

Matthew 23-03-26a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to be assembled with you in the name of the Lord this morning. We're going to continue our study in Matthew, although it will be by way of the Gospel of John.

There is an important concept at which we will look before we leave the praetorium, the pavement where Pilate is presenting the Lord Jesus to the people. There is a very important statement that is made, an exchange that takes place, which requires our attention before we move forward. And so you can locate yourself for convenience if you have your Bible to John chapter 19.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll begin. Father, thank you for another day, another opportunity to invest time and resources that you have placed under our care and in our stewardship. We pray that our fellowship and our study this morning will enlighten us and place in the hands of the Holy Spirit that truth that will guide us and motivate us and enable us to live the life to which we've been called both now and in the ages to come.

We pray that in all things, our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified. We thank you for him, for his presence, even now at your right hand, awaiting the command to return for us in the air. And our goal is that we will be ready for that moment.

And we pray that our fellowship this morning will contribute to that goal. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. There is an extended version of the trial before the Romans, the three Roman trials at which we've been looking in John chapter 18 and 19.

We saw in chapter 18, verse 28, that they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium in the early morning. They didn't go in because they felt that that would defile them and they would not be able to eat the Passover. John is the clear passage to which we reconcile other statements in the Synoptic Gospels that seem to suggest that the previous night was a Passover meal, it was not.

These individuals have not yet eaten the Passover. It is the morning of 14 Nisan. It is on this day that the Passover lambs will be slain in Jerusalem.

And at evening, everyone will go indoors and partake of that. And there is no more clear passage about this than you find in the chapters of John dedicated to this account. So they did not go into the praetorium, otherwise they could not eat the Passover.

Pilate then went out to them and said, "'What accusation do you bring against this man?' They answered and said to him, 'If he were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you.'" He's an evildoer. You don't need to know the charge. We wouldn't have brought him if he wasn't guilty or we would not have indicted him if he

wasn't a bad guy.

We would not have brought him before the grand jury. We would not have brought him to trial. We would not have made the accusation.

You can trust us. We know what we're doing. We are on the path of truth.

So if we brought him to you, just take our word for it. He's a bad guy. Pilate said to them, "'You take him and judge him according to your laws.' The Jews said to him, "'It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death, in order that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke signifying by what death he would die.' Jesus had already informed the disciples that he would be crucified, which indicates a Roman operation.

And if the disciples had taken time to sit and thoughtfully consider the words of the Lord Jesus, they would have realized that the Jews would arrest him. He would be betrayed by someone close to him, delivered to the Jews, who would then hand him over to the Romans, who would then execute him. All of this, Jesus told them plainly on multiple occasions, we've seen it.

So in verse 33, Pilate entered the praetorium again, called Jesus and said to him, "'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered him, "'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning me?' This is a very similar expression to thou sayest. "'You're the one bringing this up, so why are you bringing it up? Are you speaking for yourself? Are you curious on your own, or did someone plant this idea in your mind?' Pilate answered, "'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?' This is interesting, since they don't seem to have told Pilate what he has done.

And Pilate says, "'Why am I interviewing this man? Why has he been brought to me? The accusers can't tell me what he's done. Maybe he knows what he's done. So what have you done?' Jesus answered, and he is incorporating both previous questions.

"'Are you the king of the Jews? What have you done?' Jesus answers both questions. And it's interesting because so many times Jesus, when his disciples ask him a question, he responds with a question. But here with Pilate, he actually answers these two questions.

Jesus answered in verse 36, "'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. If my kingdom were of or from,'" and by the way, all through this verse, when you see of and from, it's the same type of Greek construction.

So of or from, of partakes of the location, the power, the principles, from indicates source. And it is context that tells us whether to take it in the first sense or the second. "'If my kingdom were of or from this world, my servants would fight.

My servants would be the source of power. My servants would accede to my authority and serve me by defending me. And I would not be taken and handed over to the Jews.

But now my kingdom," and now is important, "At this time, at this time, my kingdom is not of or from here. At this time, there is coming a day when Jesus' kingdom will be of and from here," meaning the land of Israel, "But not at this time. Now my kingdom is not from here." Jesus is very clear on the nature of the first advent coming as the suffering servant and the second advent coming as the conquering king.

"Pilate therefore, hearing this answer, said to him, "Are you a king then? If your kingdom is not of or from here, are you a king in some other sense or in some other place?' First you have, "Are you the king of the Jews? Now, are you a king?' Jesus answered," and this is the thou sayest mode. This is what Jesus says when he is non-committal. And he says, "You're the one harping on this subject.

