

When Truth is a Threat

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we give you thanks and praise that as we gather as your people in your presence to sing your praises, to pray to you, and to hear your word, we give you thanks and praise that you desire us to have a true and accurate knowledge of ourselves in the context of the gospel and the context of hope.

We thank you, Father, that you want us to know ourselves in the context of hope, that you can and will work within us to make us more whole, more free, more at one with truth and goodness and justice.

So we ask, Father, that you would do that gentle but deep and powerful work in our midst as we enter into thinking about your word. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

Amen. Please be seated. I've shared this with you before. It's one of my character flaws, of which I have many.

And I'm not very good at telling people off. When they've been doing something which is wrong and it needs to be corrected, I'm just not very good at it. I think I'm better at it than I was 10 years ago and better at it than I was 20 years ago, but it's just never been something that I've been very good at.

[1 : 22] And those times when I do finally confront a person about what they've done wrong that needs to be corrected. I can usually tell within, I was going to say a minute, but really it's probably within less than 30 seconds.

I can tell within less than 30 seconds whether this is going to go really well or really bad. You can tell just by the way the person starts to receive it, whether they're going to be sort of penitent, whether they're going to acknowledge that they've done something wrong.

And it's often, you can almost see them, if you were to videotape it, you can almost see them not slumping, but almost like puffing up their chest and moving forward and almost clenching their hands because they're going to fight you over this.

They're going to point the finger at you and, or me I should say, and really be aggressive. And I can tell fairly quickly in a conversation whether it's going to go bad or not.

Why is this? Not that why am I bad at confronting people? That's a whole, you know, that's a whole other topic of conversation. But why is it that, why is it that sometimes, not just others, but us, when we're confronted of something that we do wrong, why is it that we don't feel guilty, or maybe we do feel guilty, but our response isn't to say that we're sorry.

[2 : 48] Our response is to lash out, to get angry, to push back in a very, very hard way. And why is it at the same time, like in a bit of a similar type of thing, why is it that sometimes if we've been having a discussion with somebody, a friend or a family member, and we've made certain types of claims about things being true, and then maybe the next day you see it, that you see, you know, some really, really solid evidence that what you said was true is wrong.

And what the other person was saying was true was correct. And when you see that, it doesn't make you happy. It makes you sad. And in fact, actually, not only might it make you sad that you've been incorrect and they're correct, but it might make you want to do things to try to, well, to make it look like either you didn't say it, or they didn't say it, or they're still wrong, or whatever.

Like, why is it that that goes on in us as individuals? And of course, we can then extend it to what we see in politics and in culture and in the media and everything like that.

But why is it that those two types of things is part of the human experience? The Bible text that we have today, the two texts, the two stories or incidents that we have in, we're going to look at today in the Gospel of Mark, is actually a very interesting meditation upon these two questions.

And it's a meditation that actually has, it both is quite confronting, but it's actually also very deeply filled with hope. Hope that we can be better than that, or a way to be a little bit, or be a lot more better than that.

[4 : 37] So let's have a look at it. If you're following along in these, which we've given out, if you don't have one, there's still a few left, you can pick it up either now or after the service. It's Mark chapter 11, verse 27.

And if you're following along in this booklet, it's page 70, at the very bottom of the page. And just a reminder, Mark, it looks all fancy now, but it's an ancient eyewitness biography, eyewitness-based biography of Jesus.

It's one of four ancient eyewitness-based biographies of Jesus written, while literally thousands of eyewitnesses were still alive and could have refuted it. And in terms of, he tells it like a story, and in the story, sort of a bit of a climax or a low mat, depending on how you look at it, as a climax, or maybe it's like a bit of a pit, that he announces he's going to go to Jerusalem and he's going to be captured, he's going to be killed.

And that's in chapter 8. And now, just we looked at last week, he's finally come to Jerusalem. And we now know, but the people in the stories don't know, that within a couple of days, he'll be dying on a cross, and then he'll be buried.

And so this story is written within that context. We know that, maybe some of you don't, but we know it. But Jesus has predicted that he's going to die in Jerusalem.

[5 : 59] And it didn't maybe look at that at first because of the triumphal entry, but we know that he's predicted it. So what happens? Look here, verse...

Oh yeah, the other thing here that is important, just to know if you don't know the Bible very well, is that what's just happened before this is what's called the cleansing of the temple, where there were a whole pile of merchants taking up the area where pagans were supposed to be allowed to come and worship God.

And Jesus has driven them all out. He's caused chaos and driven them all out of the temple area with just overturning tables and everything like that.

And that's just sort of happened the day or two before this. And now we have this incident. Verse 27. And they, that's Jesus and his disciples, came again to Jerusalem.

And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him. And they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things or who gave you this authority to do them?

[7 : 08] Now just sort of pause here for a second. This is, I've said this many times, but it's an important thing to remember. However, we live in a, unless you're a conspiracy theorist and think the World Economic Forum or, you know, Jewish people or, I don't know, Davos people or whatever, or, you know, is controlling all of the different groups in society.

Apart from that, what we have in our day and age is we have very, we have separate types of elites. But that didn't exist at the time of Jesus. So when it talks about chief priests and scribes and elders, it's not talking about sort of like a Roman Catholic priest, a scribe being like a writer of a newspaper or a writer of novels and an elder being an old person.

What it is, it's actually describing what's called the Sanhedrin. So Jerusalem, Israel, the Jewish people are under Roman occupation. And the Romans, they actually gave a lot of leeway for local management.

And as long as the peace was kept and as long as tax dollars kept going up to the Romans, they allowed the Jewish people to basically govern themselves. And so what we have here is we have the three leading groups all together.

It's called the Sanhedrin. And what you need to think of, it would be as if the spiritual elite, the literary elite, the political elite, the cultural elite, the intellectual elite, the commercial elite, the legal elite, the educational elite, that all of those elites are just one body.

[8 : 44] Like in our culture, there's lots of different groups. But in that time, there was just this one group that was all unified. And so that's the representatives of that one unified group. So in our days and age, it's Amazon and Apple and the Globe and Mail and the University of Toronto and McGill, the representatives of that one group all coming and saying to Jesus, by what authority are you doing these things?

And it's a very interesting question because just to remind us, there's a difference between authority and power. Like a little bit of an illustration and maybe make why they're bothered.

You know, the last little while, there's been odd things going on in England. People throwing tomato soup, cans of tomato soup or mashed potatoes on works of art. And then after they've done that, they glue themselves to the seat or the wall or whatever.

And we might say, by what authority are you? But you don't ask them by what power you do it because they just did it. Like you don't ask Jesus by what power did you drive them all? Well, we know you did it. Authority is a different type of question.

Like what justifies it? What gives you the right to be able to do something like that? You know, and I don't want to get you on the sideline as to what the climate change people would say, but that's the same type of thing.

[10 : 00] Like you just did this, caused this huge, huge big mess. Like what gives you the right? What gives you the authority to do that? That's the question which they ask.

So how does Jesus answer the question? Well, let's look. Verse 29. Jesus said to them, I will ask you one question. Answer me.

And I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Here's the question. Was the baptism of John the Baptist from heaven or from human beings?

Answer me. Now, this is not an evasion. This is not him cloaking. This isn't trying to deflect the question.

This isn't him trying to buy time. He's actually doing something which is very profound that we can learn from. One of the problems that we have often is that we just merely answer questions, but we don't answer the questioner, the person.

[10 : 59] And I don't mean in a bad way, like going after the questioner, because Jesus isn't at all threatening here. But it's very important in life that you don't just think of the question.

You think of the person asking the question. And you don't want to just merely answer a question. You want to answer the person who's asking the question. And that's what Jesus is modeling here.

And his question is a way to help the questioner, the person, come to a certain degree of self-knowledge, and also actually for Jesus to learn a little bit more about the questioner so that there can be, in fact, a really good answer that not only answers the question, but the person.

So this is an evasion. And some of you might be thinking, what exactly is it that John the Baptist said? So if you just flip in your Bibles to Mark chapter 1, and if you're using this, it's actually the page doesn't have a number.

It's at the very beginning, obviously, page 6. And this will help to refresh our memories as to why it is that Jesus says to them, the baptism of John the Baptist, was it from heaven or was it from...

[12 : 10] And heaven means from God. And here's how Mark begins his story of Jesus, his biography of Jesus. The beginning of the gospel, which means good news, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And Mark quotes Isaiah, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

So just pause. What Mark is saying here is that as you're going to read the rest of the gospel, we're going to meet John the Baptist, and John the Baptist is fulfilling this prophecy from 600 years earlier.

