

the grace that Jesus is the Truth

Let's pray -----

If you are just joining us today, we are in the midst of a three-part study exploring the grace of Jesus' claim in **John 14:6** – that He *is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.*

And this morning we come to the **second** part of this – this reality-defining claim that ***Jesus is the Truth.***

And to begin into this, I want to come back to something I said last Sunday (and I'm sure I've said before) – that ***Christianity, the Christian life not fundamentally a belief system. It is a life. It's a life lived in and with and by and for God – through the grace of Jesus.***

Which ***encompasses*** our beliefs – our thoughts – our minds – our understanding and grasp of reality... ***But is not limited to this.***

No, the **goal** of the Christian life – the **goal** of God's grace in us – in me – in you – is not just ***right thinking*** or ***right belief***, but that we would come ***to live our lives*** – the ***whole*** of our lives – in the reign of Jesus – by the grace of God... ***Alive in His Life and Ways...***

As we named last Sunday – as Jesus tells us in the gospels – the goal is that we would come ***to "Love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind, and to love our***

neighbor as ourselves” – by the work of His grace in us (Matt 22:37; Luke 10:27; Mark 12:30).

That’s what God is after through the gospel.

Not just to get us to heaven – but **to bring us to life again – life with God...** *This is the goal of the gospel. This is the goal of discipleship...*

And this should help us be alert when the gospel and the call of Jesus is presented **solely** as a matter of beliefs...

For, as the apostle **James** states in his short and punchy epistle – **(James 2:19)** “*Even the demons believe, and shudder...*”

Which proves the point well. The call of Jesus is not just for us to believe, **but to follow. To follow Jesus.** To follow Jesus into the very life of God...

However – it needs to be said – that the starting point and foundation of this life **IS** the renewal of our minds – our being formed and transformed by truth.

To draw on our framing text in this study – **John 14:6** – the Way of Jesus – no matter how beautiful and desirable it is – is of no use to us unless we can trust that **Jesus is the Truth** – *that His Voice is the Voice that speaks truth – that his life and death is the revelation of Truth – that He is Himself the Center and Source of Truth.*

Which means that Life with God – discipleship to Jesus – begins and is forever built upon allowing this Truth to shape and define our understanding of reality...

One person who’s helped me greatly in this is a former prof at Regent College – **Gordon Smith** (I’ve quoted him before). He’s now the President of Ambrose University, and a visiting prof at Regent.

So let me quote him here (and pardon the length of the quote, but it’s worth it). He states,

“Christian teachers will have varied emphases as they describe the spiritual life, and they will differ on what matters most or is most crucial in the formation of a Christian spirituality. Some will emphasize the place of prayer as the pivot on which the whole of the Christian life rests. For others, the heart of the matter will be one’s identification with a cause or a people, whether it be a commitment to evangelism and mission for some or identification with the poor... Yet others will speak of our identification with the church and our capacity to be loved and love others within Christian community.

However, though we may debate what is most important in the end, there is no argument on where we need to *begin*: with the renewal of the mind. Nothing is more crucial than that we learn to *think* Christianly. Everything else in the Christian life depends on our capacity to allow truth to engage our minds from top to bottom, inside and out.” (Gordon Smith, On the Way)

Let me read that last line again – “Everything else in the Christian life depends on our capacity to allow **truth** to engage our minds from top to bottom, inside and out.”

Which should not surprise us – those of us who are followers of Jesus – since the first and foundational call of the gospel **is** to this very task – to “**repent**” – which at the most basic level means: *to think*

*again... to think in a new way... to rethink everything in the light of
the gospel...*

Mark 1:14-15 reads,

*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming
the gospel – the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said,
“The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent** and believe the gospel!”*

Repent. Something has happened and is happening.

Something that changes everything – the Kingdom of God is at hand
in Jesus. Repent...

*Let this **new news** of the kingdom of God being at hand in Jesus
– let **this** news change your understanding of reality – of **what is** – so
much so that it leads you into a new way of life...*

*“The time has come. The Kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**
and believe the gospel.”*

And then having announced this – **what does Jesus do?**

He invites a huddle of fishermen to become his disciples – to
learn from him.

Mark 1:17 – “Come, **follow me...**” Come **be my disciple...**

Which, as we’ve talked about before, means **far more** than
simply to learn from Jesus...

But, clearly, **it can mean no less.**

For without this – without **learning from Jesus** – we cannot
and will not be His disciple.

No one who ignores or dismisses the wisdom, the words, and the way of Jesus **is Jesus’ disciple** – no matter how much one believes in Him. *It is logically impossible...*

So, when Jesus calls us to be His disciples, He **is** summoning us to learn from him – to rethink reality in the light of his life and teaching... **to learn from the One who not only knows the truth – but who is the Truth...**

Everything else flows out of this...

Again, **to quote Gordon Smith,**

“At the center of this intentionality [to attend to our minds] comes a resolve that we will seek the truth, love the truth, and live by the truth. A commitment to our minds presupposes this resolve. It presumes that we care about truth, that truth is not something we fear but long for. And we seek the truth because we know that health, strength, and freedom come through the truth...”

