

Theme: Bringing Truth to Life

“I have been given say over everything in heaven and on the earth. As you go because of that, make disciples of all kinds of people, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to conform to all that I have commanded you. And look, I am with you every day until the job is done.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

First Talk: Friday Morning---**What Truth Is and Why It Is So Important.**

“If you dwell in my word, then you really are my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Truth is a feature of our thoughts that allows us to live with realities that are not directly present to us. Realities that are not visible—at least at the time. But also some realities that are never visible: God, His kingdom, the human heart, for example.

Not being visible makes it easier for us to go wrong about realities that will, nevertheless, deeply affect our life, and to deny realities that we do not want to be so.

What is truth? A thought or belief or statement is true if what it is about is as it says it to be. “Snow is white” is true just in case snow is white. “God is love” is true just in case God is love.

The primary enemy of truth is human will and desire. Paul correctly spoke of the “ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.... Who exchanged the truth of God for a lie...” (Rom. 1:18 & 25)

The constant battle between the human (and divine) spirit and the flesh is the battle of the will for good and for truth with human desire.” (Gla. 5:17) The flesh does not look for the good, but for what it wants. Satisfaction of desire is a hopeless goal, and leads to the chaos and harm of the works of the flesh. (vss. 19-21, see James 4:1-4)

Thus Jesus, the Smartest Man in the world, taught that those who seek to save their life will lose it. (Mark 8:35) This is fundamental, world-wide wisdom, together with his advice on how to find your life. (“Lose your life for my sake and the gospel’s.”)

The world, the flesh and the devil are organized to make us “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1-3) Satan is a liar and the father of lies because he rejects the truth and reality of God and God’s Kingdom, and so must distort everything. (John 8:44-45) The world is driven by feelings, by passions. Just look at it. It is flesh organized against God and against truth and against what is good.

Thus those who do not know God, Paul said, “walk in the futility of their mind.” (Eph. 4:17-22), and in terms of “philosophy and empty deception, according to the traditions of men, . . . rather than according to Christ.” (Col. 2:8)

Currently this takes the form of secular education, the secular university. This is the “wisdom” of the world under the deceiver. Is reality secular? The university only assumes that and does not show it to be the truth. Doesn’t even attempt to show it. George Bernard Shaw said that “Catholic University” was a contradiction of terms. Well, not more so that “Secular University.” But Satan organizes the idea system.

Thus the university system exalts humanity in all its aspects and lives by feeling, not by truth. It’s “wisdom” then goes out to all of the world as guide to what governments and societies should do. Islam has its own universities, as does Communism. They teach you how to save your life, “success.” Totally misguided

It is in this world that we are to go as Jesus’ people to make disciples to him and teach them the truth about God and humanity. This is the only hope of humankind to escape the deadly cycles of passion and evil. We must be the teachers of the nations.

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Second Talk: Saturday Morning---**The Good News that Makes Disciples.**

*“From that time Jesus began to proclaim and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand’.” (Matt. 4:17) <This is his lesson on **reality**.>*

“But seek more than anything else the kingdom of God and his kind of righteousness, and all else you need will be provided.” (Matt. 6:33)

The kingdom of God is the effective rule of God. It is where what he wants done is done, and we are invited to live there. It is the world of Romans 8:28.

The basic truth we have to teach is that the kingdom or rule or reign of God is present in the person of Jesus, and available to all who will put there hope in him.

There is no plan of salvation, only a person of salvation. Our personal relationship with Jesus is what saves us, in every sense of “saves,” and there is no personal relationship with Jesus but that of the disciples (apprentice, student) to their Master, Teacher and Lord. The idea that you could trust him for forgiveness of sins but for nothing else is a psychological absurdity, a theological crime, and nothing the Bible ever heard of. It is designed to rationalize a “Christian” system **not** based on discipleship.

