

What is Truth?

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 01] Father, we confess before you that we know at an intellectual level that we are very good at seeing little tiny specks in other people's eyes, but very bad at seeing huge logs sticking in our own eyes.

And we know that, Father, at an intellectual level. But Father, at a heart level, it's hard for us to know that, and it's often hard for us to recognize the different ways that we can pick out those tiny specks in other eyes and just be so blind to the huge log in our own eyes.

So, Father, you know our weakness. You know how desperate we are always for your grace. And so we ask that the Holy Spirit would move deeply within us so that we might truly listen to your word.

Listen to your word, Father, seeking to understand it, seeking, Father, to believe it and try to put into practice and hearing how it speaks to our heart first and foremost.

And all this we ask in Jesus's precious name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So we get to begin our sermon today when there's morning prayer.

[1 : 14] We get to do it while the kids are singing, which is sort of an interesting thing, having a soundtrack to a sermon. So the text that we're going to be looking at in a couple of minutes is a text that lots and lots and lots of us Christians like.

We especially like it because we see the world getting swallowed up with moral relativism and intellectual relativism. But even before we start to read it, we have to acknowledge that this text has profound spiritual dangers for us.

As you might have picked up in the prayer, one of the problems that we have is that we very, very, very quickly talk about this text as if somehow or another we Christians have arrived.

All the other people in the world have all of these problems and we can be very good at finding the instances of these problems. But somehow or another, we don't have these same problems.

But the Bible is going to be describing several very, very difficult things that are profound human problems. And we have to always acknowledge as Christians that a human problem is a human problem.

[2 : 24] And surprise, you and I are humans. Therefore, we have those problems too. And just because all of a sudden we say that we're a Christian doesn't mean those human problems go away.

It means we have a different place to stand to deal with them. It means we have resources to deal with them. But we still have to deal with them.

So if you take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 18, we'll have a look at this spiritually dangerous text. A text which we can easily read and easily trumpet and all the world hears is that somehow we think that we're better than them.

Which any time you read the Bible, and if you ever read the Bible and think that it's teaching you that you're better than other people, you haven't read the Bible right. Because the Bible is always going to be convicting us of our need for grace and our need for Jesus always.

So John chapter 18, verse 28. And in the flow of the book, those of you who are guests, this is one of the original, this is one of the ancient eyewitness biographies of the life of Jesus. And the way this biography, that John has chosen to tell the biography of Jesus, different than the way Matthew, different than the way Mark, different than the way Luke tells it.

[3 : 44] And, you know, one of the things, I haven't said this in a while, one of the things, there's nothing in any of these texts that contradict each other. But they haven't sat down, the four different writers of these ancient biographies, to try to make sure that we North Americans, who like to have every little detail lined up, we love, some of us more than others, love those things that you see in

the newspaper, you know, after there's been a terrorist attack or something, and it has a map, and it has, you know, number one, number two, number three, number four, and different spots, and there's a chronology, and we love that.

But the writers of the Gospels didn't get together and do that. And one of the ways I like to understand the differences is this, I hope, you know, like, so in 40 years or whatever, when Louise finally dies, my wife, and, you know, she's in her hundreds, and she's been playing with the grandkids up until the night before she died, I mean, that's what I hope, and that's what she would hope as well.

And then when it finally comes time to do a bit of maybe a memorial service for her, and we have nine kids, and so maybe the nine kids would decide, well, we're going to have four of us, four of us speak a little bit about Louise.

And so maybe they'd all team up a little bit, and Tosh and Jesse would get up together, maybe Jesse the spokesman for the two of them, and maybe, you know, when Jesse's talking, he'd really emphasize a lot of those late night conversations he had at the crucial years growing up with Louise that meant so much to him. And maybe the three younger girls would designate one of them to get up, and they might focus on other different aspects of Louise. They might focus a little bit on Louise and the different lessons they taught her as a woman, and maybe they'd spend a bit more time on their childhood and the funny things that they did with her, and then maybe Joseph and Jacob would get together, and you get my point. All four of them would say different things, all true, every single thing would be true about Louise, but afterwards, if you tried to figure out the chronology, you might be a little bit puzzled. If you got all the nine kids together afterwards, they'd be able to say, oh, yeah, no, no, this happened before this, and that happened before that, but they'd all take a different approach in telling the story of Louise's life, and that's what happens with the gospel writers. All of them true, but four different approaches, emphasizing different things, and they weren't, if you could go back in the time machine, they'd all say, yeah, no, no, no, that happened this, and that happened that, but, you know, it's not how you'd tell it. Just like, you know, with stories about Louise, they might group a whole pile of instances, one after another, because it illustrates something about Louise, but those incidents might span a big time. I've gone far enough on it. So the way John has organized his telling of the life of Jesus is that, first of all, earlier he spent time just looking at seven miracles. Jesus performed many, many miracles. John says this. He spent a long time looking at seven significant miracles that Jesus performed and what they meant, and then he actually spent a very, very long time on what Jesus said privately to the disciples on the night that he was betrayed, when he knew that Judas was going off to get the soldiers and the police to arrest him, and Jesus knows he's going to die, and John spends a lot of time talking about that, and now we've come to the place in the story where Jesus has been captured. We looked at that last week. All of the disciples have abandoned him. Peter has denied him, and the Jewish authorities have condemned him, and now the story continues, and here's how it goes. Verse 28.

[7 : 22] Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It says governor's headquarters. In the original language, it's praetorium. I'm saying praetorium because it emphasizes Rome has him now. Rome has him. He's in the praetorium, and that's where the Romans who've conquered Israel, and there's a fellow who is both a military commander and, in a sense, the ruler. In some ways, you could look at it as they're almost like it's under military rule.

They allow the Jewish people a lot of leeway to do things, but at the end of the day, there is the iron fist of Rome, which is not going to let go of power. And so in the original language, it actually says praetorium. It's emphasizing we've now come to where Rome rules. And so go back again. Verse 28. Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was early morning.

They themselves did not enter the governor's praetorium, so they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. So Pilate, and he's the Roman head of that region, went outside to them and said, what accusation do you bring against this man? And we just need to pause here for a little bit because there's lots of stuff going on so that you understand the story. First of all, the Jewish leaders are going to be really put out. We're going to see this in a moment when we get their response.

The spiritual leaders are put out because as we saw last week, when Jesus was arrested, he was arrested by Roman soldiers and Jewish police. And the Jewish spiritual leaders have no authority over Roman soldiers. Pilate was in on it. So, you know, if you're there with them, all of a sudden just put on your spiritual leader hat, you're going, what game are you playing, Pilate? You agreed to

this. They're going to be pissed off, we'll see in a moment, in terms of their answer. I don't know if you're allowed to say that from the pulpit, but I just did. So there you go. But the other thing which is really going on here is, if you think about it, the Passover is a very, very holy time for Jewish people. It's the annual remembrance of how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt to make him his own people. And it's celebrated for seven days. And here's one of the big spiritual dangers in the text for us who read it. And in fact, you know, our Jewish friends, they deal with us as Christians with a long legacy, almost 2,000 year legacy of anti-Semitism from Christians, of pogroms, of horrific things that people have done to Jewish people in the name of Christianity. And so they're going to be, it's very, very easy for us to look and say, you know, look at these Jews, look what they've done. This text is a profound critique of religion and spirituality first and foremost. It shows the great danger in religion and the great danger in spirituality that these human beings, while they are plotting and doing all they can to use the law to have an innocent man murdered, that's what they're doing. They want an innocent man murdered because he's inconvenient to them and threatens their power and they're filled with envy.

But at the same time, they don't want to become ceremonially unclean because then they can't eat the meal. You see that? There's a profound critique of religion and spirituality here.

[11:11] In fact, as I like to tell my non-Christian friends, Christopher Hitchens and other atheists who critique religion can't beat Jesus. Like I'll say to them, go read the Gospels. If you read the Gospels, you want to read the Gospels with me, and I'll just show you time and time and time and time again, the person who critiques religion the most is Jesus. Jesus is regularly talking about how people use religion to justify themselves, justify their position of power. And to try to justify yourself is to walk away from God. And Jesus is showing it all the time. And here we have them. They want to justify themselves to look religious, to look spiritual. They don't want to break some minor little rule, which they've actually made, because there's nowhere actually in the Tanakh that says that to walk into the house of a Gentile instantly makes you unclean. But they've added this extra rule.

They don't want to break that rule, but it's all right to have somebody murdered. Now, by the way, it's not only a critique of religion and spirituality, but it's actually Jesus throwing open to us a profound human problem, several profound human problems. I mean, one of them is that human beings get on bandwagons to try to destroy people.