John the Baptist is that messenger who's come to prepare the way of the Lord. And, you know, to our Muslim friends, I would say this is one of many texts in the Bible which is showing you that the Mark and the Christians in the Bible teaches that Jesus is God.

John the Baptist has come to prepare the way of the Lord. What exactly did John the Baptist say? Look at verse 4. John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.

[13 : 26] And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now, John the Baptist was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.

He was a bit of a hippie. And he preached, saying, after me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. And so what he's saying here is that this person he's about to introduce, we're going to see that in the next few verses, is vastly greater than him.

And John the Baptist is a prophet. And only God can send... The baptism of the Holy Spirit is this idea that the Holy Spirit can actually flood you. You can be immersed in God the Holy Spirit.

And only God can do that, not a human being. And now look at the next page, the actual baptism of Jesus. So part of what we've just seen is the message of John the Baptist and his baptisms.

[14 : 43] And then we see the actual baptism of Jesus and John the Baptist, who's going to be bearing witness to what happened. Verse 9, In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River.

And when Jesus came up out of the water, immediately, and now actually the he, it's not clear in the original language whether it means Jesus or whether it means John the Baptist, or it could mean both, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Holy Spirit descending on him.

That's now Jesus like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased. Now, every one of my children has the same nature as me.

We're both human beings. And if a dog has puppies, those puppies have the same nature as the mother and the father.

And so here we have another very clear claim that Jesus is actually God. He's God the Son. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit bearing witness that Jesus is God's Son.

[15 : 57] Now, let's go back to our text now that we've sort of been reminded about what it is that John the Baptist said. If you turn back to Mark chapter 11, verse 30, 31.

And by the way, just so you know, one of the things which is so interesting about the time of Jesus is that John the Baptist was well-known to historians. The Jewish historian Josephus has a lot of information about the life of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist really was viewed as a prophet. He really was wildly popular. He really is known to history outside of the New Testament. And so Jesus says, you know, back to what the question is, okay, John the Baptist, you've asked me by what authority I've done these things.

I'm going to ask you the, you know, the question is, does the baptism of John from heaven, in other words, from God or from human beings answer me? So verse 31, we get what goes on now in the questioners, right?

Jesus isn't just going to answer the question. He's answering the questioner. Verse 31, and they, the elite, discuss it with one another, saying, hmm, if we say from heaven, he will say then, why did he not believe John the Baptist?

[17 : 11] But if we say from human beings, they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John the Baptist really was a prophet.

So, they answered Jesus, we do not know. And Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Now, there's several things in here, of course, which is very important.

John the Baptist is really telling us that when we see Jesus dying on the cross, we're seeing God die on the cross. But what's really going on here, just for now, very briefly, is that it's not that they don't know.

Right? It's not that the questioners don't know. What is it? The questioners don't want to know. They don't want to know.

[18 : 13] And that means they cannot know. And if they cannot know, there's no answer that Jesus can give them that would allow them to know, other than to puzzle over how he asked them a question which revealed, if they're at all attentive, that the problem is inside of them.

They don't want to know. So, here's part of the thing, which, remember I said, this is a profound meditation. It's opening to us something which the Bible teaches in many places, is that there is a part of you that finds the truth a threat.

There is a part of you that finds the truth a threat. And that part can grow and grow and grow. In fact, that's what we're going to see here with these particular people.

They find the truth a threat, and it's going to grow. And it's going to grow to the point that they killed Jesus. But it's not just saying that, it's not just saying this about how bad these guys were.

It's making a far more basic comment about every single one of us, that if we're honest, remember I gave you that opening thing, why is it that sometimes if we hear, we've been in a conversation, maybe even an argument with somebody about what actually happened or what was true, and then we discover later on that we're wrong and they're right.

[19 : 45] And that fills us not with happiness that we know the truth, but with sadness that we're wrong. And all of us have had experiences, and probably if we were a married couple here, we could each look at the other, because we can all think of a time when they did that, and they're looking back at us and thinking of a time that we did that, where some type of truth is given, and it's obvious that it's the truth, but we fight back against it.

We reject it. We push it away. We try to use our cleverness to reinterpret it or give a different lens or just insult the person that they're too stupid to possibly know.

And this text is not saying, like if you say, George, are you saying that Christians then are sort of better than other people, that we're immune to that, that we've been able to figure out the truth, and no, that's not what Christians, I mean, some Christians say that.

