

The Truth

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Date: 21 November 2021

Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 00] I want you to think of a time that you had to tell the truth. You had no choice. Think about the consequences of telling that truth. And I guess sometimes it's nothing short of a nuclear fallout in your life. Maybe it was a work-based issue. Maybe a domestic situation, something like you have put your loved one's favourite jumper in the tumble dryer on the wrong setting, and now it only fits the dog. Maybe it was your most beautiful white starched cotton shirt that just happened to get put in with that red sock. Whatever that was, whatever that was, you know what the consequences were. It's confession time.

It's about telling the truth. From the King James Version in 1 John 1.8, it says, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The truth, and that's what we're talking about this morning in this morning's reading. It's about the truth. Isn't it interesting how in this reading that they'd already come, and they decided what they wanted to happen to Jesus. They were just handing it over to the Romans as a form of convenience.

We can't do it, but you can, but we've already decided. Where is the truth? In the film *Liar, Liar*, Jim Carrey, if you remember, if you've seen the film, plays a lawyer. He's not really that used to telling the truth, and his son is desperate that he should. So his son makes a wish, and his son's wish is granted to stop his father lying for a whole day, to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth. Truth is at the heart of our reading this morning, and very apt as we prepare ourselves.

Why does this reading come? Because we're about to enter into Advent. Pilate asks, what is the truth? I recall a police colleague telling me once that his seven-year-old son answered the front door, and there was a man, a neighbor, who said, can I speak to your dad, please? Whereupon the seven-year-old spun round, shouted down the hallway, dad, it's that man you hate. There is no reversing, is there? The truth is the truth. No hiding when we need to tell it. Today, the church worldwide celebrates this festival of Christ the King. Christ the King of our life. In our reading this morning, let's picture this encounter between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus, our King and Saviour, standing, facing Pilate in this organized encounter.

Then I guess Pilate really doesn't want to be there. Pilate, like many leaders, think they're powerful. This Roman governor, who perhaps hadn't found the best career advancement by being shipped to this backwater of the Roman Empire to actually oversee or subdue a religious-based regime. Why does this reading come today? Because Advent is so important. If we're not getting prepared for the welcoming Jesus into our lives, this is about telling the truth. In amongst us, we put up the Christmas decorations, as we get ready, we get ready in our own hearts as well. As we get this huge opportunity to talk to people about Jesus, because that's what it's all about. Perhaps it focuses on the reason why he came, which is the truth. I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord. There is something about dangerous, unselfish actions that appeal to us. We all love a hero. We all applaud heroic actions.

[4 : 35] Here we have it. Jesus standing there, risking everything to be brave, to stand for the truth. Where do we stand when we need to speak truth into situations?

Here we have Pilate asks him, are you the king of the Jews? Knowing that Pilate has been well briefed, Jesus doing the natural rabbinic thing, which you have to do within that setting, you have to respond with another question. So Jesus naturally comes back. Is that your own idea? Or did some others talk to you about me? Am I a Jew? Replies Pilate. This is a great play on verbal ping pong, isn't it?

Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, finding, digging, getting to the truth. It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it that you have done? Pilate is desperate to get the truth of this situation. Not what he's been told. He wants it from the person who stood in front of him. Jesus knows that the cross is looming, that this is a conversation not to save

his life, but to give it away in order that we can have it. Life in all its fullness. Life everlasting. What an amazing conversation we are witnessing here. I think at this point, Pilate already knows of Jesus. I think he has probably been already waiting to meet him. I think he's heard about him. I think he's intrigued. Like a lot of people that we are meeting, that we will meet over this Advent season. They are intrigued about Jesus. Tell me more. Tell me more about him. I want to know. [6:37] Pilate's there. Pilate's in that situation. Pilate knows what it is to be part of an empire. He knows what it is to be part of a kingdom. And those costs that come with the position. Maybe I'm reading too much in. But I think Pilate sees far more in Jesus than a Jewish inconvenience.

