

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 26, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 3, 8:3, 294, 355, 15.

Lessons: Genesis 3:1-7, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Passion History part 5.

Sermon Text: John 18:36-38.

. Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

NOTE: The Passion History is found on the LCCF website on the WEEKLY SERMON page.  
<http://www.lutheranlccf.org/MinistrybyMail.html>

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The first lies recorded in the Bible are the reason sin came into the world. In addition to putting doubt into Eve's mind, Satan told a half-truth which is really a lie. If you're not telling 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', words which you may have heard in an old TV or movie courtroom drama, you are really lying.

Satan, the devil, told this lie. We read in Genesis that *"He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"* Genesis 3:1-5 (NIV) Eve already knew good; she knew nothing of evil.

The opposite of truth is lies and lying. The devil is a liar and the father of lies. He wants us in his power so that he won't be destroyed alone in eternity. He wants us to be destroyed along with him and all the evil angels who have followed him. But he doesn't present it as destruction. He lies and presents it as life, as light, as pleasant, as fun, as something that everyone else is enjoying, as something that we will miss out on if we don't go along. Satan can't tell truth 'to save his life' – that is, if he could save his life.

In Genesis chapter 3 Satan was all alone in lying to Eve. But today, Satan has seven billion people – all the people in the world – to help him tell lies. And you can find lies almost everywhere. There is only one place where you find no lies and only find truth and we are going to talk about that as we look at Pilate's question to Jesus:

**WHAT IS TRUTH?**

- 1. What was the occasion for Pilate's question?**
- 2. Pilate's question is "What is truth?"**
- 3. God's Word is truth.**

In some fields of endeavor, it seems that people are always searching for truth and not really finding any truth. Sometimes, in earthly matters, truth is hard to determine. Whom can you trust? Whom are you listening to? What are you reading? What and who are you looking at? We hear and read claims of "alternate truth", "alternate facts" and "the real story" or "the real truth".

When Pilate heard Jesus say that he *"came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"* he asked *"What is truth?"* (Repeat that question 3 times, emphasizing each word.) What was his tone of voice; how did he say that? We don't really know.

Jesus is really extending an invitation to Pontius Pilate to believe. This is Pilate's time of grace but the Bible gives us no clue that Pilate believed in God's grace.

Why did this question come up? Pilate had asked Jesus if he was king of the Jews. Jesus answered honestly **“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”** **‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’** **‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, ‘I find no basis for a charge against him.’**” Pilate obviously found nothing deceitful in Jesus.

Jesus was on trial for his life. The results of this trial for his life meant life or death – eternal life or eternal death and damnation for you and for all mankind.

Jesus, because he is true God, and therefore omniscient, could have found a way to be declared ‘not guilty’ and ‘innocent’ and be set free from all accusations against him. But he didn’t and because he didn’t, the eternal verdict from God his heavenly Father is ‘not guilty’, and ‘innocent’ for all mankind.

The truth is – and there’s the word truth again – that Jesus himself was not guilty. But you know that he accepted the punishment as if he were completely, totally guilty of everything. That’s truth. That’s fact and that truth and that fact is recorded for you – and for all mankind – in this book. (Pick up your Bible and set it down again.)

Jesus said **“You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”** If you are on the side of truth, you listen to Jesus. Earlier, **“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”** John 8:31-32 (NIV) When you are Jesus’ disciples, you listen to the truth and will know the truth. That truth sets you free from hell, from eternal death and damnation.

When Pilate hears the word truth’ he asks his famous – maybe infamous is a better word – his infamous question **“What is truth?”** Was Pilate asking sarcastically? Was Pilate mocking the Jews? Or was he really looking to find some truth for his own life and existence? We don’t know what he was actually thinking. It seems that this was a rhetorical question, and he wasn’t really looking for an answer.

But his question reminds us that Jesus is **“the way and the truth and the life.”** John 14:6 (NIV)

Pilate rejected the truth. He does not ask to hear about the truth that Jesus is teaching, truth that Jesus came to earth to bring to mankind. In fact, Jesus himself, the very Word of God, caused truth to be written so that all mankind may hear it and read it. Pilate asks **“What is truth?”** Pilate has no real interest in Jesus’ truth. Here was a man, a civil governor who no doubt had seen many people come to him with lies, falsehoods, half-truths and all the other words people use for ‘lies’. In the case of Jesus he found the same kind of false accusations. He had heard his share of lies masquerading as truth.