And all I can say is that the Bible says that Christians who say that and think that are deceiving themselves. The Bible here is revealing a human problem, and it's revealing a human problem that helps us to know why it is that I need a Savior, because there is a part of me that will reject the truth and find the truth a threat.

And that's why, one of the many reasons that I need a Savior. And it's an invitation for us to look at this and say, Lord, how much is this true of me?

[21 : 22] Like, am I not even aware of the fact that when certain things come my way that I react in such a way and I push it away? Like, is it me, Lord? Help me to understand that it's me and help me to not be like that, to be changed.

I don't want that to be the story of my life. In fact, actually, what the Bible is telling us is another thing which is very, even, you see, part of the thing is this truth itself is going to be offensive to many, because for many of us, our identity is that we're not like those naive people.

We're people who suspend judgment. We're not like those naive people. We're a skeptic. We're not like those simple-minded people. We're too intelligent to actually believe such simple things.

We're not like those simple people. We're open-minded. But these are just actual ways that we flatter ourselves and deceive ourselves that we find the truth a threat at times.

Not all the time, obviously, but at times. And that that part can grow. See, by the way, just a bit of an aside, that's one of the reasons why science is a moral project, not just a technical project.

[22 : 48] Engineering. There has to be the desire to know the truth and to not be threatened by it. Now, the Bible here is very wise.

It doesn't just say this is an intellectual problem, but it also is actually a problem connected to how we relate to what is right and wrong and how we relate to justice. That the Bible is very wise and it connects things which we separate.

Because we tend to separate as if we have like the mind and intellectual things. And then there's the how we know right and wrong. And then we know how there's justice and injustice. And we tend to keep these two things, the right and wrong and justice and injustice.

We might connect those. But often we think that right and wrong is just sort of over here and not really connected to this. But the Bible constantly pushes us to understand that how our mind and how our conscience and how our will and our emotions and our appreciation of beauty and our understanding of justice, that those all ultimately come down to one central fundamental root which the Bible calls the heart.

And that these things aren't different, but they're all in a sense co-inhere with each other. They're all connected to each other. And you can't put them in separate bubbles at water-type bubbles or areas.

[24 : 03] That they're all connected to each other. And the Bible shows this not by just describing it the way I do, but just by the flow of the story because the very next story touches on how we relate to right and wrong and how we relate to justice and injustice.

Look what happens in chapter 12, verse 1. And Jesus began to speak to them in parables. Now what's going to happen here is he's going to give a parable and then he's going to ask a question.

He's going to give the answer and he's going to give the Bible passage. And the Bible passage is the hope. And then we're going to see how the original questioners who are still there and their moral, their intellectual, in a sense, refusal, their feeling threatened by the truth is also now connected to these being threatened by justice and by goodness.

So let's see the story. It goes like this. Verse 1 again. And he began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the wine press and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

And just pause. The commentaries tell me this was very, very common economic arrangement at the time that Jesus was speaking. Like we might look at it a bit off. It was very common, very, very common.

[25 : 23] Verse 2. When the season came, that is the harvest, he, that is the man, the owner, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

In other words, they have to, they've leased it, now they have to make their lease payments. And, but how did the people, the tenants react? Well, should they pay the lease payments?

No. Verse 3. They took the messenger and beat him and sent him away handed. So the owner, verse 4, sent to them another servant. And the tenants struck that fellow on the head, treated him shamefully.

Don't give him any money. So the owner, verse 5, sends another. And this person they kill. And it goes on and on and on. So, verse 4. And so with many others.

The owner keeps sending people and the people that he sends, some of them they beat and some of them they kill. So verse 8, he thinks to himself, okay, I still have one other that I can send. It's my, look at this, a beloved son.

[26 : 32] Remember chapter 1? This is my beloved son. And if you go back and you look at Mark chapter 9 where God speaks again at the transfiguration, Jesus is described as my beloved son.

And so now we have here for us who are reading this, a beloved son is sent. Finally he sent him, he sent him, the beloved son, to them, the tenants, saying, they will respect my son like surely, good grief, they'll respect my son.

But those tenants, verse 7, said to one another, this is the heir, the only heir. Come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

and they took the beloved son and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. Now that's the story. And by the way, what Jesus is doing is in some ways, this is one way to summarize almost all of the Old Testament.

What our Jewish friends call the Torah or the Tanakh, where God sends, I mean, the whole fall begins because Adam and Eve want to dethrone God and become, in a sense, the owner of the garden.

