

John 18:38, "HOW TO FACE SATAN'S ALLY, THE WORLD." (Lent A) '20

Lord Jesus, whatever the world may say, may You always be: the Way, the Truth & the Life for us. Amen.

Dear Followers of Christ,

"What is truth?" (v.38) This is undoubtedly the most famous of the questions that Pilate asked Jesus. Few Christians remember his questions, "Are You the king of the Jews?" (v.33) Or "What is it You have done?" (v.35) But most of us are aware that somewhere in the interrogation of Jesus. He was asked, "What is truth?" (v.38)

It is strange, however, that we should remember this question. After all, Pilate didn't expect an answer, for he immediately left Jesus & "went out again to the Jews." (v.38)

Moreover centuries of probing have not furnished us with a clear idea of what Pilate meant by these words.

Some have thought that the Roman governor had spent a long time searching for "truth" & that in this question he is making a statement of his disillusionment. He is saying, "What is truth? You can't find it -- anywhere."

Others have felt that Pilate's words simply express skepticism, saying in effect: "There's no use talking about 'truth' you can't find it -- anyway."

Unfortunately, we don't have a recording of Pilate's voice so we can't decide his real meaning.

Why, then, should this be a famous question? Probably because it strikes a familiar & responsive chord in many hearts. Pilate was neither the first nor the last to ask: "What is truth?" (v.38)

The speculations of philosophers center around this particular question.

The explorations of scientists finally boil down to a search for the "truth" behind the universe.

And Christians have always been interested in the "truth" of Scripture.

It would be presumptuous to try in one sermon to answer this problem that men & women have explored through the ages. Nevertheless, if should some answer is to be found, it should be discernible in this confrontation between Pilate & Jesus. Therefore, I invite you to look carefully at this question, "What is truth," a question which shows: "(HOW) TO FACE SATAN'S ALLY -- THE WORLD."

1. Not by Speculation, but by Action.

"Truth" at that particular moment should have been for Pilate to do what he was sent to do, to act in the way, he was supposed to act. He had been sent to Palestine to administer justice to the people of that land, including Jesus. Here was an opportunity to fulfill his duty.

"Truth" was not something for him to speculate about.

"Truth" meant action by Pilate, action designed to free Jesus from the "charges" leveled against Him.

For this is the nature of "truth." It is not a matter of speculation, but of doing the will of God at that particular moment. "Truth" is the decision that you & I have to make about every activity which we carry on in life. Of course, "truth" includes some reasoning, but ultimately it has to be concerned with action, otherwise it is useless philosophizing & dreaming. This fact is reflected throughout Scripture.

Think of the man who came to Jesus at night & wanted to talk about religious matters. What was "truth" for Nicodemus, a speculation as to whether Jesus was the Messiah or not? No!

“Truth” meant that Nicodemus needed to be born again & that he needed to make plain to his family & friends his intention of following the teachings of Christ.

What was “truth” for the Apostle Paul? Was it the decision that he had been wrong in persecuting the Christians? That decision had to be made, Of course, but ultimately “truth” demanded that Paul go out & spread the Gospel - the “good news” of Jesus - THE WARRIOR’S victory over sin, death, hell & SATAN.

Even in the Garden of Eden action was necessary. What was “truth” for Eve? Was it speculation about whether or not she would become wiser if she ate the fruit? No! “Truth” consisted in being obedient to God’s command, doing the thing which God had told her to do, resisting SATAN’S temptation. This is always “truth” -- the decision -- to do the will of God at that particular moment.

It is not hard to see what “truth” means for us.

If you’re in business, “truth” means treating your employees & customers -- fairly.

“Truth” for a husband & wife means being faithful to each other & being concerned about the well being & faith of your children.

“Truth” for a student means doing your assignments & using the available opportunities to broaden your knowledge & to strengthen your body.

“Truth” for a senior citizen means regularly praying for your children, grandchildren, church & country.

“Truth” for workers means an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wages.

“Truth” is always action, decision, doing.