And then Jesus talks of his kingdom. Talks of his kingdom. You are a king then, said Pilate. And then this powerful response. You are right. You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this very reason I was born. And for this I came into the world to testify, testify to the truth. That's what Christmas is all about. That's why I came. To testify to the truth.

Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. At this point I paused and I thought, am I listening? Am I listening to the truth that Jesus is speaking to me? Or am I being bombarded by other voices, other situations that is not truth? That is just misguiding me? Guiding me away? This is the very reason the Jewish leaders want him out of the way. Because he speaks the truth and people were listening. That is why it was, that's why we'll hand you over. That's why we want you out the way. Did Pilate catch a glimpse of this truth? Did he capture something of God in human form as he gazed, as he no doubt did, staring straight into Jesus' eyes? Because if you stare into somebody's eyes, believe me, you will know whether they are telling the truth or not. And imagine the meeting of eyes in this conversation. And Pilate, I believe, got a glimpse of who Jesus really was and is. Even so, later when Jesus makes this brave and radical statement later in chapter 19, you would have no power over me if it were not given you from above. Let's set it straight. This is the truth.

No wonder this reading comes before we enter into Advent and this time of expectation and anticipation of telling the world about Jesus, the truth, Emmanuel, God with us. Not historically, God with us.

[9:18] A saviour, a king, a servant king, a king of love, a king of hope, a saviour, a prince of peace. You remember a few years ago, this canvas behind us, we were invited to come up and say those things that Jesus was to us. A Jesus, a friend by my side, always there, a defender, a lifeline, a brother, a prince, all those things. Here in this conversation, Pilate is looking into the eyes of Jesus. Did he get a glimpse of that? I think he did. No wonder Pilate could find no fault in him. Dare I say it? I think Pilate saw a king stood before him. He saw something in his character. He saw something that was brave and courageous about this task that he had to do to go to the cross to save us once and for all from our sins. The lamb that is sacrificed, the truth, it's all in this book.

So many people ignore the truth that's been given to us and the truth stood in front of Pilate and I believe that he glimpsed it. In fact, he even hung it above his name on the cross.

Maybe that wasn't just to antagonize the Jewish culture. Maybe that was a statement from him himself. Where do we stand in the everyday with Jesus as our king and our saviour on this day as Christ the king?

Jesus' king. Jesus' kingship in the crib, on the cross, in the empty tomb, in our giving, in our sharing, in our loving, in our understanding, in everything that we are, in our worship, in our questions, as people ask us about our faith this Christmas and this Advent time.

In the truth of our discipleship. Where do we hold to truth? Today on this special day of Christ the king, as we are reminded as we, before, just before we enter into Advent, we worship not of a king in a palace or on a shining white charger, but a king, my saviour, this is where it gets personal. Because we can say the words, but maybe for the first time we say, my Jesus, my saviour, my lord, my king, you are my all in all. May we never miss this opportunity to exalt the name of Jesus, to stand up before those who think that they have power over us, but to proclaim Jesus, who has power over everything, and in everything, and through everything.

[12:37] We say, as we pray in the name of Jesus, maybe let's make these kingdom truths known. Maybe this morning through our reading gives us a fresh sense of bravery and courage to stand, to look into people's eyes and say, Jesus is my king, Jesus is my savior, Jesus is my all in all, Jesus is the answer, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. King Jesus, Jesus is Lord of my life and of yours. Can I pray with you?

Perhaps you've never proclaimed Jesus in that way in your life, and we're going to take that opportunity now on this morning of Christ the King, that we will say afresh maybe in our own lives,

maybe affirm afresh in our own lives as we get ready for this season of Advent, this season of opportunity that we have been given to make Jesus known.

Shall we pray together, friends, and empower ourselves afresh in the name of the Holy Spirit? King Jesus, King Jesus, you are my savior and my king and my all in all.

Lord, I thank you.

I thank you for your courage in standing for truth. Holy Spirit, would you come and help me and help us all as your people to hold to that truth, to stand and to witness to you in situations where untruth is rife and lies are abundant.

[14 : 41] And I pray that it is this Advent season that more and more people would come to know you through us. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen.