you will feel younger or more sophisticated. We accept these truth claims because we **want** to believe them, not because they are true. We want to believe that we can be the captain of our own ship, the master of our own destiny. Yet we cannot guarantee even our next breath. We are quick to believe the lie, the lie that we are ultimately self-defined or that **things** will give us life or guarantee our happiness.

Truth claims are made so often for so many products and by so many people that we have become jaded cynics, suspicious of everything, even the claims of scripture. There are many competing truth claims out there. Yet not all can be true. Some are lies. It is wise for us to be cautious lest we be taken-in by claims of truth that are false. What can we use to test the many truth claims of life? It is beyond my expertise to help you test truth claims when it comes to products you purchase. It is not my job to help you test claims of truth when it comes to economic policies, political rhetoric, and advertising. It **is** my job to help you discern the voice of God whose word is truth which will lead you to know the truth which will set you free.

As we get older and gain more experience in life we hopefully develop what we might more delicately call a good “baloney detector”. Not every truth claim is true. Truth authenticates itself. Truth rings true. We know the truth when we hear it. (Illus. The U.S. Treasury Dept is charged with the task of combating counterfeit money. How do they teach their agents to identify counterfeit money? Well, they spend 90% of their time studying real currency. The theory is that if the agents are totally familiar with the genuine article they will quickly and easily be able to notice a counterfeit.)

A member of Zion told me the other day that she appreciated so much coming to church and Sunday School. She said, “What I am learning here I know is true and I need to learn more.” How does she know that it is true? We know the truth when we hear it. The word of God is truth. It is by the work of the Spirit of God that we know the truth. There is a deep resilient chord that is struck within us when we hear God’s word of truth. That is because God made us and knows us. It is God who defines us. So when we hear the word of God, we know it is the truth and that truth, in the person of Jesus, sets us free.

That truth is not an economic policy, a philosophical tenant, a political or ideological system. The truth is Jesus Christ, the king of heaven and earth. He is the truth that sets you free.

The epistle lesson for today paints a powerful picture of Jesus the king. From Daniel 7:

**As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being*
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One*
and was presented before him.**

**14 To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.**

This is our King, Christ Jesus, God's son and our Savior. He came into his world to rescue you from sin and death. It is our privilege to know him and be known by him. He is the truth, his word is truth, and you can trust him with your life. Thanks be to God. AMEN