I'm going to give a very dangerous illustration right now, and after I give this illustration, I might lose 80% of you, and you won't listen to the rest of the sermon, but I'm going to give it anyway.

I was sitting in this Starbucks the other day, and I overheard two men talking, and the two men were probably early baby boomers, around 70. And one man said to the other, the thing that would make me happier than anything else in life is the day they take Donald Trump out of the White House in handcuffs. And the other man said, I actually think it would make me happy is when he's killed. Not making this up.

Now, I might have lost you, because you might say, oh, but Donald Trump deserves it. Whoa, one second. One second. Read this text. Does he really? Have you jumped on a bandwagon?

[13:30] I might have lost you. I'd say the same thing, by the way, if Hillary Clinton had become president, and there was a whole pile of very, very conservative people who were attacking her and saying things like they would just love to see her take out in handcuffs.

And then even when I'm giving this illustration, some of you are saying, but George, how on earth can you compare the two of them? And I'm just going to say, once again, look at the text, and let the text work in your heart. Let the text work in your heart. It's a human problem. Human problem is that we love to jump on bandwagons to get people when they're down.

We love to think of characters. We stop thinking. It's a very standard problem, you know, amongst anybody who has any type of ideals. I know it's going to sound a bit political, and I can't avoid it. I'm not really making political points here. I'm not. But all the people who want to go to save the planet, and they go on private jets to stop the use of fossil fuels.

I mean, that's a profound hypocrisy. That's wanting to appear righteous, but actually doing something which is not. I was just talking to a friend who's an academic, and the apologetics conference that we're organizing in early November of 2019 is going to be on intelligent design. And we're going to be bringing a physicist, and a biologist, and a doctor, and a philosopher who are going to show you very good scientific and intellectual reasons why the natural, why what is taught in universities and schools about naturalistic evolution doesn't work.

It's not true. And one of these academics I was talking to on the phone on Friday, he mentioned a specific place where people go to talk, and he said, are you part of it? And I said, no. And he said, okay, it's secret. Why is it secret? Because of the trolls and the angry emails that you get, if that's revealed in public, that you have doubts about it. So what I want to show is, and you know, if this was a country that was in a time which was far more right-wing, this isn't like a problem of the left. [15:36] It's not a problem with religion. It's not a problem with spirituality. It's a problem of the human heart. And it's also a problem for those who call themselves Christians. This is going to be very hard for you to believe. I've used the illustration before. After the service, go talk to somebody like Sean or Gary, who have been Anglicans for a long time.

But it is not at all unusual in an Anglican church that if I was to say hallelujah during Lent, people would be offended. But if I preached a sermon saying that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, they would applaud. And they would see no sense of irony or inconsistency in that.

It's a religious problem. And it's not just a religious problem for liberals. I was talking to one of these people who were involved in the intelligent design movement, and one of the things he shared is that actually a lot of the angriest emails he gets are from people who are young earth creationists. And they will send him the most angry, hateful emails. Friends, it is a human problem. It is a human problem. And we see it told at a very, very subtle but very powerful level in this story of the spiritual leaders of God's chosen people being all upset and not wanting to risk getting ceremonially unclean while they pursue murder against an innocent man.

So what happens next? Remember I said Pilate says, look at verse 29. Pilate went outside and said to them, what accusation do you bring against this man? And by the way, if you're just reading this for the first time, Pilate sounds like a very reasonable man, doesn't he?

[17:18] He sounds like the guy you'd like to have as your deputy minister or as your boss. He sounds like the guy you'd like to have as a cabinet minister. He sounds like the guy you'd like to have on your wardens or your council because he asks a very honest question.

What accusation are you bringing against this guy? He's the good guy here, Pilate, isn't he? Well, let's continue to see what happens with Pilate as this goes on. Verse 30, the spiritual leaders of God's chosen people answer him.

Verse 30, if this man, referring to Jesus, were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you. And then they're under their breath saying, and you know this, by the way, so what game are you playing at?

But Pilate, verse 31, said, take him yourselves and judge him by your own law. Once again, Pilate comes across as a reasonable guy, safe hands to handle a difficult problem, the sort of guy that we would want to give the problem to.

The Jew, the spiritual leaders replied to him, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. And there we receive what their real desire is.

