

“Considering Truth”
Message by DD Adams
Providence United Methodist Church
YOUTH/CHILDREN SUNDAY
November 22, 2015

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of John, chapter 18, verses 33 through 37. I’ll be reading from Eugene Philips translation, *The Message*. Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said, “Are you the ‘King of the Jews’?” Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you this about me?”

Pilate said, “Do I look like a Jew? Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?” “My kingdom,” said Jesus, “doesn’t consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But I’m not that kind of king, not the world’s kind of king.” Then Pilate said, ‘So, are you a king or not?’

Jesus answered, “You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. God we pray your blessing on the reading, hearing, understanding, and doing of your word. Amen.

Today we celebrate Christ the King Sunday; it’s like a hinge that turns and moves us into Advent on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time. In this passage, we see Pilate, Roman governor of Judaea. Jesus is taken to his palace early in the morning after just standing before Caiaphas the High Priest. When Pilate sees Jesus, he walks out of the praetorium in Jerusalem to speak with the religious authorities and get the scoop. Jesus is taken inside, but the religious leaders stay outside the

building—for fear of ritually defiling themselves the day before the Passover and displeasing God.

The irony of it all is pitiful. The religious authorities have brought the Son of God, the King of the Jews, the Messiah to Pilate. They want to put him to death. During Pilate’s conference with the Jewish leaders, Pilate says, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your Law.” But they replied, “The Law doesn’t allow us to kill anyone.”—especially by crucifixion.

So Pilate goes back in his palace and interrogates Jesus with the intent of pleasing the religious leaders and getting on their side. It’s a highly charged political situation. Fact is, people can be opportunists, and they wrestle with getting on the side of truth and staying there. They sit on the fence and have trouble committing to the truth. They can seek to take advantage of a situation that may profit them or give them a political edge.

Teens and adults find themselves in this position before they make up their minds which side to take. They like what the world has to offer, but they can’t quite commit to truth. Maybe they feel it’s not profitable to commit to truth. Their friends influence them, and they feel cornered. Everyone wants to be accepted, but to stand for truth and allow truth to become your reality and part of you takes courage.

Jesus said his kingdom “doesn’t consist of what you see around you he said if it did, his followers would be fighting. He said he’s “. . . not that kind of king—he’s not the world’s kind of king.” To sit on the fence and be uncommitted to truth will cause a constant turmoil if you’ve been raised differently. Your friends will continue to convince you otherwise, and you’ll be pulled in two conflicting directions.

Sitting on the fence, not committed to truth, you’ll be confronted with critical decisions teens—especially once you leave home. You’ll have the instinct

to go toward truth, who is Christ, but you'll be pressured by the circumstances. You'll move reluctantly away from truth and go in the opposite direction.

We can see Pilate confronted with this challenge. He says to Jesus, "Do I look like a Jew? Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?" Pilate is taking the side of the Jews. He's pressured and feels cornered. Pilate may think it's pragmatic, but he's deceived. He has a false impression of what power is because he will not and cannot see truth who is Jesus. He's deluded and swayed and thinks he can maintain his relations with the religious authorities by siding with them. Fact is, power isn't retained by siding with liars. At least not forever. True power is in truth revealed in Christ.

Before too long we see Pilate giving his power over to the Jews. He's robbed of the very thing he wants to retain. He knows he has power to release or power to crucify. How ironic. Because he refused to see the reality of truth in Jesus he lost the very thing he was trying to keep.

And so it is with the decisions and inclinations we have sometimes. We may think it's pragmatic to sit on the fence and make no commitment to truth. We figure it's the best of both worlds. Why should we allow ourselves to be convinced and follow Christ whole-heartedly? After all, our teen friends and the social circles we're in persuades us otherwise. We're allowing them to dictate what we believe.

Adults find themselves in similar situations. We don't want to let go of certain things—certain weaknesses. We allow ourselves to be taken captive, and we live in a world of illusion. We choose to sit on that fence and not commit to the real substance of reality which is Christ. You think back in retrospect, what kind of a legacy will you leave? Pilate left a legacy of disgrace and shame. Christ's legacy lives on and saves lives every day

Have you wondered about the truth? What's the real truth in life? Most kids begin to tell lies around the age of two. By the time they're teens they begin

exercising their independence, but at some point, especially after they move away from home, they begin to question truth. Jesus said, “I’m the truth.” How can someone be truth? How can they embody truth? Jesus is saying he’s more than his words.

Our aim as disciples’ of Christ is to become more and more like Jesus. Jesus is truth, and we strive to live out the reality of truth. We can say the truth and know the truth of God’s word, but until we cling consistently to truth, especially when no one is looking, we’re not allowing truth to liberate us. What are we liberating ourselves from?—ourselves. And now you ask, what do you mean preacher?

Truth that liberates us is this. We live out the reality and choose truth, and we take part in it. It’s when truth becomes who we are, we know it, and we act on it by being a part of it. The part of us that wants to cling to the world, the one who sits on the fence, well—that same person isn’t around anymore. Our true self has become the reality of living out truth.

This may sound silly, but when I was 18 I began meditating on truth. I wanted to know. I was sick and tired of what the world offered. I was ready and serious about questioning truth and what that meant. When I seriously asked the question, it was about 4 years later, and I found my answer. I was thoroughly and completely convinced that truth was Christ, and I became a new creation in Christ.

Teens, at some point and probably sooner than you think, you’ll be leaving home and confronted with a lot of choices. Will you be influenced in a direction you may regret later? Will you choose the direction of truth and participate in the reality of it? Truth is always going to be threatening to us. We’re away from home, and we feel out of place. We want to fit in.

Ultimately, the truth that sets us free and liberates is going to be the love of God. When we’re not choosing God’s love we may be choosing selfishness. We

hurt ourselves, and we hurt others. Jesus said that “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Bottom line, if truth isn’t joined to love it’s not truth.

Jesus said, “Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.” Amen.