

John 18:33-38 5/23/21 (Testify to the Truth #1) **WHAT IS TRUTH?**

Some of you may remember from the Truth Project material, Del Tackett started out his series of talks with this text and with the dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate when Jesus was on trial before Him. And basically, Del simply put up these words of Jesus on the screen this way.

Slide: “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this:

”

And then he let his class sweat it out. Because this is pretty key information, isn't it? Jesus is literally telling us what He came to this earth to do. Don't you think that would be important? Don't you think we should pay attention to what He says next? I think we should. Because the stakes are pretty high. When it comes to who Jesus is and what He came to do, we're talking about heaven and hell and spending eternity in one or the other. We can't afford to get this wrong. So if you were paying attention to this text, or if you've been thinking at all about the title of this summer series, what fills in that blank? Jesus said: “For this reason I was born and for this I came into the world:” -- to do what? The answer of course, is:

Slide: “To Testify to the Truth”

Of course we know Pilate's cynical response to that great testimony:

Slide: “What is truth?” said Pilate.

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews **again** and told them, “I find no grounds for charging him.” (John 18:38 CSB)

What is truth? Apparently that was already a figure of speech to the Romans, who questioned the idea that there could be any absolute truth. Nevertheless, there was something about Jesus and His presence that affected Pilate, so he went out “again” to the Jews... in fact John records that he said this at least five times: “I find no grounds for a charge against Him.”

Now, we've talked many times here about The Truth. And we've documented many times that this Post-Modern generation no longer believes in Absolute Truth – at least they say they don't. 70% on average and 80% of our teens no longer think there is such a thing. We've talked about that and how to fight that, but have you ever given much thought as to **why** that's happening? Just think about it visually for a minute. For instance, I don't know if you've seen this amazing new advance in technology:

Slide: The Cicret bracelet (a Tablet on your skin fake viral video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9J7GpVQCfms>

Wow, that's almost unbelievable, isn't it? Well, that might be because it's not just not true. It's a fake. And if you've been around YouTube or Fakebook very long, I'm sure you've seen lots of those. In fact, because of CG and video editing, some

of you have spent your whole lives growing up around lies and fakes and phonies. It's no wonder people have trouble believing the Truth today. We've literally been taught to doubt something that seems too good to be true. And yet inwardly we still have a desire for the truth with a capital "T". It's because we were literally wired by God to want that. We have a desire to know the truth and live by it, not by lies.

So again, when this Jesus that we've been hearing about all our lives, whether you've been a church goer or not... when this incredible history changing figure declares to Pilate and to us:

Slide: "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth." (John 18:37 CSB)

...don't you think we should take some serious time and investigate the Truth He's talking about? I think we should. In fact, next week in this series we're going to look more specifically at this exclusive claim that He made:

Slide: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 CSB)

Now, that's an "exclusive" truth claim, right? Because He's saying that He is **THE WAY** to the Father and there is no **other** way. Now, that's either true or it isn't. It's not 50% true or 70% or 80%. It's either 100% true or it's not true at all. See, when you study the claims of Jesus Christ, you need to understand that either Jesus is telling the truth, and He is who He says He is in the Bible, or He is a lunatic or a liar, just as C.S. Lewis said. It's lunatic, liar or Lord. You make the choice. But you have to choose. Because folks, Jesus Christ is not a good teacher if He's a lunatic. And he's not a true prophet if He's leading people astray. If Jesus is not who He says He is in the Bible, the Son of God who came to earth to stand in our place and take the punishment for the sins of the world – your sins and mine, and die in them on a cross, then rise again to offer you eternal life, then He is most certainly not somebody around Whom you want to build your life.

So, this is BIG. Way too big for one message. So, for the next 14 weeks we are going to consider the most fundamental truths that a human being could ever discover and live by. And you might think that the summer is not such a hot time to start something like this. But times have changed, haven't they? And technology has changed. Wherever you are this summer, as long as you have an internet connection, you can join us in worship on a Sunday morning. Or you can tune in later, starting from our website: _____ . And by the way, you can share that link with others and invite them to join you in this journey. I can't think of a more important or more relevant topic to preach on in our world today than the Truth. Because no matter how much postmodern philosophy tells us that there is no truth, instinctively we know that we can't live that way. We can't just have "your

truth and my truth and dozens of other people who live by different truths”. It just doesn’t work. It doesn’t work with engineering or science or math and it doesn’t work with morality or with your eternity. And deep down we all know that. And I hope you can see what’s happening: As our culture rejects God’s truth, other truths will come in and fill that void. Now for instance, Facebook and Twitter, Google and Amazon have become the new apostles of truth. They decide what can and cannot be spoken into culture today. And how’s that working out? We are literally living in the fulfillment of this prophecy:

Slide: “For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they **want** to hear.” (2 Timothy 4:3 CSB)

That’s true today about issues of where we came from, why we’re here, where we’re going and how we get there. So we’re going to talk about all those things and many more in this series. We’ll have the Sunday morning messages, but as we’ve been saying, we also have the journals that are out in the narthex for you to pick up free of charge. There will be a separate truth from God’s Word for you to consider for every day in this series throughout the summer. Every day you can individually consider the following questions related to that truth:

Slide: What truth does this verse express?

In what way(s) can this verse change my attitudes and my actions?