[27 : 55] And time after time, prophet is sent. Some of them they ignore, some of them they listen to, but most often they ignore them, they beat them, and some of them they even kill them.

And Jesus is saying he's the end of that process, the beloved son. So what's the question? Jesus asks them, what will the owner of the vineyard do? Then he gives an answer.

What's the just answer? Now we as Canadians don't like capital punishment, but the answer is he will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. And we would ultimately all say that that's the right thing.

Like, I mean, if one of us owned a house and we were leasing it out to somebody and the people never were paying, we would want eventually the police to go and arrest those people and sue them and we'd want to get their money and even if it means that every last penny of theirs is taken away, we'd want to get what was ours.

That's just and right in terms of the story. And now Jesus quotes the Bible and here's what he says, verse 10, have you not read this scripture?

[28 : 29] And he quotes from Psalm 118, which was recognized in Jesus' day as a Messianic psalm. And here it is, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. And I'm going to explain in a moment what this means. But notice here how it is that the same people who found truth a threat, how they hear this description of right and wrong and justice a threat.

Verse 12, what's their response? Their response is, and they were seeking to arrest Jesus but feared the people for they perceived that he had told the parable against them.

So they left him and went away. Now, the fact of the matter is, Jesus is predicting here that he's going to die. And in fact, he's correct.

Within a couple of days, those very same people will have figured out a way to conspire with Rome, pressure Rome and conspire with Judas to have Jesus isolated, falsely accused, falsely condemned, killed unjustly for political expedience reasons of the Roman imperial power, crucified, and die.

[30 : 27] That's all going to come true in a couple of days. It's very interesting that their response to recognizing that this story is against them, that they're plotting to kill him.

It doesn't go, good grief, is that me? Like, am I really so blind to what's right?

Am I really so blind to injustice that I would respond with anger at this? Is that me? me? No, the fact of the matter is there is a part of you that finds justice and finds the good a threat.

And me. I'm not just saying you and me. There is a part of me that finds at times justice a threat, that finds the good a threat, and that part can grow.

There are some very important thoughts here that are captured in this whole story.

[31 : 33] If your center, if a person's center, or if a significant part of your personality, if a significant part of your thinking, if you're centered on your personal power, or the power of your group, your center isn't really on what's true, your center isn't really on what's good, your center isn't really on what is just, but the fact of the matter is your center is deeply connected to personal power.

What the Bible is suggesting to us is that you will always be anxious. You will always be fragile. You will always be insecure.

You will always feel threatened. And you will never find peace. Never.

Because if it's all about your power, you're always under threat. Like good grief, it's all about your personal power, you'll notice every, you know, it's all about your beauty, and that personal power from beauty, you'll notice every zit, you'll notice every wrinkle, you'll notice every little bulge.

It's always about you being, not just knowing the truth, but being the smartest. You're always going to be threatened by some little, you know, irk, some 12-year-old who's way smarter than you, or some new hire that's way smarter than you.

[33 : 05] You will always be insecure and anxious. You will always be. But you know the thing is, and we all know this at a very, very deep level, you see, because the very nature of my personal power is that others are now going to be a threat, but the truth is shareable.

Goodness is shareable. Justice is shareable. And the truth doesn't make you anxious.

I mean, it does when it's threatening your power, but when you actually just, well, that's just the truth. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm not going to be very popular if I say that. I'm not going to be very popular that I believe, but it's just the truth. It's just true.

And why is it that? Why is it that power makes you anxious, but truth, and knowing what's right, and walking with what's right, and walking with what's just, and walking with what's true, why is it that those things don't create anxiety?

It's because you were made for it. You were made for truth. You were made for justice. You were made for goodness. Augustine, many years ago, said, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you.

[34 : 29] You see, Christians, once again, aren't saying that we don't have any of these problems. No, Christians are saying we need a Savior. It's proof that we need a Savior, and it's an invitation for it to say, Lord, in what ways is this me?

But why is this all set in the context of hope? Look again, if Claire can put it up, look again what verse 10 and 11, the Bible passage that Jesus shares, that they don't listen to because they're threatened by what's right and wrong.

They're threatened by justice, and they respond by anger. But listen to what Jesus says. He quotes the psalm, the stone that the builders rejected. You know they're looking for stones.

There's a stone, throw it out. But it's actually the cornerstone of something that God wants to build. And this thing, which was rejected, and it looks like a tragedy, and it looks like a defeat, but it's actually the Lord's doing.