Thomas asked him: “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?” And Jesus replied: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” (John 14:5-6) In other words:

1. If you want to get to where I am going, to God, stay close to me. “I’m going in that direction,” we sometimes say to an inquirer, “I’ll take you there.” God does not give us a map but a friend.
2. I am the correct representation of reality. That’s truth. “He that has seen me has seen the Father.” I don’t just tell you the truth about God, Jesus says to us, but about how to live well and be a good person. Thus “abide in my word.” That is, live it out in your life. Do what I tell you in all the relevant circumstances.
3. I am the life. Life is self-initiating, self-sustaining, self-directing activity or power. That is “the life that is life indeed.” (I Tim. 6:13 & 19) It is God’s life, the only sufficient life for human beings. This is the eternal kind of life of John 17:3: **Interactive relationship** with God.

So: As a disciple of Jesus I am with him *learning* to be like him—learning to lead my life as he would lead my life if he were I. I am **learning to do** all that he commanded.

I am working out the salvation I receive in his presence “with fear and trembling; because it is God who is at work in us both to will and to accomplish his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may become yourselves blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you shine as stars in the world**, holding forth the word of life...”(Phil. 2:12-16)

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and **glorify your Father** who is in the heavens.” (Matt 5:16) We accomplish good things, not because of our cleverness, efforts, or natural abilities, but because of the life of God that is flowing in us and around us in goodness and inexplicable power.

“For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” (Eph. 5:9)

We abide in Jesus’ word, and that allows us to know the truth, and the truth orients us toward the reality of God and his kingdom in such a way that we are no longer in bondage to sin and evil—that was the freedom of which Jesus spoke.

Others become disciples of Jesus because of what they see and hear from us about him. Nothing compares with what they see. That is the power of truth.

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Third Talk: Saturday Evening---**The Bible as Indispensable Source of Truth: The Best Information Available to Human Beings on the Most Important Subjects in Life**

“And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say. Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and

when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it because it had been well built.” (Luke 46-48)

From this statement of Jesus, would you think we are to do what Jesus said, or is that dispensable, “optional”? Today, Christians generally do not know how to respond to this statement. It is because they do not understand his teaching about how we learn to do what he said, and they stay at the level of “the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.” (Matt. 5:20) This verse is a basic teaching about “entering the kingdom of the heavens.” No way forward except this.

It means to move our efforts, our “learnings,” from the level of actions to the level of the heart or the interior person, from which evil comes. (Mark 7:20-23) Study carefully. This is the problem of human life, which we must teach as the truth of the human condition.

Here also lies the work of “spiritual formation.” Spiritual formation is what happens as we, above all else, engage Jesus as his students or apprentices. In the process of Jesus’ “spiritual formation” of us we progressively take on, through effort and grace, the character of his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and learn to love our neighbor as our self. (Mark 12:29-31) We do **not** make it our aim to do what Jesus said. This only leads to deadly legalisms. (Consider the realities of “Christian” history.) Rather, our aim is to become inwardly like him in all dimensions of our personality. Agape love is all.

In the light of this we consider Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:20-32 as examples:

1. The significance of anger and contempt. How to live without it.
2. The significance of the cultivation of desire—not just sex. How to live without it.

The broader view of the Sermon of the Mount.

This is the truth about life and character and action that we, as the people of Jesus, the “society of Jesus,” must live and simultaneously teach.

To fail in this, as we are now doing, is “The Great Omission from the Great Commission,” which currently is the standard fare in Christian circles.

Secular institutions cannot teach this way of life because they do not have it, nor anything close. Just observe them to see. ***Pastors, teachers and leaders for Christ must presume to be the teachers of the nation and stand in their places as teachers of the nation and the nations.*** This alone amounts to the re-globalization of Christianity.

They must know the alternatives to Jesus, wherever and whatever they are, and they must understand that what they present is the body of Christian knowledge. It is only present in the Bible, not in “research” (the modern idol) and not in “scholarship,” which tends to establish **its own criteria of “success.”** Biblical success is the life **with-God** that is presented in the Bible to those who seek it humbly and repentantly.