

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. (1Jn 4:6)

Some months back I was studying the differences in the telling of Christ's trial before Pilate and was taken by something I don't recall ever focusing on before. Then when Brent did the Lord's Supper recently, he read from John 18, and drew my attention to this element again, so I started pulling together my notes and developed today's message.

What I was drawn to specifically was this

*"Pilate saith unto him, **What is truth?** And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." (Joh 18:38)*

As I say, I don't know that I've ever been drawn to that question before as an element of that discussion, but it pulls to me now in a strong way.

This question is very profound, and it is one that philosophers have chased for the entirety of the field's existence. Pilate stands here as a representative for all mankind. He literally has the truth standing right in front of his face and he can't recognize it, rejects it and pushes it away from him. This is an amazing event inside the event, as it were.

You'll notice that Jesus doesn't answer the question. I think that's for two reasons. First, He pre-emptively answered it in verse 37:

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (Joh 18:37)

Christ has already told Pilate that He is the Truth. His voice sounds out the truth and those that are of Him hear it. The things that Jesus bore witness of throughout His earthly ministry are the truth. The entirety of Scripture is declared true here.

The second reason I don't think He answered the question is Pilate had no real interest in the answer, and couldn't hear it if he did. Compare this dialog with that of John 3, where Christ takes the sincere questions of Nicodemus and helps him to discern the truth of the Gospel and helps him to understand this new economy of things. Here, Pilate was being at best flippant in response to what Christ had told him, and there was no point in engaging in a dialog.

As I consider how this world is darkening, I think knowing what the truth is and how we keep it close to us is incredibly important. This question is more relevant today than maybe it has ever been, though not for the reason Pilate asked it. I've made this point several times lately, and I'm going to make it again – the world is a sea of lies.

Everything around us is used by Satan to bombard us with lies. The songs on the radio, the shows on TV, the pictures on Instagram, the posts on Facebook, the Tweets on Twitter, the headlines on websites, all of it is a tool, a weapon of Satan to distract us and drive us away from the truth. I know this might sound like 'get off my lawn' old guy curmudgeonly talk, and while it is definitely true that the older I get and the more of these things I see, the more this presses on me, I assure you it's much more than that.

The importance of understanding the truth and what it is should be an exercise of paramount importance to all of us. We cannot mount a defense of the Gospel if we do not have a fundamental understanding of truth. In human thinking, truth is malleable and subjective. That is the basis of Pilate's question, and why lies are such a strong weapon in Satan's arsenal. If the truth really can be questioned and shaped by man's will, nothing can ultimately be true. That's what Satan wants.

In the world of data, where I spend a lot of time professionally, we speak of a concept called the 'source of truth'. When you have lots and lots of computers and users and things creating data and all those things are feeding that data into big repositories, sometimes you get discrepancies. Two systems or two sets of users might create the same data, but it doesn't fully match. When that happens, one system must be declared the 'source of truth'. If you don't do that, then things break down very, very quickly. Take a simple example to make the point. If Amazon has two systems that have an understanding of my home address, and one of them has it wrong, successfully getting a package delivered to me becomes at best a 50/50 proposition. One system must be the 'source of truth' for the shipping process so they are assured of successful delivery; of course that assumes the UPS guy doesn't mis-read the label and take it to Brent's house instead. But that's another problem.

This leads to the first truth I would like us to make particular note of.

Truth #1: The Bible is the only source of truth for any matter that is of import to your soul.

We have the only actual source of truth, and we are blessed with an understanding of it. It's important to grasp that not only are we blessed with an understanding of the content, but an understanding of the validity and truth of it as well. I can read an authoritative document or book on a subject, but if I don't recognize the authority of the text, to me it is untrue. That is the lever Satan uses. The Bible is treated like just another book, whose validity and truthfulness is subject to human whims. He has done that from the very, very beginning

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:4-5)

You see what he did there, I hope. He took what was said, in plain words and simply refuted them as though they were not true or factual. His deception was clever, subtle and preyed on the lusts of the flesh. This hasn't changed over the course of human history. Now, though, instead of just taking the conversation to everyone himself, he has the constant barrage of radio waves and broadcasts and little distribution screens in our hands to spread his lies.