And with that, he defines what he means by truth. He says,

“To pursue the truth is to seek to see things as God sees them.”

Which this matters – greatly – because, as Jesus tells us in **John 8:32** – **it is the truth that sets** us free – from the lies and half-truths that take us captive... (Right? That’s the corollary of what Jesus says in John 8).

As followers of Jesus, our calling is to be **lovers** of the truth... **pursuers** of the truth... **champions** of the truth...

Which, I think, many of us would say, **matters deeply to us.**

Whether we are Christians or not, most of us care deeply about truth.

I don't think any of my neighbors want to live a life shaped by lies...

But **explicitly**, as Christians – as a community of Jesus-followers – this is integral to our calling, is it not? To know and love and live in the truth...

Which is not easy, is it – especially in a post-truth world!

That's what many call our day and age... We hear about it endlessly. We encounter and experience it is endlessly.

Interestingly, there was a two-page article in the Globe & Mail last weekend (an excerpt from a new book) – challenging this idea – suggesting (I think, rather convincingly) that “Humans have always lived in a post-truth era.”

Recounting story after story of historic deception and fake news, the author, an Israeli historian, asks rhetorically,

“If this is the era of post-truth, when, exactly, was the halcyon age of truth? In the 1980s? The 1950s? The 1930s? And what triggered our transition to the post-truth era? The internet? Social Media? The rise of Mr. Putin and Donald Trump?

A cursory look at history reveals that propaganda and disinformation are nothing new...

And before you run off to find and read the article, I need to tell you that one of his primary arguments for this is his claim that the

Bible itself is a work of fiction – that all religions are works of fiction – myths made to dupe and control the masses...

Which probably stirs a deep response in many of us.

It does in me.

But the essential argument of the article – that **humans have** ***always*** lived in a post-truth world – is what the Biblical Story itself teaches.

Genesis 3 – the story of the Fall – the rebellion of humanity to seek life apart from God – was instigated by the first account of ***fake news***... The serpent speaking a lie to Eve – that God’s command isn’t worth obeying... That God doesn't know what He’s talking about... That’s God can’t be trusted... That eating the fruit of *the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* won't bring death – just the opposite – she (and Adam) will finally come alive – and be like God...

And they believed the lie – they ate the fruit – and the rest is history... the history of a broken world, seeking life apart from God...

All that to say, fake news, half-truths, lies and deception are not the unique reality of ***our era***. This is the story of humanity from the beginning... This is one of the core reasons why our world is at it is...

This is why we need Jesus who is the Truth so much – and why truth must matter so much to us – as followers of Jesus.

*Because it is the truth that sets us free – from the lies and half-truths
that take us captive...*

But at this point, we need to pause...

Before we all rise up and run out with a fresh resolve and
mandate **to proclaim the truth that we know...** We need to
acknowledge the truth **that we – the Christian community – have
a complicated relationship with the truth.**

Let me explain what I mean – though I’m sure most of know
exactly what I’m talking about... at least at a gut level...

I sat in a meeting earlier this week – with a collection of pastors
and Christian leaders – who care deeply about our world, our city, and
what is going on in it all. And at one point, one person stood, and in
the light of it all, stated unequivocally, “**We are now in a moment
where we are being forced to proclaim the truth.**”

And I’ll be honest – for all the parts of me that wanted to cry out
in agreement “**YES!**”, I was equally pierced and humbled by the
awareness that we – the church – have a complicated relationship with
the truth...

At our best, we, who follow Jesus, only ever see through a
glass darkly. Our knowledge of the truth is **always only in part...**

And, **at our worst**, we who claim to follow Jesus, have at times been the source and champion of many half-truths and flat out lies... all in the guise of guarding the Truth.

This is why many young Christians lose their faith in University – not just because they are confronted by false and faulty lines of thinking, but sometimes because the false and faulty ways they have been taught in the church or in their Christian home are finally confronted and shown for what they are...

I remember walking alongside a young friend – as he journeyed through his University years and realized that science wasn't the enemy of Christian faith... And it rocked him – and left him uncertain about everything else he believed and had been taught – because his faith had been formed and founded in a church that distrusted science and any claim to truth that didn't have a verse attached to it. And so his faith crumbled for a time – because it was built on a faulty foundation... On a house of cards built by the church...

If we're honest, we – the Christian community – have a complicated relationship with the truth.

At our best, we, who follow Jesus, only ever see through a glass darkly. Our knowledge of the truth is ***always only in part...***

And, **at our worst**, we who claim to follow Jesus, have at times been the source and champion of many half-truths and flat out lies...

Can we be honest about this? Will we?

That **we have not** always and **are not** always known as people who know and live and speak the truth...

And if I’m honest, that’s exactly what I experienced in this meeting of pastors and Christian leaders that I attended recently. I found myself confronted with **a mix** of truth and distortion (which is just a soft word for “lies”)...

