

Children's sermon (crown)

(As we) approach the end of 2018, in a month, I have the sneaking suspicion that the "word" that has been featured in more headlines in newspapers, or on-line is: post-truth. One headline that caught my attention was "Our Post-Truth World."

Of course most of those articles dealt with the political reality that surrounds us today. But, even if we can step away from today's politics, I think that there is a more insidious reality: (we live) in an Age of Untruth. We live in a world of blatant lies, of wily exaggerations, photo-shopped images, fairytale resumes, conspiracy theories, and.....fake news. Objective facts, anymore, are met with an equally intense scrutiny as once we did with made-up stories. (The true) is false, the false is true, and anything can mean anything.

With that reality in mind, (we have) reached Christ the King Sunday, and the Gospel reading for today does not show Jesus in all of his kingly best. We (don't get) Jesus standing his ground against his detractors; or teaching in parable about the glory of God's grace; or even walking across the water as a sign of coming into this world. Nope, we don't get any of those scenes.

No, today when we are to celebrate the reign and rule of Jesus Christ, the scene we have is a (beaten), broken, hungry, tired, abandoned Jesus standing before the cruel and inhumane political head of the region..... Pontius Pilate.

While it isn't the most amazing scene....it is one that will smack the smugness out of us. It will scuttle all the nice happy images of the Jesus who feeds lots of people with a little. It will make us avert our eyes away from the one in whom we have placed our trust. This is the Gospel's scene of the political concession speech.

"I want to thank my supporters, and all who have believed in me....but right now I'm standing exactly where I need to be....."

Our candidate for king is now a falsely accused criminal, stripped of his authority, a dead-man walking, on this short journey to death and defeat.

So, what does that have to do with our present issue with the matter of truth? Well, if we listen to the brief conversation Jesus has with Pilate it may become clear.

"Are you a king?" Pilate asks Jesus repeatedly...then annoyed and frustrated....then at his wit's end. See Pilate thinks of himself as all that and a bag of chips! Why is he having to waste his time with this peasant anyway. He's got a tee time in an hour, and he needs to change clothes.

"You say that I am a king." Jesus responds cryptically....and Pilate realizes (Jesus) just did a "touché". Then Jesus (says,) "It is for this reason that I have come into the world....to testify to the.....truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth....listens to my voice." That's the unfortunate place the pickers have us stop today. But....and there's always a but....Pilate would (respond:) "What is truth?"

Tom Cruise asked that question of Jack Nicholson in "A Few Good Men" and Nicholson's response is now a (cultural) identity: You can't handle the truth. While it would have been pretty cool if Jesus pulled a Jack Nicholson on Pilate.....he didn't. In fact, he (didn't say) anything else. He didn't get into a contrarian philosophical debate about the nature of truth. No. He didn't give him a pithy four word slogan. He didn't because truth is not a weapon, or a

bludgeon, or a slogan we can make into a refrigerator magnet. No. Truth is who Jesus is. We had seen it in his life, recorded in the Gospels. (We see) the truth who lifts up the poor, the blind, lame, deaf, and dead. We see the truth who spoke stories of wandering sheep, and compassionate foreigners. We see the truth welcome women, and give prime time to children. What is truth? We have seen it in Jesus.

So today is Christ the King Sunday. (If we) say that Jesus is the King of Truth, then what does it mean for us to belong to the truth?

I think we have a hard time with the notion of a king. We have presidents, we don't have kings. While presidents are disposable after a term or two, kings go on forever. If Jesus is the king of truth....how might he be say, a president of truth. Hmmmm.... a president of truth. Never mind.

If we belong to the truth of who Jesus is, I guess loyalty would be high on the list. If truth is king, then self-aggrandizement or self-deception are not. If truth is king, alternative-truths, denials, or wild reinterpretations are not.

If Jesus is the truth, and he calls us to belong to him then distorting inconvenient truths is in fact, not truth.

I need to pause here to remind you that the (church) is a human institution, and in the past the church has sought to consolidate its power and influence to colonize, enslave, reject, and dehumanize vast populations that somehow were seen as threatening to the power of the church. In those chapters of our history, the church was not honoring the reign of Jesus, the king of truth.

In all truth, this (scene) of Jesus standing before Pilate is very depiction of Jesus' reign in truth. He does not amass a great store of wealth, mansions, personal jets, or more at the expense of the people. He does not seek to rise as a voice of power and might...but rather he humbles himself, even to the point of death. Even the truth will need to meet the powers of sin, death, and evil and then after a 3-day struggle for its very existence, truth shall rise, victorious despite the compelling ways of the world to silence truth. Jesus stands before Pilate....for us. Jesus has told us these truths: that love is greater than hate; that less is greater than most; that gentleness is greater than destructive violence; that hope is greater than assumed power.

This is Jesus...facing the political power of the day with its twisted facts, and denial of inconvenient truths. Later that day he would die. Defeated? No. He will simply show this very truth: in a world that loves power, wealth, and might....it will be the humble (truth) that will set us free: love, hope, mercy, and peace. We have met the (truth)...and that truth is Jesus.

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