I will say again, I know that sounds like 'get off my lawn' guy, but all of those mechanisms are freely at the disposal of Satan. Remember this isn't some academic exercise we are engaged in.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Eph 6:12)

Everything in the world is his tool to use against us. And while the story of Job shows us that he is restrained in how far he can go, he was not restrained in what earthly options he had to tempt Job. Also consider the final temptation with which he tempted Christ:

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Mat 4:8-9)

This wasn't an idle offer of something he didn't have to give, at least in a certain sense. He has the world at his disposal to use to tempt us away from the path our profession set us upon. That's a lot of tools in the tool belt.

But we have a foundation more sure and certain to rest upon, and that is the truth of God that we have heard:

“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” (Joh 8:47)

I think this is an important thing for us to remember and should help humble us. These things we say as it relates to spiritual matters, with properly applied scripture, are not our words. We didn't just come up with these things and start spouting off about them. We have been afforded a unique gift from God to hear and understand these words, seeing them for the truth that they are, and we are obligated to defend them as such.

That doesn't mean every word that comes out of our mouths is truth. Don't for one second think I'm saying that. We are human and subject to the same weaknesses and sins as any other men. But there is truth and there is everything else. When we are dealing with these matters of heaven and hell, there is no muddying of that. There is right and there is wrong.

Not only should we not shy away from that, the absolute nature of it should help us to be firm and resolute in our devotion to my second truth.

Truth #2: **Truth is not negotiable.**

As we are more and more immersed in the constant barrage of lies, being driven by this simple truth is a thing that we must hold onto like the rail of a storm-tossed ship. There is no truth outside the Book. Anything that questions that truth is a lie and must be treated as such.

We don't have to be afraid, cautious or careful about stating that, no matter how much the world berates us and tries to convince us otherwise. Connect two dots with me.

First

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Joh 14:6)

And second

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb 13:8)

If Jesus is the truth, and he is unchangeable, then what is the truth doesn't change. No one claiming to believe on Christ can dispute what the truth is.

That might be a gigantic 'no, duh!' to you, but friends, I cannot overstate this, and I grow increasingly concerned with just how much we are hounded by a world that works actively to contradict that simple and blessed truth.

In a world where you can change your gender, the message is that there is nothing that cannot be changed. Even God.

That's what they want us to believe. God can be changed by the whims of men. I don't worry about any of us rejecting the idea that God is immutable, but I worry about us becoming desensitized to sin via this same path. We can grow tired of saying the same things over and over again and seeing things get worse. We can grow less and less revolted as we see more and more of this generation mutilating themselves or

applauding those who do and calling them 'normal', 'brave', 'progressive', or 'heroic'. It can be exhausting to watch sin increasingly abound and it feels more and more oppressive as the darkness grows. But this truth that our God is the same today as He was at the Creation (and indeed before) is what we have to hold onto.

Sin is sin, and our duty to call it out and declare it sinful doesn't change with the mores of our age. We also must be on guard not to change the message with those mores.

Our hanging onto this as a truth that drives our behavior is all the more critical as less and less light shines in our world. Our actions, our treatment of our own sins, how we help each other, not capitulating or compromising on the sinfulness of sin is important to our upholding the standards. We cannot let the inundation of lies diminish our understanding that this is the truth.

Truth #3: **Jesus Christ IS God.**

This is could be called the source of all other truths, but it is under such a brutal attack from all sides today I think it must be called out specifically.

Again, this might be another 'duh!' kind of thing for us, but this may be the most important thing to keep our focus on, to keep front and center for our children, as we are told here

"And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." (Deu 11:20)

I think this is an important one to constantly be teaching our young people and reminding ourselves of, because the world works vigorously to undo it.

I love the fact that we have this on a sign. The world, especially so-called Christianity, actively denies this, with their idolatrous imagery, the notion that 'Jesus ate with prostitutes and tax collectors', etc., etc., trying to reduce Christ to being nothing more than a man with some super-powers.

