



The Reign of Christ

Sunday
November 24th, 2024

Pilgrimage towards Heaven

Pigs doth fly



St Peter's by the Lake
PAYNESVILLE
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



Breaking Open the Word

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INTRODUCTION

READINGS

Daniel 7.9-10, 13, 14

Psalm 93

Revelation 1.4b-8

John 18.33-37

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

Introduction

Sermon

Discussion Questions

Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

In this sermon, there are reflections on the themes of truth and authority during a pivotal moment in scripture where Pilate questions Jesus.

A creative analogy is used of young oysters dressing up and seeking to impress, prompting questions about identity and authority.

It strongly emphasises the critical moment Pilate queries Jesus about his kingship, revealing a tension between earthly power and divine truth. He highlights that while Pilate represents worldly authority, Jesus speaks of a truth that transcends worldly norms and is rooted in the sacred.

The sermon underscores the importance of recognising different perceptions of truth, illustrating that Jesus embodies the ultimate

truth that can liberate and offer eternal life.

As the sermon progresses, it shifts to the significance of the upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope, urging the congregation to approach the Advent season with a sense of preparedness for the transformative journey ahead. Capturing the essence of this season it is a time for spiritual reflection, inviting everyone to stir their hearts and embrace the discomfort that often accompanies the pursuit of truth.

In concluding the message, there is a call for an openness to the reign of God, reminding the congregation that true liberation lies in understanding life through God's perspective and the legacy of sacrifice and hope that Jesus offers.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord,
the wills of thy faithful people:
that they,
plenteously bringing forth
the fruit of good works,
may of thee be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer 🙏

- Ask for prayer requests from your community. Pray for understanding and application of the sermon in our daily lives.
- Ask God to help us recognise our lives' truth and be open to his leading throughout the week.
- Seek guidance in becoming a legacy of love and service to others, just as Jesus exemplified.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

A dozen young oysters, keen
to follow and be part of
something bigger, dress
themselves up. They looked
so wonderful in their new suits
and were eager to please;
they even polished their
shoes. There is nothing better
than wearing your Sunday
best to make an impression.
But to whom were they trying
to impress? And since when
do oysters have feet?

Of all the questions that could
be asked, one is not in the
reading of today's Gospel
portion. It is the elephant in
the room, or, more to the
point, could it be the Walrus in
a conversation with a
carpenter?

All powerful and arbiter of life
and death itself within the
context of law, Pilate stood
and questioned the young
man, the son of a carpenter,
from the hick town Nazareth.
What have you done, Pilate
inquires. They think you are a
king and need to die, yet, in

their need to be all undefiled,
unsullied, they send me to you
to decide what to do. Who are
you? Are you a king?

"The time has come
the walrus said
to speak of many things,
shoes and ships and
sealing wax,
of cabbages and kings,
and why the sea is boiling,
and whether pigs have
wings."

Yet, in that strange
conversation now taking
place, only the subject that
was up for discussion was
that of kings. Shoes on
oysters, seals on decrees, the
delicacy of cabbages had
taken flight over the boiling
sea, carried aloft when the
pigs, desirous of a different
way of life, spread their wings
and fled.

Are you the King of the Jews?
Demanded Pilate. This is an
excellent question to ask of
the young carpenter's son.

Outside, the High Priest's
followers were setting up this
debate so that Jesus would
die at the hands of Rome,
vicariously acting on their
behalf. They would not put
Jesus to death; Rome would.
And this happened on the
night when all godly men
would remember that the
firstborn sons of Egyptians
would die as the angel of God
passed over the land. The
firstborn needed to die, for by
their death, an end to slavery
and the promise of land
forever was about to happen.
Become truth.

As in any good courtroom
drama, a question is met with
another. "Do you say this
yourself, or did another
authority give you words?"
Indeed, by whose authority do
you speak? Pilate pleads what
the citizens of the United
States would call "the fifth." I
am not a Jew; why would I
understand their ways? My
authority was given to me by
the Emperor. If you were the
King of the Jews, where does
your authority come from?

"Not from them, not from you,
but from a different place, not

of this world." "You say that I
am a king. For this, I was born
and came into the world to
testify to the truth. Everyone
who belongs to the truth
listens to my voice." And so
ends Jesus' defence. And yet,
of all the many things that
could be said, one question
today is left out of this
emerging drama. And it took
great strength not to include it
as I read the gospel.

"And what is truth?"

Truth is like beauty. It is in the
eye of the beholder. My truth
may be familiar with your
truth. It liberates and
empowers. It condemns. It is
the difference between life
and death itself. And it is
proven not from absolute but
the view from where it is seen.
For Jesus, that authority was
not of this world but of the
realm of the divine. For Pilate,
it was measured against what
laws were in place according
to who happened to be
emperor. Finding that there is
nothing more to see here,
Pilate ponders that authority.
"What is truth?" In Jesus, he
finds no guilt but must keep
the peace. It was the eve of a

major festival, and the city was entirely of pilgrims. The truth for Pilate is that he had to be seen as worthy of the trust of Rome.