[18:25] They want to have Jesus put to death. In verse 32, this was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

It's very interesting that they inadvertently, these people are the enemies of Jesus, inadvertently have Jesus' prophecy fulfilled. Inadvertently, seeking to be wise, they become fools.

And because, you see, Jesus had prophesied that he was going to die on a cross. And Jewish people, if they had had the power at the time to kill him for blasphemy, or any other way, they would have killed him by stoning.

And Jesus' prophecy about how he would have died would have failed. So these people inadvertently are actually having the words of Jesus fulfilled. So, we see Pilate, he's asking very, very reasonable questions.

You know, what's the charge against this guy? Charge him yourself. And now, we finally come to the next bit, where Pilate's been doing all of this in the courtyard so that the spiritual leaders won't get unclean.

[19:39] He says to the, he now takes Jesus and goes inside the praetorium. The Jewish leaders stay outside. It's just Pilate and whatever attendants and soldiers he has with them.

And he's with Jesus. And that's what happens now, beginning at verse 33. So, Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me? Now, just pause. One of the things that people often tell me that they dislike about religion is that they like

to speak in riddles.

And it's just an attempt to look wise and insightful, but it just, often things just don't seem to follow. A doesn't, A, you know, B doesn't really seem to follow A, and C doesn't seem to follow B, and somehow or another, you know, we Christians go, Ooh, ah, over these types of things.

But they don't really make any sense if you're just thinking rationally. But here I'm going to give a bit of a spoiler alert. Because you might say, up until now, and in fact, if you were to keep going for the next few questions, Pilate is the solid guy.

[20 : 46] He's the guy you'd like to have as your boss. He's the guy you'd like to have handling your problems. He's asking the good questions. He's not being pushed around. But what we're going to see, if you just, could you skip to the next scripture text?

I think it's the next one. Look at the end of this whole thing in verse, the last part of verse 38, if you can follow up there on the screen. You know, what you're going to find out if you keep going on is that Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent.

And then in verse 38b, after he had said this, he went back outside, that's Pilate, to the spiritual leaders and told them, I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover, so do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?

They cried out again and again, not this man, but Barabbas. Now, Barabbas was a robber. We know from other places he's a murderer. The point I'm reasoning is this, is that the end of the conversation reveals what's really going on with Barabbas.

He does not give a hoot about the truth. He doesn't care about the truth at all. He doesn't care about being sound.

[21 : 54] He doesn't care about all of these categories. And Jesus recognizes this. And that's why Jesus asks Pilate the question he asks him. And we, if we were just following through it and we didn't know the other things that happened, we go, that's a reasonable question.

That's a reasonable question. That's a reasonable question. That's a reasonable question. Pilate's a reasonable guy. Why on earth does Jesus give this odd response to him? Because Jesus knows what's going on in his heart.

That he doesn't care about honesty. He doesn't care about justice. He doesn't care about truth. He doesn't care about any of these things. He's playing games. That's what Pilate's doing.

He's playing games motivated by power. If you could go back up, sorry, to the previous screen. For those who are using the screen to follow along, those of us reading in our Bibles, we just go to verse 33 again.

So Pilate entered his praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him, are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered, do you say this of your own accord? Or did others say it to you about me? You see, what Jesus is doing is he's asking Pilate a heart question.

[23 : 00] He's asking him a question about his heart. Pilate, why are you asking me this question? Like, you're asking me this question because you believe it? Are you asking me this question because you're threatened by it?

Are you asking this question because you're actually really curious? Like, are you asking this question because you're looking for grounds to set me free? Like, what's going on?

And so Jesus responds with a question that's going to reveal Pilate's heart. And as it goes on, Pilate's heart is completely and utterly revealed. And you see, every time Jesus asks a question that reveals a heart, it's also an opportunity for us to repent.

To be stopped in our tracks and say, good one, I don't really care about the answer. Maybe I should. Actually, you know, there's an opportunity to repent here for Pilate, which is we're going to see he doesn't take.

And so Jesus answers in a way that could at least potentially make Pilate reconsider. But look what happens in verse 35. How does he answer? Am I a Jew? Like he's in the praetorium.

[24 : 14] I have a thousand troops. I don't know how many it is, but a lot of troops. I think it's like a huge number of troops. I have all these troops.

I'm not a Jew. You're a Jew. Jews are on the ground, even those religious leaders out there. And Rome's foot is on their neck.

