

**"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."**

I preached here three weeks ago and after the service I remember telling you that I had washed my hands for 20 seconds and would shake your hand if you extended it but understood if you didn't want to shake mine. Three weeks later and look at where we are now--unable to come together physically and worship in our church. All because of this COVID-19. I spoke to a few people in the last few days and they hadn't realized how devastating this is for Christian camps. You see the majority of our income is from user fees--people who come for retreats, field trips, summer camp programs. If people aren't coming, money isn't coming in. And even if there's nobody at camp, we've got bills to pay--insurance, utilities, that's not even talking about salaries for 8 year-round staff. Some Christian camps in the nation have already closed up. I hate COVID-19. Do you know what those initials stand for? *(Use markerboard.)*

COVID-19: CO stands for corona, VI for virus, D for disease and 19 for year 2019.

I say we take those initials and make it stand for something else. How about:

COVID-19: Christ Our Victor In Disasters and 19 for 2019 could be Matthew 20:19? Jesus is speaking and predicts his death. **18 (The chief priests and the teachers of the law) will condemn him to death, 19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life.**

Or how about John 20:19 just 2 chapters after our text for today? Jesus had risen and the verse says, **On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"**

Today we're looking at John 18:38 **"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."**

What is truth? How about those two 20:19 verses I just read--Matthew "On the third day he (Jesus) will be raised to life" and John quoting Jesus after He had risen, "Peace be with you."

My friends, we're in a battle that's a whole lot worse than the coronavirus. While the coronavirus can take our physical life, Satan wants to take our spiritual life, our eternal life; Satan does not want us to know the truth. He does not want us to know that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Not just a way, but The Way, The Only Way to heaven.

Jesus had been standing in front of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who had to decide whether to have Jesus crucified as the Jewish leaders wanted or to set him free. Pilate had asked him whether he was a king, which would make Jesus a direct threat to the Romans. Jesus answered, **"You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me" (John 18:37).**

Did you catch his reference to being "on the side of truth"? He's talking about sides! On one side is the truth; on the other side is the lie. A lie can be an outright, blatant lie and denial of the truth altogether, or it can contain some truth mixed in with fake truths or some other shading of the truth. But on that side is the liar, Satan, and he has an ally, the unbelieving world.

There are those out in the world who do not believe in Christ and work hard to bring people into their cause:

Freedom From Religion Foundation in Madison WI : "Join the largest freethought association in North America."

"We are too advanced as people to be doing the religion stuff. Logic, reason, evidence and science are real."

Or the Central Wisconsin Atheist Society in Wausau.

It's not too difficult for us to walk away from these groups.

But it's a lot more difficult when the truth is hidden. I was thinking of that when I was cutting wood at camp. The tree didn't look bad on the outside, but some of the upper branches were dying off, so I figured the tree should come down. I began to cut the tree and the chainsaw slid through the tree like a knife through butter (and not the frozen kind). Not bad looking on the outside but the inside was rotten.

You can find that in the world--people that you might know, good to you on the outside, but just want to lead you down a path that is not God-pleasing, that's destructive, that leads to hell.

You can find that in the church too. Story about grandmother and 17 year old granddaughter who had just been confirmed in the Lutheran Church (liberal Lutheran Church in American in the early 1980s). I was taking them through Bible Information Classes because they wanted to join our church. One of the first questions that I ask is “What do you believe about the Bible--is it the true Word of God?” Grandmother--Yes; 17 year old granddaughter--Yes. My next question is “So you believe the Bible is ‘inerrant’, that it has no mistakes and no errors?” Grandmother--Yes; 17 year old granddaughter--No. I asked, “What do you mean ‘No.’” 17 year old says, “I was just confirmed and my pastor told me that “inerrant” means that there are no errors (defined by that pastor as something done to intentionally deceive) but there are mistakes (not intentional; but because writers were humans and didn’t know everything about history, geography, or whatever, an unintentional “mistake” might have occurred when writing.). So the pastor has changed the definition from one generation to the next. So what happens is a person is sitting in the pew and the pastor says, “God’s Word is the inerrant Word of God” and grandma thinks “No errors; no mistakes” and granddaughter thinks “No errors, but full of mistakes.” And as soon as you say that, you can make the Bible say whatever you want to, because you don’t know what is truth and what isn’t. John 17:17 (Jesus) “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Where are you getting your truth from these days? TV? Internet? What God condemns in the world, the world says it’s OK. Or do you get your truth from God’s Word, the only truth with no mistakes and no errors?

Jesus never said, “I’m guessing” or “I wish” or “I hope” or “I think” or “possibly” or “maybe.” He always spoke with complete authority. He often said, “Verily” or “Truly, I tell you . . .” He was certain about truth: **“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’” (John 8:31,32).**

In other words, God’s Word, the Bible, holds everything we need to know for life, to live freely without guilt and death’s curse--without the fear of God’s punishment--and, especially, to live forever free in eternity. That’s because every word in the Bible, in one way or another, points to Jesus Christ.

Our triune God loved us so much that he planned to rescue this sin-damaged world. The Son came to tell us the whole truth and to be the truth that would battle sin, death, Satan, and a world that hates him. Throughout his entire life he remained holy so that he could trade his life for ours at the place of God’s judgment. This is the sacred truth that we believe, confess, and hold dear because it means the solution for the world’s sin and for our own personal sin. Our truth-telling Jesus gives us the certain conviction that he will take all those who trust him to live with him in heaven. This is the only reality there is.

Is Satan using this difficulty that we are facing in our country now to separate us from God’s Word, from the only truth. Is Satan trying to cause doubt that god even loves us?

Here’s another truth. God says (Romans 8:28) “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Actually now is a great time to read the whole chapter.

*(Use markerboard)* Here’s how to remember where to find it--Man in rowboat is “Romans” Flagpole with finial at top in shape of number 8 for Romans 8.

Flagpole with victory flag for Christian victory:

8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?



God’s Word says, “In all things God works for the good of those who love him. Do you believe that?”

It may not seem like it at first. But just look at some of what is going on right now. Families spending more time together, eating meals together, having family devotions together, singing, watching sermons/services together, communicating. I chuckled at the guy who said, “Night 1 of no sports. My wife and I just had an hour long conversation. She’s really nice. Apparently she works in the medical field.” Churches have been forced to be more creative in their ministry with how they are sharing God’s Word with members. Camp is doing song periods with staff from their homes

and sharing devotions.

Whether you get sick and die, whether you have to close up a business or shut down a camp, know that you have a God that loves you and defeated Satan and forgave your sins and is preparing a place for you in heaven.

Jesus has overcome the world and given you the treasure of his truth. Go out there and live, play, and work in God's marvelous truth. Be ready to share it.

COVID-19: Christ Our Victor In Disasters and 19 for 2019. And those two 20:19 verses: Matthew 20:19 "On the third day he (Jesus) will be raised to life" and John 20:19 quoting Jesus after He had risen, "Peace be with you."