In the midst of a lot of honesty about things that are going on our world – in our city – the truth about things – there was a lot of misinformation, a lot of spin, a lot of half-truths, a lot of willful or simply blind inattention to other sides of the conversation – other aspects of the truth... All in a passionate desire to guard a Greater Truth, one might claim...

But we need to realize that sometimes we can be so passionately consumed with one truth – with one aspect of the truth – that we actually end up **promoting a lie** through our blind or purposeful neglect of everything else.

And if I can be frank, I think our loud and overwhelming emphasis in the evangelical church on matters of sexuality – and the truth of God’s design for our sexuality – can stumble into this territory too easily and too often.

We can be **so loud and focused** on one truth that our silence on everything else tells its own lie...

Let me give an example... I remember years ago, a young guy in my church had a band – a great band. They were all passionate Christians and they played a lot of gigs – in all sorts of venues (for youth and YoungLife events, community events, clubs). And on their merch table, alongside their albums and t-shirts and buttons – they sold a sticker that said simply, “**God Hates Divorce**”.

Which is true. *God hates divorce.*

But proclaiming this truth – loudly in isolation – can also promote a lie that God hates those who get divorced...

Or that divorce is the only thing that God hates.

Where’s the sticker that also says “*God hates deception... manipulation... infidelity... abuse... and domestic violence...*”?

Where’s the sticker that says, “*God loves the broken*”, “*God saves sinners*” and “*God hears the cry of the oppressed*”?

Which isn’t to say that we should stay silent in the face of the many lies, half-truths and faulty lines of thinking that are shaping our culture and world these days – including in regard to sexuality.

But we need to also be honest – **truthful** – about the fact that we ourselves – well-meaning Christians – have, at times, contributed to the lies and half-truths. Whether implicitly or explicitly...

In regard to sexuality, we have often painted ourselves as the only ones who care about truth... And that **our** relationships, affections and desires are all honoring to God and in keeping with God’s ways, whereas others – those people – are utterly corrupt or perverse...

When the truth is that we are all sexually broken.

That all of us are oriented away from God’s design in some way.

That we are all a mix of truth and distortion.

That we are all in need of God’s radical rescuing grace.

*That we are all **more than** our sexuality.*

*And that **God cares about** more than just our sexuality.*

Which I think most of us know in regard to **ourselves**, but do we acknowledge this when we are looking at or talking about others?

Oh friends, don't miss-hear me. Jesus cares deeply about sexuality (as He does all things). And we must as well.

Truth is, Jesus spoke far more about sexuality than is often given him credit – and much more clearly than many realize.

But He **also** cares about – **God also** cares about – greed, and pride, and arrogance, and our indifference to the suffering of our neighbors (including our LGBTQ neighbors).

He cares about slander and lies – and how we care for the sinner – whether that sinner is us or another...

He cares about the Truth – the whole truth – **and how we live**
and embody and proclaim it...

And I think that’s the reality of this that’s stirred in me so deeply this week – in the face of some of what I see and hear about the need to stand up for the Truth in our day – that being committed to the truth, being lovers of the truth, means being as concerned about **how** we proclaim the Truth as we are about **what** we proclaim as truth.

For, as I’m sure many of us know by experience, it is possible to betray or malign the truth of Christ *by **how** we proclaim it.*

And so as we seek to be people of the truth, we need to pay close attention to **how God proclaims truth.**

Think about it: When God wanted to proclaim the truth in the boldest way possible – **what did He do?**

Did He post it online for all to read?

Did He shout the Sermon on the Mount from the heavens – with a petition for all to sign?

No, **He came in the flesh...**

John 1:14 – “*The Word – the revelation – the proclamation – became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

When God wanted to proclaim the Truth, **He came in the flesh** and made His dwelling among us...

And then He laid down His life for us all.

This is how God proclaims the truth – through the incarnation and the cross...

And on the eve of the cross, Jesus declared to his disciples,
(John 14:6) – “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”

This is how God proclaims truth.

And He calls us to the same. Not through truth-bombs and Pharisaical denunciations, but through embodying the grace and truth of Jesus in a costly, personal way.

In a way that, above all, points ***to Jesus who is the Truth.***

As I’ve said, we have a complicated relationship with the truth – as does the world.

But Jesus doesn’t.

Thank God someone doesn’t!

He sees everything as it is and knows the way it should be – in you, and in me, and in the world.

And in His grace, Jesus – the One who sees all things as they are – who knows all truth – has come and ***calls us*** and all ***to Himself.***

Hear this friends: for yourself and for others – the call of God is not first and foremost to believe or accept or embrace some truth on its own – as though truth on its own is enough. As though any truth on its own can and will set us free.

No. The truth that sets us free is not any concept, or fact, **but a Person – Jesus** – who alone knows all things – and who can, in love and grace, apply the truth in our lives and unshackle us from the lies that destroy us...

And so Jesus – the One who IS the Truth – calls us, “Come”, He says, **follow Me.**”

“**Then...** Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

As we bow to follow Him...

As we bow and celebrate the grace that Jesus is the Truth...

And that my friends, is freedom...

The freedom that we – and the world – need...

→ Invitation to the Table