I don't care about stupid things like Jewish kings. Am I a Jew? I'm Roman. Verse 35 again.

Pilate answered, am I a Jew? Your own people and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? Like, what have you done? Now he's maybe a bit curious. But Jesus

answered, he goes back to the original question.

He says, my kingdom, and by this he's implying that he is a king, is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the spiritual leaders of the chosen people.

[25 : 20] But my kingdom is not from the world. Jesus says his kingdom is not of the world. It's not from the world. We now know that this is opening this whole, it's all part of Jesus' teaching that the old covenant, God is going to continue to maintain his Old Testament covenant promises to the Jewish people.

But a new covenant is being opened. And in this new covenant, there's not going to be a chosen nation or a chosen people, but there will be disciples of Jesus who have trusted him as their Savior and Lord in every people group on the planet.

It has no borders. In fact, the borders are going to be, the border to the kingdom is truth. The border to the kingdom is trusting the words of Jesus. That's the border of the kingdom.

That's what separates the kingdom that Jesus is about to inaugurate and create from the kingdoms of this world. And the primary weapon of the kingdom of Jesus as we're about to see is the truth.

Not the sword, but the truth. And justice and mercy and grace. So verse 37, then Pilate said to him, oh, so you are a king.

[26 : 38] Jesus replied, you say that I am a king. And that's, it's a Hebraism. It's translated accurately, but what it really means is, yes, I am a king.

And then he says, for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

Pilate said to him, what is truth? Now, just here's one of those other hard situations or this very controversial text. I just want to draw out the controversy of what Jesus has just said.

Jesus says, everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. He says, in a sense, if there is a visible church that doesn't listen to the voice of Jesus, the words of Jesus, it means it is not a church of the truth.

There is a spirituality, a philosophy, an economic system, a political system that is completely and utterly uninterested in listening to the voice of Jesus.

[27 : 48] It is not of the truth. If there is a religion that does not want to listen to the voice of Jesus, it is not of the truth. And the normal Canadian response, and some of us might be profoundly uncomfortable by me saying this in public, but the normal Canadian response is to say that this is a deeply arrogant statement by Jesus.

And all I want to say right now, I'm not going to go into a long defense of it, all I want to say is that the death and resurrection of Jesus changes everything. The death and resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

I was just in a coffee shop yesterday afternoon sharing the gospel with a man, listening to him and trying to share the gospel. It's hard to share the gospel in a long conversation.

He has a very, very developed system of thought and moving hither and yon. But at the heart of it, I said, you know, listen, ultimately the reason I trust Jesus is not just because on the third day, after he was completely and utterly dead, that he rose from the dead and defeated death, and that there's good reasons to believe that.

It's not an unreasonable thing to believe that. It's not like believing in two plus two equals four, but it's a reasonable thing to believe. And it's not just that the resurrection changes everything, but that the resurrection comes after the cross.

[29 : 11] That for me, it's those two things, and it changes everything. It means that Jesus is revealing the God that really does exist. I told him, I do not believe in the God that Canadians believe in.

I believe in the God who's revealed by Jesus. And when we're suffering over, when we're trying to struggle over questions about the fairness of God, or the justice of God, or the love of God, I am not talking about an abstract God with an abstract goodness in an abstract place, doing abstract things. The God that I believe in came and lived amongst us, and out of love for you and me, died on a cross to do everything that could be done to make you right with God. And if your understanding of God does not include Jesus dying on a cross, and his blood falling down, then you and I are not talking about the same God.

And Jesus dies on the cross. He does it out of love for you and out of love for me. And after tasting all there is to taste of death, and after dealing with sin, on the third day, he rises from the dead. And if that doesn't justify and vindicate who he is, and what he accomplished, nothing will. And so even the arrogant words of Jesus, these are just a prelude to him dying upon the cross, and the cross and the resurrection changes everything.

[30 : 28] This is not a statement of arrogance. It is a statement of urgency. Listen to my voice. Faith comes by hearing.

And it is by faith alone, in Jesus alone, that the grace of God comes with power into your life to change you. And Pilate's response in verse 38 is, what is truth?

Now here he is, the preeminent Canadian academic and newspaper writer, an average person that you will meet in a bar or in a coffee shop.

What is truth? Now we're going to unpack this more in a bit of a moment, but let's just see what happens next. And remember, see what the thing happens in this story form is the story form helps you to understand the truth.