You're the one focusing on this. I didn't bring it up. I didn't stride in here, demanding that you bow to me because I'm the king of the world or king of the universe, or that you should acknowledge that I am king of the Jews.

You're the one saying, and you see the word rightly is in italics. My suggestion is line that out. You say I am a king.

You're continuing to pursue this topic.' Jesus said, "My kingdom is not from here.' Well, if he has a kingdom, he is de facto the king. If the kingdom belongs to him, my kingdom, then the question has already been answered. You say I am a king, but you're bringing up the wrong subject.

This is not the time to talk about kingship or kingdom. And by the way, that was not the charge that the Jews brought when they tried to defend the arrest and the handing over to Pilate. The charge that they wanted to bring in the Sanhedrin, you remember what it was? Blasphemy.

Blasphemy. And in Deuteronomy, blasphemy is a capital offense. And you can also go and find where a false prophet, God says, if you have a prophet who speaks in my name, but I did not send him.

And the notion being that such a prophet who is speaking untruths, speaking falsely in God's name, is to be executed. So for this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world. Now this is where we wanna pay attention.

This is our subject for the morning. For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.

Pilate said to him, 1838 of John, what is truth? And when he had said this, he went out

again to the Jews and said to them, I find no fault in him at all. The first thing you note about this is Jesus focuses on his mission. For this cause I was born, for this cause I came into the world that I should bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice, of the truth, from the truth, associated with the truth in some way. We wanna focus today on this statement, this question by Pilate, what is truth? It is a question that has been pertinent ever since Adam and Eve were created and placed in the garden. And when they left the garden in the pre-Diluvian civilization, the anti-Diluvian times, the post-Diluvian times, the patriarchal age, the age of Israel, the age of the church, what is truth? And today as never before, this is an issue.

I have mentioned in the past few weeks that there are two books that I possess that directly bear on this question. One is this book by Douglas Gruthius called Truth Decay. It was published in the year 2000, so over 20 years ago, but it is just as pertinent now as it was then.

There is a second book by Alisa Childers that also addresses this, and it is called Live Your Truth and Other Lies, exposing popular deceptions that make us anxious, exhausted, and self-obsessed. Live Your Truth and Other Lies. I am going to refer to this book by Dr. Gruthius because it sums up the substance of this conversation between Jesus and Pilate so well.

This is from the opening pages, and this is how it begins. Aristotle began his great work, Metaphysics, by writing that man by nature desires to know. Centuries later, the poet and playwright T.S. Eliot noted, humankind cannot bear very much reality.

Strangely, both are right. Out of this all too human tension and polarity is born the perennially paradoxical quest for and escape from the truth. Truth is a daunting, difficult thing.

It is also the greatest thing in the world, yet we are chronically ambivalent toward it. We seek it and we fear it. Our better side wants to pursue truth wherever it leads.

Our darker side balks when truth begins to lead us anywhere we do not want to go. Let truth be damned if the truth would damn us. We want both to serve the truth and to be served by it.

Such is our uneasy lot east of Eden. The apostle Paul knew this well. In the book of Romans, he speaks of our inescapable knowledge of God's truth and our natural aversion to it.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all godliness, godlessness, and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power, and divine nature have

been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that they are without excuse. Elemental to this deep division in our beings, this civil war within, is not simply the question of what things we take to be true or false.

Am I a good man or a bad man? But what we take the nature of truth to be. Is the truth in dissolubly connected to objective reality, or is it something more malleable, fungible, and adaptable to circumstance? Do we construct truth, whether individually or as a culture, or do we receive truth as a gift, however unnerving it may be? Can language capture realities outside of itself, or can it only refer to itself in a kind of linguistic solitaire? That's pretty deep, that last question. But do we construct truth, or do we receive truth as a gift? These are not philosophical games reserved for intellectuals or the otherwise bored.

They are matters of personal rectitude and integrity. How ought I orient myself to the truth? Can I find the truth and live within its domain? Can I abide by its demands and delight in its benefits? We ought to be haunted by the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein, no one can speak the truth if he has still not mastered himself. He cannot speak it, but not because he is not clever enough yet.

The truth can be spoken only by someone who is already at home in it. Not by someone who still lives in falsehood and reaches out from falsehood toward truth on just one occasion. The philosopher does not here tell us just what truth is, but he underscores its inestimable value for those who desire integrity, to speak and live truly.

Therefore, if proper understanding of truth is undergoing decay, we should be alarmed as well as animated, motivated to reverse it. I do not engage this topic dispassionately. I've been intensely concerned about the defense of Christian truth in contemporary culture.

