

Easter! So What?
What is Truth?
John 18:33-40

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Text Introduction: What is truth? There is no better Easter question than this perhaps.

Through the years you have grown accustomed to my question, “So What?” at the conclusion of my messages. I fell into this practice a few years ago as the result of making sure that every message ends on a note of action. As I routinely say, “We gather not so much for information, but for inspiration and transformation.”

As we journey toward Easter this year, we are pursuing what I would call the ultimate “So What” preaching series. Through the week after Easter, we are considering several questions surrounding the Easter accounts in the Bible. Some of the questions come from Jesus. Others questions come from the disciples. A few of the questions come from adversaries of Jesus like Pilate. Many of the questions are our questions—like today. I think you will discover that every question impacts us. That is, all of the questions cause us to ask “So What?”

Our text today is John 18. Jesus is standing trial before Pilate. Pilate is not a Jew. Jesus has been brought to him by the Jews. Pilate is an official of the Romans. Pilate has already had a brief conversation with Jesus’ accusers. Our text today is Pilate returning inside to where Jesus is being held.

Text: Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?”

³⁵ “I’m not a Jew, am I?” Pilate replied. “Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶ “My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus. “If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

³⁷ “You are a king then?” Pilate asked.

“You say that I’m a king,” Jesus replied. “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

³⁸ “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. ³⁹ You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

⁴⁰ They shouted back, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Introduction: A few weeks ago I came across these words written by Mr. Rudy Gray, the editor of the Baptist Courier, the paper of the Baptist Convention of South Carolina.

In 2016, the Oxford Dictionaries International Word of the Year was “post-truth.” The word itself can be traced back to at least 1992, but it flashed into the world stage in 2016 when its usage increased by 2,000 percent from 2015. In a nutshell, a post-truth culture states that all claims to truth are relative to the particular person making them. That means one person’s “truth” is as good as that of someone else who may have the opposite position. The idea of objective, verifiable reality and actuality is gone.

The evidences of a post-truth society are things like fake news, alternative facts, subjective interpretations, disinformation and misinformation. The concept of truth becomes increasingly irrelevant or virtually meaningless. The conclusion is that a person has a right to believe whatever he or she wants to believe without evidence or conformity to truth. In that type of atmosphere, lying is normalized, moral absolutes don’t exist, and God becomes a subjective idea rather than the Holy God revealed in Scripture. (Rudy Gray, Editor; Baptist Courier; February 2018, p.23)

This communicates the moral depravity of our society as well as anything I can think of, because when truth is gone, moral absolutes go also. So, this Easter question is of incredible importance, but understand this is not a new question. This was the question of Pilate.

Now, this can be pretty complicated, so to keep us on track and on time, let me organize our thoughts around 3 questions.

Does Real Truth Exist?

The belief that real truth does not exist is sometimes called relativism.

Relativism could describe Pilate. “What is truth?”

The idea of relativism in itself is contradictory.

That is, the belief of relativism is itself a statement of truth to those who espouse this philosophy. So, if adherents to relativism want others to believe that they have the truth, why is it impossible that those of us who believe in Christ are looked down upon because we believe in Christ as an absolute truth?

The first step in coming to the truth is to believe that real truth exists.

In 1987, college Professor, Alan Bloom, published *The Closing of the American Mind*, a critique of the modern day American university classroom. He wrote, “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students’ reaction: they will be uncomprehending.”

The first step in coming to know Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life is to have the assurance that you can know the truth.

If real truth exists, those ideas that are opposite cannot also be true.

- All truth is by definition exclusive.

This is what makes something true. If $1+1=2$, $1+1$ cannot also equal 3. If I say that I-10 East will take you to Baton Rouge, I cannot also say that I-10 West will take you to Baton Rouge. Truth is always going to make an exclusive statement or else the statement would not be made as though it was true.

- Christianity is not the only religion that claims exclusivity.

Even those religions and philosophies that say there is some truth in all beliefs are making their own statement of exclusivity. They are saying that you are only right if you believe that there is no right.

By simple logical assessment, if we believe that the claims of Christ are true, claims in opposition to Christ cannot also be true!