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” said Jesus. That truth is defined not in terms of our earthly understanding but in allowing ourselves to be subject to a view of the world created and constantly recreated in God. It is that image we all have in our life and being. In truth, it is God that will ultimately liberate us. And once the bonds of strings and sealing wax of human tasking are loosed, the truth through Jesus will lead us onto life and life everlasting.

For Jesus is the beginning and the end, and all things are one with him. This kingdom is not of this world; it is a reign with eternal and justified wholeness. The most profound question not answered is about to be sacrificed in the name of keeping order and rule in a chaotic and defiant world.

In his 1927 “Secret Papers”, Aldous Huxley wrote, “Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.” The fact is that Jesus is from God, and the reign

of God is heard by those who believe and listen. Kalu Ndukwe Kalu, a Nigerian-born US political scientist based in Finland, wrote, “The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain your legacy.” What Jesus is doing for others in giving his life for us, a passover from the life of sin and bondage, is that legacy. And it is in the truth of this, we engage and believe, suspending our disbelief and engaging in reality, and not worrying about whether or not our needs are nothing more than a big porky seeking clearance to take off into a world of make-believe or fantasy.

Truth has a habit of being unsettling. Shortly, we begin the journey through the Jubilee Year of Hope. The year of Jubilee, a long and honourable tradition that has been exploited for some for temporal gain, is one we are asked to make, passing over a threshold that will set us free. Various acts of symbolism will be used, the most striking being the opening of a door in the Lateran Basilica in Rome. It is the pilgrimage leading to a new beginning.

In 2000, on the banks of the Huon River, as an ecumenical journey, the pilgrims of Cygnet passed through a gate placed on the very site where the first Catholic Mass was to be offered in Palawan land. As a community, we linked ourselves with others seeking to make a pilgrimage to understand a new life in the truth that is our way and life in Jesus. Symbols and actions are essential to reinforce what we hold in our hearts.

Advent is a time of preparation; honestly, it begins here now as we join in that moment when we know why Jesus had to die. We will be unsettled by stories of young and older women suddenly pregnant, seeking to bring peace to a world of haste and longing. We will journey or be on pilgrimage towards Christmas, often arriving exhausted, as we marvel at the very means of how God entered into our humanity. And then, we relax, only to be disturbed again later in the new year as we remember the Passover.

Today’s service will end with the much-loved and often quoted collect that begins, “Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord.” Yes, it was the time of year when the puddings were to be made in readiness for Christmas, but the little inconvenient truth is that we are also being reminded to stir up or unsettle our comfortable ways and make room for the reign of God to be in our hearts, now and always.

Truth will always be our liberation, and it is known only when perceived through God’s eyes. We know this because one man’s obedience gives us hope for eternal life.

Indeed, unsettle us, Lord Jesus. Stir up our hearts and allow ourselves to grasp the truth that pigs can fly and oysters often wear shiny shoes.

Discussion Questions

What does the phrase 'What is truth?' reveal about Pilate's understanding of authority and morality?

- The sermon discusses Pilate questioning Jesus and his struggle with understanding truth in the context of his authority.
- How do you think our society defines truth today, and how does that affect our decisions and beliefs?

Why do you think the pastor chose to include the image of oysters dressing up in suits to illustrate a more profound point about appearances?

- The sermon uses the image of oysters polishing their shoes to highlight the absurdity of trying to impress others when we are not true to ourselves.
- In what ways do you feel pressure to put on a facade or change who you are to impress others?

In the sermon context, how does Jesus' statement 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' challenge our understanding of truth?

- The sermon references Jesus defining truth as something rooted in divine authority rather than human understanding.
- Could you reflect on a time when you faced a difficult decision? How did your understanding of truth influence your choice?

What does it mean by stating that truth can be unsettling, and why is that significant in our spiritual journeys?

- The sermon discusses how truth can disrupt our comfort zones and encourage personal growth and a deeper relationship with God.
- Can you identify an area where the truth might be uncomfortable but necessary for your growth?

How does the concept of legacy, as mentioned in the sermon with the quote from Kalu about doing for others, shape our understanding of our actions?

- The sermon connects Jesus' sacrifice for others to leaving a meaningful legacy rather than just focusing on oneself.
- What legacy do you hope to leave behind, and how can your actions today contribute to that legacy?

This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. We will explore themes of hope, unity, and God's eternal love as we remember those who have gone before us and look forward to the promise of resurrection in Christ.



