

WHAT IS TRUTH?
Christ the King, November 21, 2021
Deacon Robb Pailthorpe

Sometimes, my wife questions why we have a color TV. It's true... many of the shows I watch are what are now called "classic" black and white television shows. One of my new favorites is "Perry Mason" – a courtroom drama if you're not familiar with it. For each episode, I try to figure out who is the guilty person and, essentially, I'm wrong each and every time! We love courtroom dramas... whether real or Hollywood... shows and movies like "Judge Judy," "Law and Order," "Twelve Angry Men," "A Few Good Men," the O.J. Simpson trial or, most recently, the Kyle Rittenhouse trial. We love trying to figure out the "who dunnit" or if the person will be found "guilty" or "innocent." We hope to see justice served... we hope to see the truth come forward.

The truth – would you recognize it if you saw it? Would you recognize it if you heard it? And, as Pilot sarcastically asks in the verse that follows our Gospel today, "What is truth?" I could tell you that our

altar candles burn at 175-degrees. You could take a scientific thermometer and measure, finding that the candles do, in fact, burn at 175-degrees... a truth. I could tell you that you could take County Road E-44 from Elberon to Newhall while another might tell you could take the Elberon-Newhall blacktop. Two ways of looking at the same thing and both a single truth that can be verified by map or observation.

But, herein lies the problem... these kind of truths, a true statement about something that relies on our own observation, our own judgment or our own evaluation... we become the one who determines the truth... but if that is all there is to the truth, we'll never reach it... or my version of it because it is subjected to *my* judgment, *my* interpretation -- or yours... and as social media will tell us, add in five million other people's interpretation and you'll never know which observation or judgement is right... what is the truth?

In our Gospel today, St. John brings us the second trial of Jesus. In the first, Jesus appears before the Sanhedrin. Men come forward to bear false witness... to lie... or as we call it today, to commit perjury.

There are a few of the priests who try to follow the law... telling the group there is no quorum of members and that a man cannot be tried during the night. They are quickly silenced accused of calling into question the motives of the high priest.

So now, Jesus stands before Pilate, the judge, jury and prosecutor of his second trial. The chief priests have sent the Messiah to the Roman governor with claims that Jesus portends to be a king... another lie. Pilate knows that the religious leaders find the man before him a threat to their power and their way of living. As the leader of Judah, Pilate is used to making the truth become whatever he wishes. One truth he knows, he does not want the high priest going to Caesar claiming that he did not deal with a threat to Rome and emperor.

This meek, inoffensive man who allot people wanted dead did not have an army, weapons, wealth, power or even belong to a political group as the Jews were an ethnic group. It was oblivious that Jesus was no king... at least that was a truth in Pilate's mind. And yet, the governor asks, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus responds with his

question wanting to know if someone has told Pilate he was a king or did he come to this conclusion on his own. Pilate retorts with “Am I Jew?!” In other words, “I am a Roman, why would I know about Jewish religion or customs?” Pilate wants to hear from Jesus what he has done to merit the handing over of him by his own people. Jesus does not answer the question but says his kingdom is not of this world. This religious double-talk confuses Pilate who only wants to know, “So you are a king?” Jesus testifies that he’s come into the world to bear witness to the truth... like a modern day witness in a courtroom, Jesus is to testify, tell the world what the truth is.

You see, truth is not just a collection of true or factual statements like the temperature of a burning candle or the name of a highway. The truth is the foundation on which everything else rests, that foundation is Jesus Christ. He came to restore us to God, to undue the sin of Adam and Eve. The truth of our faith is the Lamb of God hung on a cross, died in our place, rose from the dead and is coming again to

restore us in the Kingdom of his world. **That is truth**... you cannot measure it, you cannot test it but we are baptized into it.

Pilate did not belong to the truth therefore he cannot see that, ironically, the truth is literally standing in front of him... Jesus is not just the King of Jews but the King of All, the King of Truth. Likewise, the crowds outside the governor's palace did not belong to the truth... they cannot see that Jesus is the Messiah, the one sent to save, so they demand Pilate to crucify him. But you and I, those baptized into Christ and who live by faith, we see it because we are of the truth. Sure, we fall short of God's expectations... we could enter into evidence a laundry list of missteps that can be observed, measured and recorded... all of which would be true... and it would equally be true to say because of this, we all could be sentenced to death and separation from God but that is not the truth.

Religious blogger Jeff Kloha writes of truth this way: "The truth is that because Jesus died on the cross for you and rose from that dead that you are holy. The truth is that because of Jesus you are forgiven.

The truth is that because of the work of the Son of God you are righteous in God's sight, you are perfect in his eyes, you are his dearly loved child. That is truth."

"What is truth?" Pilate asks. It is Jesus Christ. In our Gospel today he stands before you, about to be crucified for you... because he is the way, and the truth, and the life... he is Christ, the King.