

“A Word of Truth” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Easter 7 May 12, 2024

- I. **John 17:17** – “Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth.”
- II. **The truth has broken down in society today.**
 - a. Maybe you’ve heard of something called a moral absolute.
 - i. It’s a belief that some actions are inherently right or wrong.
 - ii. In the past, Americans generally viewed God as the basis of truth and what was moral and right... but not so much anymore.
 - iii. A recent study shows that most Americans do not believe in any absolute or firm boundaries when it comes to morality.
 1. 58% of adults surveyed believed that moral truth is up to the individual to decide (kind of like saying, “it’s my truth, and you have your truth, but nobody has the same truth.”)
 - b. Geonga Barna, who runs many surveys, found that fewer adults believe in absolute moral truth that is rooted in the Word of God.
 - i. Here’s the sad part, it really didn’t seem to matter whether people were churched or unchurchd!
 - ii. It didn’t matter what their politics were, their age, or even if they identify God as the source of truth... a majority rejected any absolute standard of morality in American culture.
 - iii. Even 46% of the Christians who claim that the Bible is the true, reliable Word of God rejected absolute moral truth... in other words, Christians who hold a high view of the Bible often do not see it as the absolute truth.
 - c. In younger Americans, the secular pull was even stronger, in those under age 30 were much less likely to say God is the basis of truth (only 31%) and 60% would say that moral standards are decided by the individual.
 - i. Jeff Meyers is an author who wrote a book about these findings called, *Truth Changes Everything*, and he writes, “We live in a world where we cannot go a single day without hearing that truths are based on how we see things rather than on what exists to be seen. [For so many people]...truth is not ‘out there’ to be found; it is ‘in here’ to be narrated.”¹
 - ii. In other words, let me tell you or narrate my truth to you.
 1. When people say that they have the truth in whatever they believe is true... is that truth?
- III. **Truth can only be considered absolute when it is from God.**
 - a. If everyone has their own truth, then there is no absolute truth... but God tells us – Jesus tells us that the Word is truth.
 - i. In verse 17, the Greek word for truth is not an adjective... like “Your Word is true...” but rather, it is a noun... “Your Word IS truth.”

1. The point is that God's Word is the essence of truth... Just as Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life... (John 14:6)
 2. As if God's Word and truth are interchangeable... and by which He makes us holy or sanctifies us.
- b. We hold a high view of Scripture in our church and our church body, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
- i. This means that we see God's Word as the only source and norm for faith and life in the Church...
 - ii. This means that we believe God worked through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring us what we have in our Bibles today – just listen to 2 Peter 1:
 1. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:19-21)
 - a. In this section of Scripture, Peter is saying that human authors did not just write down their own truth... they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us the very Word from God Himself.
 - b. Just as Moses says about the Ten Commandments, "And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God." (Deuteronomy 9:10)
 - c. And again God tells Moses, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (Deuteronomy 18:18)
 - i. No doubt, God was speaking about the raising up of Jesus – but this is another example of God getting His truth into our hearts and minds.
- c. We are not the author of truth... God's Word... and we do not have the privilege of telling God He can have His truth and we will have our own.
- d. Sadly, not only the world, but the people who claim to be followers of Christ – Christians – do not believe what the Bible tells them about God's will.
- e. Certainly, those who don't believe in Jesus call the Scriptures outdated and misogynistic (meaning prejudiced against women) and will mock people who believe it to be the truth.
- f. However, it's also people in our churches who say they believe in Jesus as their Savior, but don't agree with the Bible in many places.

- i. Or, maybe they believe the Bible is telling them to do or not do certain things but are unwilling to make the change and let truth prevail and sanctify their lives.
- g. I know we all may have questions about certain parts of Scripture – but if we love God, we allow Scripture to guide and lead us rather than our own reason and will.
 - i. So when God says don't live together outside of marriage – or have any sexual intimacy outside of marriage – we take that at face value.
 - ii. When God says that marriage is for a man and a woman... we take that as His will for us.
 - iii. When God says we should not take innocent life – through things like abortion or euthanasia, we try to understand the value He places on life rather than our understanding.
 - iv. When God tells us that we are to love all people – He means everyone – not just the ones we think are worthy of it.
 - v. When God calls us to read His Word and know Him, we don't pretend like it's too hard for us to understand – and we figure out ways to get the Word into our daily lives – so it can do its work of making us holy.

IV. **Jesus is praying to His Father about us, because He loves us that much.**

- a. At the beginning of His prayer, Jesus says, “³ And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (17:3)
 - i. Nothing is more important than to know the Father and how to get to the Father, through His only Son, Jesus.
 - ii. We cannot know the truth without Jesus, because He is the Truth (John 14:6) and it is by His gift of salvation – that He would die on the cross to take away our guilt, that by His death and resurrection we receive forgiveness, life and salvation – by this gift... we can be made holy or sanctified in the Word.
 - iii. Knowing the Father is believing in Jesus His Son, and believing in Jesus as the Truth is believing the Word.
 - iv. All of these things tie together because God is not against Himself, and He wants us to have a sure anchor in which to hold us steady.
- b. Jesus even prays to the Father, “¹⁴ I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (vs 14)
 - i. We are not of this world as we believe in Jesus Christ – and the world will hate us, and mock us, and ridicule our faith and our trust in the truth.
 - ii. Yet God says time and time again, listen to Me... read My Word and you will have strength for the journey and the struggles ahead.
 - iii. Don't trust in your own truth... Trust in God and the truth alone.

- c. And finally as Jesus tells us in John 8:31-32, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Amen.

¹ Source: Adapted from Arizona Christian University, “American Worldview Inventory 2020 – At a Glance Release #5,” (5-19-20); Jeff Meyers, Truth Changes Everything, (Baker Books, 2021), pp. 9-10