It's not as if John is writing a whole pile of abstract philosophical points, this and this and this and this. He tells the story. But in the process of the story, at the level of the story, we imaginatively enter into a very, very, very important truth.

[31 : 37] I'm going to make it a point in a couple of minutes, but the big thing here is, is that when you abandon the concept of true truth, you inevitably abandon justice. Because look what happens.

What is truth? We go outside. After he had said this, Pilate went back outside to the Jews. I'm in verse 38. The Jewish leaders, the spiritual leaders, and told them, I find no guilt in him.

But, you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? How is that just? What would it be like if Canadian government found a serial killer?

And then all of a sudden, the Canadian government came in here one day and grabbed one of you, grabbed Nora, grabbed Dick, grabbed Anne, just grabbed an innocent person and brought them out onto Parliament Hill and said, by the way, I'm really, I'm just feeling really good today.

I'm going to give you guys a choice. Who do you want to have killed? The serial killer or Anne?

Well, how is that just? Anne's just a sweet, I didn't, I almost was going to say, well, lady, a sweet, long-lived lady who hasn't heard a fly.

[32 : 50] And you're going to just give a whole group of people who hate Anne, all half a person in the world who hates her, and say, you know, you have the choice. You have the serial killer go free.

Or Anne, and Anne get killed, or, you know, have Anne go free. It's not just. And so as soon as the, the doc, as soon as the idea of truth is lost, justice is lost. And boy, do we see this in our country.

And in verse 40, they cried out again, not this man, but Barabbas. Now, Barabbas was a robber, and we're going to talk more about Barabbas in, in the next week, because he becomes, it becomes far more important to the next part of the story.

So here, here's the thing. To say that truth is relative, or that truth does not exist, is self-refuting. I mean, it's, you know, people are bothered when I, they say this to me, and I say it to them, and, but the, the problem is, it really is self-refuting.

I mean, to say that, that, that all truth is relative, you're making an absolute statement that all truth is relative. You don't think the statement, all truth is relative, is relative. You think it's absolute. You know, as soon as somebody says that, as soon as say that, the truth does not exist, well, they believe that the statement, the truth does not exist, is a truth.

[34 : 08] And so, I mean, it's, it's, it's just silly thinking. It's not thinking. It's not thinking. The fact of the matter is, is that human beings are made for truth.

We desire truth. And the big problem, on one hand, it's hard to even have any type of category. The mind can't even work without having some relationship to know what is real, and how to navigate the real, and appreciate the real.

But the big problem that we have in our day and age right now is we have, we are, we have fragile selves. And I think that we live in a day and age where ourselves are even more fragile than they've been in other ages.

Statistics Canada, I was just seeing this the other day, 41% of marriages in Canada will not reach their 30th wedding anniversary. We, I, I will talk to people in a Starbucks, and there's probably some of us here, and they will talk about not just their biological dad, but they've had a variety of stepdads

and stepmoms, boyfriends, and vice versa.

And I'll ask them about their family, and the first thing they'll say is it's complicated. It's complicated. And then, and then you add in things like abortion, and you add in alcohol, and you add in drugs, and you add in institutions that have failed you.

[35 : 37] Many, many people have watched their moms or their dads give decades to a, a, a job or an industry, and then at the whim of a boss, you're just let go. And I think we live in an age where people have profoundly fragile selves.

And on one hand, we want to know the truth, we want to, we want to be ordered around the truth, but on the other hand, because we have this fragile self, we, we fear deeply. You know, there's all this thing, it hasn't been talked about much, about the trigger effects and all that type of stuff, and we can make fun of it, but the fact of the matter is it's, it's revealing profoundly fragile selves.

And selves that are very, very troubled, if there's an inconvenient truth, which is mentioned, it can threaten to break apart the fragile way that we're holding our fragile self.

And often our fragile selves are tried to be based around identities that we grasp or cling on to. If anything threatens the truthfulness of that identity, it's threatening us at a very, very deep level.

And one of the things what Jesus is showing throughout the gospel is that only the gospel is a solution for the fragile self. Only the gospel is a solution for the fragile self.

[36 : 54] Because you see, in the gospel, the entire wonder of the gospel is it begins by the fact that God comes up to you and says, in a sense, he comes up and he taps George on the shoulder and he says, George, I know this is going to terrify you, but you are a rebel against me and you do wrong things and you're broken and you deal with shame.

