

“Thanksgiving Truth Telling”

John 18:28-38a

Sermon, 11/25/2018

We know the Bible is clear in its affirmation that ***the truth will set us free***. The problem is deciding what is true and what is not true. Please do mistake this as a political statement. It is not. It is a human question and predicament. With so many would-be truths floating around us, it is a question of choosing one competing claim from among many. We are exposed to so many possibilities. Just think of the products that tell us we can look and feel years younger than we are. Has anyone here found that claim to be true? Has anyone here found that worldly success is enough to define us? How about the movies and television, which often suggest that love relationships just happen, or that physical intimacy is of ultimate importance? Do they speak a valid truth. What about some television preachers who tell, imply, or tell us outright, that God wants us to be materially successful? We hear so many voices politically, religiously, and by family and friends, and culture. The signals of truth and falseness are often mixed.

Strangely enough, these thoughts came during our season of Thanksgiving, as I again realized how many of my reasons for being grateful are portions of different truths.

So my question is that of Pilate, who had the same confusion when he asked, ***What is truth?*** It is a question that seemingly has no answer.

Everyday, or so it seems, either Barbara or I knock down spider webs on our front steps. Spiders seem to love the corners of the roof over our entrance way. Why they do so is a mystery to me. Don't they know the webs will be quickly swept away? Don't they get the message? Apparently not!

***The itty bitsy spider climbed up a waterspout.
Down came the rain and washed the spider out.
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.
And the itty bitsy spider climbed up the spout again.***

Does the spider ever think there is no point in climbing up the spout? The sun will not last, the rain will inevitably fall. Is there ever a thought that life is an endless round, a case of one step forward and two steps back?

Pay the bills and more arrive. Make plans and have them upended by changing circumstances. Revel in the sun only to have a rainy day. The

poor spider is seemingly trapped with a cynical cycle. But the spider is not alone. Others voices tell us that.

I don't know why I bother being nice, it doesn't get me anywhere.

There is no sense worrying about what I eat or taking care of myself, I will probably get sick anyway.

Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Cynical? Yes! But we experience, or will, having to start all over again. Life brings both success and failure. We all face the dilemma of the spider. Is the truth the reality of the itsy bitsy spider? Is it the sametruth of another song children all over the world have heard?

***Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top,
when the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
down will come cradle, baby and all.***

The seemingly soothing nature of these verses tell a truth we would rather bypass. Terrible things happen in life. Loved ones get sick and die. Disappointment is an ever present reality. Our plans do not always process as hoped. So we ask: Is this the ultimate truth?

Recall the historical facts that led to America's first Thanksgiving. One hundred and two ill-prepared settlers landed at Plymouth Rock and proceeded to spend a grueling first year in a strange new land. Crops failed. Disease and malnutrition took lives from them. Some of them fell, as it were. The bough on which they rested was not as safe as they had hoped. Some of them must have wondered about the reality and wisdom of their decision to sail an ocean in search of a new life.

What is truth? These realities? Or something else? Is our faith in a loving presence we call God, God who we see in Jesus, the truth? Many have claimed it as our own. For us, the hymn writer got it correctly.

***O joy that seeketh me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain,
that morn shall tearless be.***

Life is more than futility. It offers joy when we know that “love that will not let me go,” when we remember who we are and to whom we belong.

Pilate could not have known the aftermath of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion when he raised the question: ***What is truth?*** For those of us who know the ending, the message of an eternal loving spirit surrounding us, no longer ask the question. ***What is truth?*** I know where I find the answer.

Happier than today, and every day.