He gives a little bit of personal testimony here about why he is interested in post-modernism of philosophy or better a cluster of philosophies that seeks radically to reconceptualize traditional notions of truth and rationality. Post-modernists fret mightily about arrogance and dogmatism. This is what they're reacting against.

They think that people who are dedicated to truth are arrogant and dogmatic. But to avoid them, they typically rebound into the equal and opposite errors of cheap tolerance and relativism. A belief in the objectivity of truth and its importance for all of life does not entail an arrogant attitude or unbending irrational dogmatism.

Despite the strong convictions that drive this book, I want to briefly distinguish two claims lest I be misunderstood. It is one thing to claim that objective, absolute and universal truth exists. It is quite another to claim that one has mastered these objective, absolute and universal truths or that one has nothing more to learn and is in no need of correction.

I will argue strenuously for the former claim, but make no pretense to the latter. In fact, it is precisely belief in a truth beyond one's own thoughts and culture that allows one to be rebuffed and reconstructed by reality. In other words, it is the truth of God above and outside of us that enables us to take that truth, the word of God, the scripture, as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.

That truth resides outside ourselves. This non-negotiable distinction should engender humility, not arrogance, a quest for reasonable certainty through dialogue, not dogmatism, through mindless affirmation and denunciation. Richard John Newhouse should be considered when he says, few things have contributed so powerfully to unbelief in the modern and postmodern world as the pretension of Christians to know more than we do.

If Christians exhibited more intellectual patience, modesty, curiosity and sense of adventure, there would be few atheists in the world, both of the rationalist and postmodern varieties. Blaise Pascal, a true genius and extraordinary apologist echoes this concern about holding the truth wrongly. We make an idol of truth itself, for truth apart from charity is not God, but his image and an idol that we must not love or worship.

Still less must we love or worship its opposite, which is falsehood. The application of what Pascal's words convey here, we make an idol of truth itself. This has happened in terms of making an idol of the study of scripture or understanding what a scripture passage says and saying, I know the truth of that verse or that statement or that claim or that principle or that doctrine.

We make an idol of truth itself, but truth apart from charity, apart from love is not God, but his image and an idol that we must not love or worship. With these exhortations in mind, let us investigate the conditions of truth decay in the postmodern world. And in his first chapter, he discusses how postmodernism seeks to transform radically and so jeopardize the biblical understanding of truth, which is our topic.

This is illustrated from many aspects of our culture. And so that is the substance of this book. And I wish I had time to read you more of it, but what I want to do is take the subject of truth as we find it in the gospel of John and see how we have arrived at this culminating scene in John's gospel of Pilate, the Roman governor and the Lord Jesus on the morning of his crucifixion, discussing what you might consider to be an abstraction or a philosophical point, what is truth? And yet it is at this very moment and on this most important of all occasions, the threshold of the great work of salvation that Jesus makes this point.

Jesus is the one that brings up the subject of truth. And far from being academic, intellectual or abstract, think about the situation. Picture the Lord Jesus here standing before Pilate, knowing he is about to be crucified, bringing up this point.

For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. There is no better place to look for the nature of this truth and the characteristics of this truth than the gospel of John itself. And you might prepare to write these down.

I'm going to give you the verses and then the observation and interpretation we make from each one of these in the gospel of John. In chapter one, you're well familiar with these. The name of our church derives from John 1 14 and John 1 17.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth. For this cause was I born.

For this cause I came into the world, Jesus says. And in the introductory portion of John, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. He was born, he came into the world full of grace and truth.

What point would you draw from John 1 14 about the nature of truth? What can you learn about truth from John 1 14? It's incarnate in Christ, he is the embodiment of truth. In terms of our experience, what can you say? It is observable. The truth is observable in the incarnate Christ.

We beheld his glory. His glory is full of grace and full of truth. So looking at the Lord Jesus is to look at truth walking around in human form.

John 1 17, the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The law was given through Moses. What was the purpose of the law? Paul tells us the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin. Law reveals what we are and what we are not, what we are capable of and what we are not capable of. By law comes the knowledge of sin.

And it teaches us that we need Christ. It brings us to Christ as the solution to the problem that the law reveals. It's interesting if you puzzle a bit over John 1 17, because it says the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Does that mean that there wasn't truth in the law? There wasn't truth in the Old Testament? That truth didn't come until Jesus Christ came? We have to think about this a little bit because the law and the revelation of God throughout the Old Testament in the prophets and the writings as well is truth. Sanctify them by thy truth, Jesus says. Thy word is truth.

The word of God is truth. Man doesn't live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So obviously there is truth in the law, the truth of our lost and fallen condition, the truth of our sinfulness, the truth of our inability to meet the

righteous requirements of God, the truth of our limitations, our earthliness, our transience.