An older man was watching a group of children skating on the ice rink. Among the youngsters was a small boy who was very evidently a beginner. He fell often, but got up to try again & again.

“Sonny,” the man cried out, “Why don’t you come over here & sit by me & watch? If you stay on the ice, you will keep -- falling down.”

“But, Mister,” the boy replied, “I didn’t get these ‘new’ skates to give up -- with. I got them to learn -- with.” And he continued his painful efforts, bravely accepting the bumps & bruises in order to learn how to skate.

This is “truth” -- to decide & to act.

2. Not by rejection, but by acceptance.

But why didn’t Pilate act -- judicially? He began to carry out his duties as he tried to free Jesus; but it didn’t take long before the spineless Roman governor had wavered & retreated. Most likely, it was because Jesus clearly stated his position, “...for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me.” (v.37) In other words, “truth” is not simply blind action, but action based on acceptance. “Listens to Me,” Jesus said. Why? Because He is the Source of all “truth,” the explanation for all existence, the meaning for every life. “Truth” stood before Pilate in the Person of the Son of God, but Pilate was too blind to see it.

“Truth” always confronts us in the Person of Jesus Christ.

He shows us what we are -- weak & sinful & hell bound.

He shows us what we can become -- forgiven & righteous & glory bound.

There is no need for speculation here, Jesus Christ is God's messenger of "truth" to people & He confronts us in an effort to bring us to the "truth. Pilate's question should not have been, "What is truth?" but "Who is truth?" The answer to that question, Jesus Christ, stood in his presence, yet Pilate chose to walk away. Pilate saw Jesus as just another Jew, just another human being & not the Source of "truth" or the Savior of the world. And that viewpoint can never lead to real "truth."

Like Pilate, consider how THE WORLD treats Jesus & His claims.

1. Jesus says, "I and the Father are one." (Jn.10:30) THE WORLD says, "Jesus is...a prophet, a

god among many gods, Mary's

illegitimate

son."

2. Jesus says "I am the way" to God. (Jn.14:6a) THE WORLD says, "All roads lead to heaven."

3. Jesus says, "I am the truth." (Jn.14:6b) THE WORLD says, "Truth is what you make of it."

"It is

what it is."

4. Jesus says, "I am the life." (Jn.14:6c) THE WORLD says, "Eat, drink & be merry for tomorrow

we die." 5. Jesus says, "...anyone who looks at good --- do it." THE WORLD says, "If it feels

a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mt.5:28)

6. Jesus says, "God so loved the world that He then

gave His one & only Son." (Jn.3:16)

why

COVID-19?"

7. Jesus says, "Come follow Me..." (Mt.4:19) THE WORLD says, "I am the master of my fate. I

am the captain of

my soul."

SATAN's lies about Jesus & THE WORLD's rejection of His claims is disastrous. For the person without divine wisdom is like a surveyor trying to measure 100 yards due north. If he makes a mistake & points his instrument north-northwest, every inch he measures is a little farther from the real line that he wanted to stake out. If there is no real "truth" in a person's heart, every action drives him/her a little farther away from God.

There is but one way that people can serve "truth" in this life. There must be a Spirit-led commitment & acceptance of the Person & claims of Jesus.

A certain tourist boat was known by the clumsy way it always docked. Locals called it, "Old Bust 'em up." One day the boat sailed into the harbor & docked as neatly as a sleek 40 foot yacht. A by-stander called out, "Hey! What happened to 'Old Bust 'em up'?" "Nothing," came the reply. "We got a 'new' skipper - aboard."

That's the way it must be. For "truth" is action, but there must be the right "skipper" in charge. A person can not speculate as did Pilate. Neither can he/she act without knowledge as Pilate also did. A person needs Jesus in his/her heart & a firm hand at the wheel: acting, moving, going forward in this life.

The hymn writer wrote, "Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus/ Can my heartfelt longing still." (C. W. 348:1) Why? Because "only Jesus" is the "truth...that sets us free" -- "free" from the speculations of THE WORLD, "free" the lies of SATAN & "free" to do the will of God -- by serving others & honoring Him. (Jn 8:32) Amen.