Day 1 John 18:37

The conversation between Jesus and Pilate reveals the underlying theme of authority and the essence of truth. As Pilate questions Jesus, it becomes clear that his understanding of kingship is tied to worldly power and political structures. In contrast, Jesus presents a different kind of kingship that transcends earthly authority. This reminds us that authority comes from our connection to the divine, not from position or power.

As we reflect on Pilate's inquiry, "What is truth?" we are invited to examine our lives. Are we seeking truth in our daily interactions, or do the world's definitions blind us? Jesus' assertion that he is the truth challenges us to let go of earthly measures and embrace a life guided by divine wisdom and understanding.

- What does authority mean to you in your daily life?
- How do you seek truth amid conflicting messages?
- How can you align your life more closely with the truth of Jesus?
- Pray for clarity in understanding God's truth in your life.
- Please ask for the courage to stand firm in your beliefs, regardless of external pressures.
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Day 2 John 18:36

When Jesus explains that his kingdom is not of this world, he invites us to reconsider the value systems we navigate daily. The world often prioritises wealth, status, and power, but Jesus encourages us to focus on love, grace, and the eternal. This kingdom offers hope and liberation, contrasting with the chaos and uncertainty we experience.

This realisation prompts us to evaluate where we place our trust. Are we investing in earthly things that fade away or nurturing our spiritual connection that leads to everlasting life? The road to understanding Jesus' kingdom is paved with humility and a willingness to listen to His voice, guiding us to the truth that sets us free.

- What does the notion of 'kingdom' mean to you personally? In which areas of your life do you struggle to align with the values of Jesus' kingdom?
- How can you contribute to bringing God's kingdom to those around you?
- I'd like you to reflect on the areas where you seek validation from the world.
- Pray for a heart that desires the things of God's kingdom above all else.

Day 3 John 18:38

The weight of the question, "What is truth?" resonates deeply in our lives today. We often grapple with what constitutes true wisdom in a culture filled with relativism and contrasting narratives. Jesus exemplifies that truth is not merely an abstract concept but embodied in His life and teachings. As we seek to understand and experience this truth, we are encouraged to reflect on the implications of living truthfully in our contexts.

Embracing truth requires us to confront uncomfortable realities in our hearts. It calls us to authenticity, not only in our relationship with God but also with those around us. Jesus' call to follow him is a call to a life marked by love, honesty, and integrity—an invitation we can accept as we journey forth.

- What does it mean for you to live a life defined by truth?
- How can you create spaces where truth can be shared within your community?
- In what ways have you experienced the challenge of living out your truth?
- Ask God to show you areas where you may be avoiding the truth.
- Pray for the strength to embrace authenticity and vulnerability with others.

Day 4 John 14:6

In declaring Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus defines the very essence of our faith. This declaration invites us into a transformative relationship, guiding us through life's complexities. As we navigate our paths, we can rest assured that leaning on Jesus as our guide leads us to true freedom and fulfilment. In a world filled with distractions and false securities, we must continually reassess where we find our source of truth and sustenance. Focusing on Christ can provide clarity and purpose, empowering us to live compassionately and intentionally. Jesus's life is rich and meaningful, and we should aspire to embrace it daily.

- What choices do you make that reflect your reliance on Jesus as the Way?
- How can you invite others to experience the life of truth that Jesus offers?
- What distractions do you need to set aside to focus more on Jesus?
- Spend time in prayer, affirming Jesus as the guide of your life.
- Reflect on the meaning of eternal life and how it impacts present living.

Day 5 Isaiah 61:1-3

The theme of liberation permeates Jesus' message, as he offers hope for the oppressed and binds up the brokenhearted. Reflecting on this passage encourages us to internalise the transformative power of truth. Just as Jesus brought freedom, so too can our lives embody this truth and actively work towards justice and mercy in our communities.

We must carry the lessons learned into our daily lives as we complete this devotional journey. Each of us is called to be a reflection of God's truth, embodying love and hope in our interactions. Our commitment to living truthfully has the potential to impact those around us, leading to profound change as we step forward into a world yearning for authenticity.

- In what practical ways can you serve as a vessel of hope and truth?
- How can you encourage others in your community to embrace their truth?
- What actions can you take to work for justice in your surroundings actively?
- Pray for opportunities to spread love and truth in your interactions.
- Ask God to help you recognise how you can be a source of healing and restoration.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark (St Paul's Press)

The Worship Cloud: articles by N.T. Wright and Jane Williams

Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

John for Everyone Part 2 – by Tom Wright

http://www.desperatepreacher.com/sermonbuilder/b_pool/alpha_and_the_omega.htm

Sermon Seeds: Testify to the Truth

<https://www.ucc.org/sermon-seeds/sermon-seeds-testify-to-the-truth/>

<https://tinyurl.com/botw2411>



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