And it's marvelous in our eyes. This act of rejection, this act of evil, God uses for good to build something new, and strong, and stable.

[35 : 46] Because on one level, every single person would want to say, I want to be a person of the truth, not a person of the lie. I want to be a person of the good, not a person of the evil.

I want to be a person of the just, not the unjust. That's where I want to live. I want to live in that country, in that land, where truth is what we feed on, and what we live out of.

I want to live in that place where goodness is what I live on, and what I feed on, and where I live, and justice, and beauty, that's where I want to live.

And Jesus is saying, you know, when you see me dying on the cross, you see me being rejected, but actually what you really need to see is that I'm doing something, God is doing something marvelous, and is building something different and marvelous.

You're seeing truth, truth itself dying for lies, so that we might be one with the truth. You're seeing justice dying, in a sense, for the unjust, so that we, by accepting it, can enter into his justice.

[36 : 55] We see goodness dying for evil, so that when we trust in him, we enter into goodness, because he desires to build a people, a kingdom, through faith in Christ, that is characterized by the good, the true, the just, and the beautiful.

people. And it's not just ideas, because he really did die, and he really did rise, and he is really coming again.

So it's not just these ideas, but it's his presence, and his power, and an invitation to be a member of his people. That is the gospel.

one of the reasons why church is so important, and I just want to encourage you, first of all, I want to encourage you, if you haven't given your life to Christ, there's no time better than right now to say, you know, I understand that there's part of me that finds these things a threat, and now I need a Savior, and a call out to Jesus to be your Savior.

He is your hope, the only hope, and he will move you and me as we draw closer to him, and he draws closer to us, to feel more uncomfortable when we find the truth a threat, and to want to repent, and more uncomfortable when we find goodness a threat, and want to repent, and find when we're uncomfortable by justice, to want to repent of that.

[38 : 31] He will come into our lives and begin to rebuild you in the context of his people, into one who, well, he wants to invite you into his kingdom of truth and justice and goodness and beauty, and he's asking you to say, let me in, let me in, be my Savior.

One of the wonderful things about coming to church is the church is not where we pound our chest and wave our fists because we're always right and we always love the truth and we always love justice and we always love goodness.

It's time for us to be refreshed by God's word and the power of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Jesus to win the creed, to say, you know, Lord, this week it's not always been a good week, maybe it's been a terrible week, but I once again, it's like the pledge of allegiance, I pledge my allegiance, I believe there's just one God, I believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and it's time for us to get on our knees and remember and to recommit ourselves in a sense by a covenant, renewing the covenant, remembering that Jesus said, I'm going to die on the cross for you, I'm going to break my body and shed my blood for you and I want you to feed on me and to remember that it's me who makes you right with God and we can come together in the midst of our failures, in the midst of our successes and recommit and to know his favor to face the rest of the week and it's so important that you're able to come here and be part of that, it really is, you and I need it and I'm very thankful for this technology and the fact that for some who are old and ill and maybe even incarcerated and there's no other opportunity and I'm really thankful we can do that but there is something about being together.

And eating the bread and drinking the wine and hearing the beautiful children and helping with Sunday school and making a difference in people's lives and being part of the women's ministry and the men's ministry and small groups and we need each other.

We need to be together in the presence of Jesus as he builds not just us as a person of the truth but a people of the truth. I invite you to stand. Please stand.

[40 : 59] We close in prayer. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank you so much. Father, thank you so much that you are the truth.

You are true. You are good. You are just. You are beautiful. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God. Thank you, Father, that you love us. Thank you that you sent Jesus to die on the cross for us.

Thank you, Father, that you know how conflicted we can be about the truth and we don't want the truth to be true sometimes. We don't want justice to be just sometimes. We don't want goodness to be good sometimes.

Father, you know how that can be so conflicted within us and you know, Father, the ways that we can allow those things to grow and grow within us. Father, we give you thanks and praise that seen us, still you love us, that your son died for us, that we might be made one with you.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring your word home to us in a deep way and bring the gospel home to us in a deep way, that we might know that sense of security in the gospel, so that we might hear texts like this and say, Lord, is this me?

[42 : 08] Show me those times it's me, and Jesus, please come and help me and use your people to help me to repent of that, so that each of us can grow more and more day by day as a person of the truth, not a person of the lie, of a person of the good.

Not the evil, of justice, not of injustice. And we ask all these things in the sweet and precious name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.