And I know that you're going to get red in the face and you're going to get huffy and you're not going to like it when I say these things, but you need to remember as I'm saying these things to you that my son died on the cross for you. He set aside his glory.

He knew all about you, everything about you. He knew how fragile your self was. He knew the different identities you cling to. He knew the truths that you're afraid of and the lies that you cling to. He knows the faces that you put before the world to keep people at a distance and to protect your fragile self.

He knew every single thing about that and yet he came and set aside his glory and divine splendor and he dies on the cross. He suffers injustice for you.

He suffers pain for you. He actually bears in his person every single thing that you have done that's tearing you apart and tearing you from me and every single thing with nothing left over he bears in his person for you dying on a cross.

[38 : 22] And it is from that perspective that I want to tell you George, in a sense, God is saying, can I hug you? This is my son and this is what not just my son but myself and the Holy Spirit we have done this for you and there is going to be no truth about you that's going to catch us by surprise.

And what I'm offering for you is that every accusation you have against yourself everything you do which you can't stop everything that you do that you're terrified that somebody will bleed I have dealt with all of that I have died for that I have died for all of those things I have died for you and I have defeated death and sin and all hostile spiritual powers all those accusations I have offered to have on myself and you can have my favor and you can actually have me begin to live within you when you put your faith and trust in Jesus and it's all a gift it's all a gift and I will begin to not only give you a strong place to stand where you can begin with timidity to look at the things in your life that terrify you and your worry will make you more fragile but you can stand in my strong love and look at them and I will give you my word to give you wisdom the words of Jesus as he taught his apostles and he makes clear the Bible and my words are wisdom that will begin to mend who you are to make you whole and to make you free and to fit you for an eternal weight of glory with Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth and my son will live within you and the Holy Spirit will live within you and only the gospel is the solution for the fragile self

I had a variety of points I'm going to really frustrate you can look on them earlier on could you just jump up to point four please point four the sacrifice is true the love is true the resurrection is true the grace is true the salvation is true the sacrifice is true the love is true the resurrection is true the grace is true the salvation is true could you put the next point up we Christians we struggle with telling the truth just like everybody else we struggle with lies just like everybody else but we know that Jesus as the gospel grips us the gospel if the gospel is gripping us and we are believing lies it's

not the gospel that's gripping us if we believe the gospel if we think that if we're afraid of the truth it's not because the gospel is gripping us as the gospel grips us it makes us into a people of the truth who do not believe the lie and a Christian is not a perfect person or a better person than other people a Christian is only a beggar telling other beggars where to hear the truth that will set them free and then if you could put up the final point

Jesus said I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me I invite you to stand please for some of us this is just an opportunity just to do some business with Jesus and say Jesus I have a fragile self and I'm really I have just so many times I don't even share with people I have these fronts I have these fears I have these worries about your word I have worries about what if people knew about Father I just need to come to you and ask that you would grip me with the gospel that you would fill me with the Holy Spirit that I would trust your word that your word will mend my soul mend my heart mend my mind grant me freedom deliver me from lies and truth just to call out to Jesus thank you for the gospel make it real in my life and if there is any here who has not yet given their lives to Jesus there is no time better than right this instant to do that work with Jesus and say

Jesus thank you for dying on the cross for me and loving me please come into my life be my savior and my lord and never let me go and I give everything that is within me even those things I don't know what they are everything within me I give to you that you might be my lord of my life there is no time better than right now to call out to Jesus let's bow our heads in prayer father I stand here with a fragile heart this is a room of people with fragile souls and fragile hearts some of us father have been on the road have been mended for a little bit longer than others but we all stand here with different things within us and we give you that are broken and that we have broken not just that others have broken but we have broken and father you know we thank you so much for your perfect knowledge of us and we thank you so much that with your perfect knowledge of us that still you loved us and still Jesus came to die upon the cross for us to be the one who makes us right with you he does what we could not do and father we thank you for this and we ask that you would just pour the Holy Spirit within us that we might be once again gripped anew by the wonder of who Jesus is and what he accomplished for us and that as we are gripped by that we might read your word and be open to your Holy Spirit moving within us to start to mend us together more and give us freedom make us whole that we might live free and whole and unafraid for your glory father we ask for this continued ongoing wonderful work in our lives and all God's people said amen amen