That is the work of Satan, and it has been since he said

"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:5)

He has worked diligently to displace God as the pre-eminent being and undo the rightful worship and deference men owe Him as their creator. His strategy is simple – if he lowers Christ to being nothing more than a man, then everything in the Book is a fairy tale, or achievable by others. You see this in his champions Antichrist and the False Prophet; you see the type of this in Janes and Jambres withstanding Moses with

their carnally produced 'miracles'. If the Son of God is reduced to nothing more than a street magician, a hippy peace-nik who loves everyone, then nothing in Scripture is truth, it is just another fable agreed upon. That makes it simple to displace Him with any other story.

This may be the most important truth for us to hold onto and shout from the rooftops, because it is the basis of everything else we say and do if you think about it. The same Jesus who walked with the apostles and said

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Mat 5:44)

Also said

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law." (Mat 10:35)

And

"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." (Deu 11:26-28)

Jesus Christ is not this milquetoast softie, who is calling softly and tenderly in some morose, skittish way, pleading with people to accept His friendship like the lone kid at a lunch table. He's not walking around with flowers in his braid and a spleef tucked behind his ear waving the peace sign, dudes. He isn't 'getting with the young people'. He is our God.

This is the Jesus Christ who we worship in truth

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath

on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev 19:11-16)

To His enemies, that view will strike terror to their core. To His chosen, it is a scene of glory and power – it is a scene of a King, a Father and a Friend coming to deliver on His promises and end their occupation of a foreign land.

I say all this not because I think any of you buy into this hippie-Jesus nonsense, but because at one time or another our faith waivers and we might forget that this is the God we worship. It happened to the children of Israel almost as soon as they left the bondage of Egypt. Do we think we are immune to these things? Let us not think more of ourselves than we ought, friends, and grasp ahold of this truth as it is a life preserver for us in the sea of lies we swim in.

These truths are here to help us. They are planted like flags, if you will, for us to look to and see and believe. Like the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, these truths are held up for us to look upon and be rejuvenated by their completeness. It is a great mercy that there is Truth. It is an even greater mercy that we have been given some sight to see the truth and believe.

This leads me to a word of warning. These are not our truths – we didn’t create them, and we don’t own them.

Just because we have an understanding of what the truth is doesn’t mean we have a unique ability to speak nothing but truth. Remember,

“...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Rom 8:7)

We aren’t exempted from this reality. We suffer from carnal thinking because we are of the same creation as every other son and daughter of Adam. It is easy to fall into a trap of thinking that because we dwell with the truth and deliver it to the masses that what we say is, *de facto*, truth.

That, dear friends is a trap of pride. We have to work daily not to fall into it.

We can very easily confuse our delivery of God’s Truth with our own perspective of things, whether those are perspectives on the world stage or the elements of a personal conflict and its resolution.

This is the trap that the Jews largely fell into and they serve as an example for the Christian dispensation. There can be no disputing that the Jews were given the word of God, entrusted with it and received benefit from that

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom 3:1-2)

And I firmly believe that this applies to God’s people in every age:

“And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.” (Luk 8:10)

Knowledge of these truths is preserved for us, and we are by His mercy given eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand them. But that simply doesn’t mean that every word that proceeds out of our mouths is accurate or a truth. I don’t care if it’s to someone on the street or in conversation with a person you share a pew with here in this house. I will include the words spoken in this pulpit in this analysis as well. The Holy Ghost guides and helps us, but friends, this body is not beyond temptation or being led astray. We all have to check one another and realize that no one can claim ownership of the truth. No single one of us has an exclusive lock on the truth, an understanding of it or a unique right to speak it.

That can be difficult sometimes to see when we rise up in a prideful way onto our soap box, thinking we’re rightly exhorting someone, when what we’re actually doing is just putting our own spin on a thing, presenting our own perspective as though it is capital ‘T’ truth.

Remember how Paul instructs us that we have no righteousness and our understanding isn’t our own:

“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom 3:9-12)

None of us are righteous via our knowledge of the truth when we are ruled by the old man.

