

WELCOME 29th March 2024 – Good Friday '24 B

John 18:1 – 19:42

What **is** truth? That's what Pilate asked Jesus...It was not an idle one off question. People ask today. Elvis Presley once noted, "Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't going **away**." We remember tonight the One who came to us **"full of grace & truth...the Father's One & only Son."**

This One too was shut out for a time...In fact it was today...clothed in humility, immersed in tragedy, accused of blasphemy, tortured with brutality, suffering in agony, sacrificed for humanity, the Truth proclaimed to the world for all eternity... God loves you to death so you will have life in his Name.

It's this truth we experience again today...the One who fashioned the universe hangs dead at the hands of his rebellious creation...human agony is felt in full in the heavens & the Son suffers as the only solution to & the only freedom from that which would destroy us forever...

Jesus is the sacrifice given in love for you & **all** creation.

"Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?"

You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't going away.

Do please stay with us for morning tea after worship...to find strength & encouragement among those gathered by Christ today...and to reflect on the sacrifice made for you...

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 15...

DEPARTING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we heard Pilate ask: What is truth?
Now we have seen the truth:
Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
betrayed, denied, mocked and beaten,
sacrificed and put to death on a cross, buried in the tomb.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy on us.

We have seen the truth.
But we trust you for more...
show us the truth of your saving power;
show us the truth stronger than the grave;
show us the truth of life everlasting;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, the way, the truth and the life. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY '24 B – THE TRUTH: JESUS IS SACRIFICE

Scottish Pr George MacDonald wrote: “The one principle of hell is: I am my own.” I stumbled across that again a few weeks back & thought... Man he nailed it...that is so 21st century. How many times have we heard it...You’re not the boss of me! Your rules don’t apply to me! You can’t tell me what to do! I’ll determine my own truth! Your truth doesn’t have to be my truth...I’ll decide what’s real for me. The variations are endless even when some version of someone’s “truth” is contrary to all known facts, evidence, science, history, or reason.

“The one principle of hell is: I am my own,” but it isn’t new it’s as old as life on earth. “You won’t die!” the serpent replied...God knows your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, & you will be like God, knowing both good & evil.” – Gen 3:4-5 We are plagued as humans by the perpetual tug on our hearts of “I am my own. I will be god for me.” The result has always been obvious...our early ancestors thrown from the Garden & God’s immediate fellowship subject now to the horrors of death/dissolution...& over the millennia the verdict remains: *Those who live according to their own sinful nature will harvest decay & death from that sinful nature. But those who live according to the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.* – Gal 6:8 “I am my own” always ends at the grave. “I am my own” always yields confusion, corruption, strife & disorder. “I am my own” always yields scarcity, anxiety, despair, frustration, grasping but never having...% hope - peace - joy - contentment - satisfaction - abundance...the glass is always empty.

Thank God the word for tonight is a different word: “*Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?*” The only principle Jesus knows is doing the Father’s will to give his life as a ransom. The only principle Jesus follows is that of the Father who in Jesus Christ comes to reclaim & restore to himself this world & all who dwell in it. The only principle Jesus lives is the single truth spelled out across the ages in the promises of God to his fallen world: **JESUS IS SACRIFICE**

“*Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic & wild. You will crawl on your belly, grovelling in the dust as long as you live. I will cause hostility between you & the woman, & between your offspring & her offspring. He will strike your head, & you will strike his heel.*” – Gen 3:14-15

He was despised & rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him & looked the other way. He was despised, & we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. We thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. - Is 53:3-5

He had done no wrong & had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal...it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him - Is 53:9-10 Jesus is the sacrifice given in love for you & all creation. The One who fashioned the universe hangs dead at the hands of his rebellious creation...human agony is felt in full in the heavens & the Son suffers as the only solution to & the only freedom from that which would destroy us forever.

True to his promise...according to God’s plan of sacrifice set in motion before the first glimmer of light broke the darkness of our pre-formed world...in the greatest war ever waged, the battle for every human heart...God’s strategy never faltered shifted altered or changed. His plan always involved a cross...this day belongs to God, so we might belong to God. The last word belongs to God so that that word would be life...once – for all – forever...abundant free from pain death chaos & emptiness...abundant in joy & hope peace & love. This sacrifice ends all sacrifices. “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” – 2 Cor 5:21

Jesus dies w/ the words...“*It is finished*” — which doesn’t mean “I am finished” but “My work here for you is finished, complete, accomplished, perfected.” It is too easy to say the cross is about the love of God because it is no cheap, sentimental, look-at-how-special-we-are kind of love. It is a sacrificial, costly, deep, rich, wrath-absorbing, burden-bearing, grace-saturated, in-my-place-condemned-he-stood as a gift kind of love. 1 Jn 4:8 says God is love, butverse 10 explains what this love is like “*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us & sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*” – 1 Jn 4:10

It’s weird...Elvis was right...“Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain’t going away.” *Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.* - Heb 12:2

We are the joy for which Christ endured the cross. We are the joy for which Christ gave himself over to the Father’s love for his sin-ruined creation. We are the joy for which Christ is the sacrifice...so that death would not be the final word...but life – forgiveness – hope & joy and the honour of sharing the fellowship of Father & Son by the power of the Spirit would be ours in Christ forever...