

“Deliver Us from Evil”

October 29, 2017

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann**

Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. He had been beaten and bound with ropes. Pilate asked Jesus a question: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. But he condemned Jesus to death anyway. It seems that he really didn’t care much about the truth. “What is truth?” A lot of people are still asking the same question today. Truth can be hard to hear and hard to find. Just look at the news. We are living in a time of false promises and misleading statements. People say that truth is relative. They say, “What’s true for me, may not be true for you.”

There’s story about a man who went to a very conscientious doctor. After doing some tests, the doctor told the man, “I have some bad news for you.” Then the doctor showed the man his tests and went over the results. The doctor looked directly at the man and said, “You only have one week to live. You need to get your affairs in order.” Then the doctor asked, “Is there anything more you need before you die?” “Yes,” the man answered, “another doctor.” Are there times when you don’t really want to know the truth?

Martin Luther was a man who wanted to know the truth. He wanted to know what was true about God. Today, we are celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and we are remembering Luther’s search for the truth. By the time Luther came along the “Good Ship Church” had been sailing along for

about 1500 years. The “Good Ship Church” had become crusted over with barnacles and filled with dry rot. The truth was in there, somewhere, but it was hard, if not impossible to find. What did Luther do? He read the Bible. In Romans chapter 1 Luther read—“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes ... And the righteous shall live by faith. Luther tried to keep what was true and good in the Church. Then he scraped off the barnacles and cleaned out the dry rot. What was left was a faith based solely on the Word of God. Luther said, “Stick to the Scriptures and God’s Word. There is the truth; there you will be safe.”

Jesus also had to fight a battle for the truth. Jesus was not afraid to call Satan what he is—a liar and the father of lies. Jesus said, “There is no truth in him. When he speaks he lies.” (John 8:44) In fact, the first time people had to make a choice between God’s truth and the Devil’s lies, they chose the Devil’s lies. The moment Adam and Eve rejected God’s truth and chose to believe the devil’s lie—in that moment all the troubles of the world began. And we are still fighting the battle today, because our sinful nature tends to side with the Devil’s lies instead of God’s truth.

What is truth? This is a question we are all faced with. Luther said, “Here I stand on the Word of God—I can do nothing else.” You need to decide where you are going to take your stand. Will you stand on the side of God’s Truth? There’s a story in the gospels about a young man who comes to Jesus looking for the truth. He asks Jesus, “What is the greatest and the most important commandment?” Jesus answers him, “The greatest and most important commandment is this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and will all your soul and with all your mind.” And the second is “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” “All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments,” Jesus said.

Let's take that second commandment first. How do you love your neighbor? A couple of years ago I took a mission trip to Nicaragua. The mission team went to an orphanage in Puerto Cabeza, one of the poorest areas of Nicaragua. At the orphanage I met man named Mark. Mark had left a successful life and a high-paying job in the tech industry—he was from right here in Ashburn—he'd left the money and the success—he'd left the big house and the fancy car—he'd left it all and moved to Nicaragua to work in this orphanage. And he was serving God and doing wonderful things for these children who had very little. The world would say, "That's crazy!" The world would say, "The measure of your worth is how much money you make and the number of things you possess." But is that God's truth or the Devil's lie? Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

And then how do you love God first? How do you remain faithful to God—how do we stand up for what God says in his Word—in a world that, so often says the opposite. We are not the first generation to struggle with and have deep disagreements about what the truth is and what it is not. It's clear that we can't always agree—we humans never could. We still wonder, like Pilate did, if truth has any meaning at all—Can we ever really know the Truth? What I want to say to you today is, "Yes, you can know the truth and the truth can set you free." God's Word is Truth. Jesus is the Truth. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life—no one comes to the Father except through me." You see, Truth is not found in a list of facts or religious doctrines. The truth is Jesus—his word—his life—his death and resurrection. They all testify to the truth. When you determine to follow Jesus, he leads you into a different way of being and living in this world—a new way of seeing the world.

In this world, that is so twisted by hate and greed and distrust—where suspicion and anger are commonplace—Jesus wants to show you a different way—the way of truth and the way of life. Will you follow that way? Love your God first and love your neighbor as yourself. And when you fail—because we are all sinners and we do fail. When we fail we turn to Jesus. The one who is true—Jesus Christ—gave his life on the cross for you—so that you can know the truth and the truth can set you free.

PRAYER: Father, today I choose to put You first. I acknowledge that without You I can do nothing. I invite You to have Your way in my life as I seek You first in all I do in Jesus' name. Amen.