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” (Eph 4:22-25)

It is only through the imputing of Christ's righteousness to us that we are made righteous. No matter how good you are at reciting scripture; or pulling the right verse out at the right time; or putting together just the right answer to a disputer's question; or creating a slickly turned phrase for a sound bite; or writing the most eloquent sermon; or orating the most humble and soul-wrenching prayer; even when these are all done with good intentions, we can still make them not be based on truth – simply because we are human.

That shouldn't make us despair, it should make us watchful for one another and work as Paul says in Ephesians to put off that 'old man', which I've spoken to at some length before. When we take that positive action of 'putting off', excising from our thinking and our behavior those ways of the old man, we can be renewed in the spirit of our mind, which drives us toward spiritual behavior and away from carnal behavior; it drives us closer to the truth.

I don't want anyone to think I'm on my soap box here about this, either. I catch myself in this frame of mind, but the older I get the more attuned to it I become. When you're younger, and you seize on new knowledge of a thing, there is a natural tendency to think we own that realization; there are more 'aha' moments that feel significant when you're younger. But as you get older, and closer to the 'get off my lawn' guy, you start to understand more and more this beautiful concept

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." (Ecc 1:9)

There isn't anything new here. Every generation has thought they had the lock on knowledge and understanding far and above the previous one. Just because we understand a truth doesn't mean we own it, that we live it exclusively or that we are beyond departing from it. We are all at risk of falling into this prideful trap and must actively work to avoid it.

The sins aren't new either. They're more aggressively pushed on this younger generation than they have been at any other time in history, I think.

When I was a middle or high schooler, the Internet was a thing limited to government and academia. The most subversive thing my parents thought was out there was MTV, and it was easy to keep me from it because we had one television, for years didn't have cable, and they knew what I was doing nearly 24 hours a day. They knew the books I owned and got from the library, they knew what music I had and controlled it. The difference that has come about in just 20 years is astounding, and it would be like my growing up without telephones in comparison.

It is nearly impossible for you young people to understand the difference you face today in a meaningful real way. The constant barrage of images, sounds, and words

coming at you did not exist 20 years ago. You didn't have 10 screens of access available to you, and certainly not one with you 24 hours a day.

Understand this – these channels of information you think are there to enhance your knowledge are actually not channels FOR you at all. They are actually channels of access TO you. They exist to accomplish this:

*“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: **many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.**” (Dan 12:4)*

In the garden, Satan only had to convince one person, and he was able to do it face to face. He had to do that for a very long time throughout human history. Start with one, and get that one to tell one, tell another, and so on. Today, the visual you should have is of him sitting in a mass control room with absolute and constant broadcast powers to reach into our bosoms and work against our understanding of the truth. Constantly, constantly, constantly whispering ‘ye shall not surely die’. Working diligently to erode our keeping of these truths in our hearts.

Grasping ahold of these, and the many, many, many other baseline truths I could have talked about and could spend years of sermons talking about is our primary defense against these influences. Our time together, if spent dealing in spiritual things is a key defense against these lies. Our time individually spent delving into the truth, delving into the Book is another. These defenses prevent the lies taking hold against the truth and our listening to that little whisper of ‘ye shall not surely die’. These defenses help us to stay focused on that bright shining light and the pierced hands and feet of our Lord and King.

We're in a season of change, with people graduating from one school level to another, and graduating into the workforce, etc. These seasons should generate for us a time to contemplate and consider these sorts of things. You young people undergoing these changes are getting your ears filled with how awesome each of you is as a unique little snowflake, ready now to fix all the problems us old folks created, and blah blah blah. Reject that pride infusion and lie of Satan.

Instead, attune your senses to this reality, to these truths. The danger you face is greater than any generation has faced with the exception possibly of Noah's. The rapid increase of Satan's reach is certainly more dangerous than it has ever been.

I encourage all of us to focus energy and effort every day on understanding and thanking God for these truths, to keep us from the infection of Satan's lies, and to help us defend these blessed and pure truths with all we have.