The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. So obviously we're not talking about an abstraction of truth but a specific truth or a specific kind of truth. What is that truth? This is the truth of the revelation of God's character, the positive side, if you will, of his character.

The law reveals his righteousness and his justice. The Lord Jesus Christ, John 3, 16, reveals the love of God. God so loved the world that he gave his uniquely born son, the son who was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth.

The act of sending the Lord Jesus in his entrance into the world, being born in human form is an expression of God's love. And that love transcends the love that he has for Jacob or for Israel as a nation in establishing a land and a people and a nation. The love of God in the Old Testament is largely expressed in a corporate form.

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated is so widely misunderstood in Romans because people try to take it as referring to the individuals when it is referring to the nations that stemmed from those individuals. The nation descended from Jacob have I loved, the nation descended from Esau have I hated. This was proclaimed before they were ever born.

Two nations are in your womb. So this truth in John 1, 17 that comes through Jesus Christ is the fuller and more profound expression of the positive attributes of God's character toward individuals. You say, well, doesn't it say he loved the world? Well, keep going.

That whosoever believes in him should not perish. The individual who believes in him will have eternal life. So then you have John 3, 21.

He who does the truth comes to the light in order that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. So we find out in John 3, 21, that truth is something that can be lived. It can be accomplished.

It can be a characteristic of our walk. We do the truth. And when we are doing the truth, we are drawn to the light.

He who does the truth comes to the light in order that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. There is a harmony between God, the light, and truth. And you find this in John's epistles as well.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with him and he with us and so on. So truth is something that ought to characterize our lives. It is something that we ought to do.

John 4, 23. Jesus says, the hour is coming and now is, remember John 4, this is the woman at the well chapter. When true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth, for the father is seeking such to worship him.

You have truth twice in this verse. The hour is coming and now is when the alethenos worshipers, the true worshipers. This is not in the sense of real or in the sense of actual.

This is, aletheia is the word for truth. And this is alethenos, the adjectival form. The hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers truthing worshipers.

The worshipers characterized by truth, those who do the truth, who are drawn to the light, who come to the light so that their deeds can be seen as being in God. They will worship the father in spirit and truth. This has not always been the case that you could worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus says the hour is on the way and has now arrived. He doesn't say you could worship the father in spirit and truth in Old Testament days. The hour is coming and now is when true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such to worship him.

The father is seeking this kind of person to worship him. What kind of worshiper? What kind of person? Those interested in truth. How important is this subject of truth? How critical is it for us to understand that as the gospel of John begins with the word and with the truth and with the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us so that we could see the truth.

And on the last day of his earthly life before the crucifixion, Jesus is making an issue to pilot of this very same concept. This is why I was born. This is why I came into the world.

On this last day of my life, as I look back over my life, did I accomplish the goal to bear witness to the truth, to give evidence of the truth, to be an observable, beholdable truth? Why is that important for us? Where is the incarnate body of Christ today that has been born and has come into the world? Look in the mirror, look around you, it is us. This is our purpose for being born. This is our purpose for existing in the world as body of Christ, our identity in Christ.

Our purpose is to bear witness to the truth. We sometimes see an overemphasis on evangelism and on witnessing in Christian circles. To recognize that that's an overemphasis should not result in a lack of understanding or a lack of awareness and proper emphasis on our role as bearing witness, bearing witness to the truth.

If Jesus is the truth, then we should be bearing witness to him in our lives, as we walk around, in our words, in our attitudes, in the extent to which we forgive one another so that we can be forgiven, and the extent to which we seek to walk in the light, acknowledging our own sin and receiving forgiveness. Forgive us our trespasses as we

forgive those who trespass against us. This is to walk in the light.

He who does the truth comes to the light. That tension that Gruthius mentions in the introduction to his book, we love the truth, but we dislike the truth. The truth is something we want to serve, but we also want it to serve us.

And when there are uncomfortable truths, when there are truths that we find disquieting or painful, we want to push that truth away. We have to be people of the truth if we are going to be people of Christ, because he is the truth. He came into the world to bear witness of it.

We are in the world to bear witness of the truth and to the truth. The father is seeking such to worship him. And this gets to the whole nature of what evangelism is and what the appeal to lost and unsaved people has to be.

Properly communicating the gospel is something we need to know how to do and to understand the issue of acceptance or rejection on the part of those who receive this witness. If we are bearing witness, we need to know something about what to expect in terms of the effect of that witness, the purpose of it, the effect of it, the goal of it. What is that? That's what we'll see when we come back from the break.