In what way(s) does this verse apply to the news of the day?

In what way(s) can we offer this Truth to our world with gentleness and respect?

I think you can see how profound that could be for you personally if you stick with it. The Bible says of itself:

Slide: “For the word of God is living and effective...” (Hebrews 4:12 CSB)

Folks, there’s one and one way only for you to discover if that statement is true. That’s if you open the book and read. That’s what we’re challenging all of you in this church and all who are visiting or visiting on-line to do: to get real and lay these words of God on your heart this summer and see what God’s going to do with it – in **your** life and in the lives of **everyone around you**.

Of course when we’re talking about Jesus testifying to the truth, there is one truth that stands above all others. It’s the truth that Jesus told Nicodemus. He said:

Slide: “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 CSB)

Now, many of us are used to hearing that great truth. But in case that's new to you, that's what we call the Gospel, the good news that even though we by our sin and rebellion against God deserve to be separated from Him forever, His love kept Jesus on that road to the cross. It kept Jesus from saying just the right things to Pilate to worm His way out of the crucifixion, because He was actually there orchestrating it all to happen. That's why He came, to die in our place, to be punished for our sins so that the justice of God against sin would be satisfied and we could be forgiven of all we've done wrong and all we've failed to do right. He brought life back into His dead body and has promised that those who put their trust in Him will live with Him forever. That's THE TRUTH. That's the truth that changes everything for us. And just so you don't miss it, who was it again who delivered that truth? Jesus Himself. We love that John 3:16 verse. We love knowing that God loved us that much, but again, who said it? Jesus Himself, pointing to Himself, telling one of the leaders of the Jewish people what he had been waiting all his life to hear.

Folks, Jesus is, as I've been saying for years, the most egotistical person who ever lived, or He is who He said He is, the Son of God and your Savior. There is no middle ground. Jesus occupies that space. (*point to the cross*) This is an all or nothing teaching. So, maybe this series and this summer is going to be more than you bargained for, but so be it. This is the Truth. It's the truth that changes everything and against which the world is raging. And why? What is so harmful about that truth that there are so many powerful voices today that don't want it spoken into our world?

Well...if that truth is really **The Truth**, then you must admit that you are a sinner. You aren't basically good. You are sinfully inclined to reject Jesus being your **Lord**, because if you gave Him that position then you'd have to give up that position yourself. You'd have to let Jesus and His Word guide your life instead of you.

This first message of the Testify to the Truth series asks the question: "What is Truth?" Again, that question came from the lips of Pilate as he walked away from "the way, the truth and the life", Jesus Christ, the Lord. In this series, we're doing the opposite. Jesus, in His High Priestly prayer to God the Father, declared: "Thy Word is Truth." (John 17:17) What is truth? The Word of the Living God. And if we admit that God's Word is truth, then it only makes sense that we should abide by that truth. And people don't want to accept that. They don't want to **do** that. "They have an itch to **hear** what they want to **hear**" and **do** what they want to **do**...

The Bible says that many people "exchange the truth of God for a lie". Coming back to the confrontation between Pilate and Jesus that's exactly what was

happening in that trial. Truth was on trial. Jesus said that he came to “testify to the truth. But He went on to say:

Slide: “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:37 CSB)

The NIV puts it this way:

Slide: “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (John 18:37 NIV)

Folks, what does that statement imply? ... It implies that there are sides right? And there absolutely are. We see it with a new evangelistic atheism and false religions, organizations like the Freedom From Religion Foundation and so on. The apostle Paul warned Timothy and he warns us: People will...

Slide: “They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:4 CSB)

So, what we’re seeing today is nothing new. But we have to know where it’s coming from. In the end we need to recognize that there is a spiritual war on and there are spiritual forces at work. And it has always been that way ever since Satan led His rebellion against God and was cast down and ever since he convinced Adam and Eve to join His rebellion and live by their rules instead of God’s.

Later in this Testify to the Truth series we’ve set aside a Sunday and a week’s worth of Scripture in your journals to the question: “How Can the Truth Be Lost?” And we’ll talk more specifically about how the evil one comes and snatches away the word that is sown in people’s hearts. Jesus calls Him a “thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy.” He also called him “a liar and the father of lies...When he lies he speaks his native language.” And truly it is the devil behind all lies, all untruth. And against whom we must stand if we are going to successfully Testify to the Truth in this brief moment in time the Lord has given us to do so. Thank God we don’t have to stand against the devil alone, and we don’t have to stand against him unarmed. Paul told us the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. And that word has power. So, we’re going to listen to it. We’re going to listen to Jesus, Who told you again and again:

Slide: “I tell you the truth”

Did He? Join me in this summer journey and discover the tremendous Truth that He did!

Let’s pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

We thank and praise You that at some point in our lives someone loved us enough to share with us the fact that You are the Way, the Truth and the Life. That's why we're here today. But Lord, because of the lies and whispers of Satan through our society today, we've been led to believe that we should for some reason, keep the truth to ourselves and live out a very quiet and private Christian faith. Forgive us for buying that lie, Lord. You tell us in Your Word to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have (in You). Lord, use this series and this summer to convince us to testify to the truth. Use the journals and our personal study of Your truth to change us, and use the sharing of those journals and these messages to draw our friends, neighbors, relatives and coworkers closer to You, the way, the truth and the life. Amen.