But Pilate’s question is a question that is still being asked today.

**“What is truth?”** The truth is not some current spiritual idea from the world, or some human philosophy which may seem very believable to men.

We could find all sorts of human ideas about the answer to the question **“What is truth?”** Are you talking about health? About what is happening in the world? About what is the best way to do your job? About what is the best finish for a piece of wood or a project? About what is the best motor vehicle? About what is the best place to live? About what foods and beverages are best for you? About what is the best way to spend your money?

Yes, **“What is truth?”** When you consider all the words and their synonyms for lies that are used repeatedly in the world, it could be almost impossible to determine **“What is truth?”**

But you are here today looking for some kind of answer to that question for your life. You came to this worship service because you are looking for some truth for your life. And you have found it here – (Hold up Bible again.). Truth is in this book. In fact, this book is truth, from beginning to end. In his prayer on the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed as our great high priest to his heavenly father: **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. .... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”** John 17:17,19 (KJV)

The Bible doesn’t just “contain” truth, along with other ideas. You don’t have to sort through it to find grains of truth, like you’d have to pick through a lot of gravel or sand to find a few grains of gold if you were mining for gold.

It doesn't just 'contain' truth along with lots of fables, and myths and made-up stories to let you search through lots of words to find a little bit of truth. God's Word, the Bible is truth from beginning to end.

But many people, even many ministers and churches don't think so. They feel and think and say and write that much of what you can read in this book. (Hold the Bible up again) has to be weighed and measured against the wisdom, the studies, the conclusions and attitudes of men, yes, even the "science" of men. The Bible itself tells us that it itself is ***"the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** 2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NIV) And if you don't want to accept what the Bible says about itself, think of the power Scripture has in your heart and your life.

We use the term "verbal inspiration" to mean that each word God the Holy Spirit caused the writers of the Bible to write or dictate to scribes was inspired by God, that is, the very words were given to them by God. The Apostle Peter tells us that ***"prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*** 2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV)

Now most of you are familiar with the so-called "scientific method", whether from a 'science fair project' or some school science class as a method to try to determine ***"What is truth?"*** But how much of that human method can really be used to verify what men say against the Bible? Five steps of the "scientific method" are 1. Make an observation. 2. Ask a question. 3. Form a hypothesis, or testable explanation. 4. Make a prediction based on the hypothesis and 5. Test the prediction.

OK, how you would prove, using this human method, that the Bible is true or false? For example, how could you prove that God didn't create all things in six 24-hour days but instead it all evolved slowly over – how many years? Doesn't the latest wisdom of men say 13 billion years? Compare that to a long life span of 100 years! How could you possibly test such a hypothesis or theory?

When it comes to explaining all the things we are supposedly learning about our universe I personally can't explain everything – at least not yet now. I will have to wait until I'm in heaven and I can ask Jesus personally face-to-face about all the things I wanted to know when I was on earth.

My calling as a minister of the Gospel is to preach truth, to preach and proclaim and teach what God says, and not just my opinions, as so many do from the pulpits in their churches.

Not only is the Bible God's truth, just as Jesus said, ***"Thy word is truth."*** But Jesus said more: ***"I am the way and the truth and the life."*** John 14:6 (NIV) Wait! Is the Bible truth or is Jesus truth? Well, the honest, truthful answer is both. Remember that at creation, God used his Word to create things, to make them out of nothing.

Well, he also recorded these words: ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men."*** John 1:1-4 (NIV) And then ten verses later we read: ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** John 1:14 (NIV) Jesus Christ is The Word of God!

Truth of the Bible includes two main teachings: Law and Gospel. The Law shows our sinfulness and the Gospel shows our Savior – Jesus Christ who came and suffered and died so that you, simply by believing it, may inherit eternal life.

So what are you going to do with that Book of truth?

God's Word is all the truth we need. We often think we want more, but aren't Satan's lies often behind our thirst and quest for knowledge? Remember Eve's curiosity? Didn't she want to be 'like God' and know even more than she did?

Yes, earthly education has its place, so that I can learn to make a living and provide for my family.

But let your study of truth, real truth, genuine truth from the Word of God, the Bible, be the most important part of your continuing education! Amen.