So, to answer our question “Does real truth exist,” real truth has to exist.

Is Jesus the truth?

Christianity is based on facts so there is the logical and intellectual pursuit of truth.

Jesus said, “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth.”

I’m so glad that God does not ask us to check our intellect at the door to believe in Him. Part of the reason that we can know that Jesus is truth is because of the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in His life. The prophets of the Old Testament had proclaimed His coming. In some cases they had been real specific about certain details of his life. (1) Isaiah predicted He would be born of a virgin (7:14). Micah predicted He would be born in Bethlehem (5:2). Isaiah prophesied that His main ministry area would be in Galilee (9:1). In addition Isaiah predicted that He would be silent before His accusers (53:7) and that He would be buried in the tomb of a rich man (53:9).

During His ministry, Jesus bore witness to the truth by healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. The result of these miracles in every case is that some would call out to him in belief. The miracles of Jesus testified to the truth of His message. When He preached, the response was that the crowds were astonished. He spoke with authority and not like their scribes. (Matthew 7)

At the end of His life, He died on a cross only to live again just as He said. This is fact. We know it is fact because the disciples who were eyewitnesses to the resurrected body of Christ gave their lives believing that this was fact. Believing in Jesus is not just a blind leap of faith into what you hope is true, but there is archeological, historical, and logical evidence that points to the truth about Jesus. I’m convinced of

this. People do not miss the truth about Jesus because they look for it and cannot find it; they miss the truth about Jesus because they choose not to search for the truth about Jesus.

British Philosophy Professor and champion of Atheism, Antony Flew, created quite a firestorm in 2004 when he confessed that he could no longer say that he was an Atheist. Now, while not yet calling himself a Christian, listen to what he said, "I know my remarks will upset some of my colleagues, but I have always sought to follow the evidence wherever it leads."¹

Christianity is based in a Person so there is the spiritual pursuit of truth.

Lest anyone misunderstand, I must confess though that believing in Christ is not merely an intellectual pursuit; faith is involved. However, the faith is not in an idea, doctrine, book, or church—this faith is in a person.

Listen to these wonderful words from Acts 17:27-28:

From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live.²⁷ He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

How can we pursue Jesus as the truth? Let me give you four quick ideas.

Jesus is the personification of truth.

- John 1:14, 17—The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.
We observed His glory,
the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

for the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- John 14:6—Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Truth is a person!

The Bible presents the truth.

We discover truth in the Word of God. Some people want to rely on opinions for the basis of truth. Some people want to rely on feelings for the basis of truth. But these are so subjective and ever-changing. We need a better source for truth.

¹ Originally heard on Paul Harvey and verified on numerous internet sites.

- John 17:17—Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.
- Psalm 119:160-- The entirety of Your word is truth, and all Your righteous judgments endure forever.

Chuck Swindoll was quoting a Puritan preacher when he said, “Two things I want to know. First, does God speak concerning a matter? Second, what does He say?”

But, we don’t always agree on what the Bible says. So...

The Holy Spirit points us to the truth.

- John 14:17 {Speaking of the Holy Spirit which is introduced in verse 16} “He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn’t see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.”
- John 16:13—When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.

The Church exists to be the pillar of truth.

- 1 Timothy 3:15-- But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to act in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

If Jesus is the Truth, Then What? So What?

If not sure, search until you are sure. You cannot risk eternity.

You cannot put off making a decision about Christ. Pilate made no decision about Christ. He walked away questioning could he really know truth. However, in making no decision about Christ, he made a decision about Christ.

If you are sure, live the truth.

If you believe that Jesus is the truth, you cannot be uncommitted in your relationship. If He is the way, the truth, and the life, why do so many live their lives half-hearted in their commitment to Him. If Jesus is the only way to Heaven, why do we have to beg people to do what Christ has commanded to do?

If you are sure, share the truth.

If He is the only way to Heaven, how could we not share with others who desperately need to know Him?

Once you come to be positive about the truth in Jesus, practice the truth, so that you might preach that truth while being patient with those still searching for the truth.