

“Inflation & the Cycle of Blessings: The Currency of Truth”

John 14:1-6

When you hear the word truth, what comes to your mind? Often times we think of truth as objective facts that we can just define once and for all. There is a sense of hierarchy of truth or dualism where one thing is either true or false, right or wrong, good or bad. One movie that comes to my mind about this kind of truth is “A Few Good Men.” The story line is about two U.S. Marines who were accused of killing a fellow Marine at Guantanamo Bay. The lawyer in the case, played by Tom Cruise, was given information that the Colonel, played by Jack Nicholson, was the one who gave them the order. There is a court scene where the Colonel is on the stand and is being pressed to tell the truth. Here is what he says: [You Can't Handle the Truth! - A Few Good Men \(7/8\) Movie CLIP \(1992\) HD](#) . The Colonel believed that his version of the truth was more important than anyone else because he was protecting others from harm. He justified his actions to himself based on a false narrative of putting himself above others and refused to hear the truth of others.

When we think of truth, we are tempted to think that it is about facts or what we believe to be objective truth. This kind of thinking is being put to the test in our time with so many opinions and narratives about who is right and who is wrong. We are often left confused or overwhelmed by the sheer divisions that exist today around even simple facts. Outrageous conspiracy theories have become mainstream in our country with many people believing them and being willing to kill others based on such theories. This is all to say that the currency of truth seems to be in short supply these days.

Jesus spoke about truth, especially according to the Gospel of John. There are several famous sayings of Jesus about truth. Let’s listen to some of them.

John 1:14

“¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son,^[a] full of grace and truth.”

John 1:17

“The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 4:24

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 8:32

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 14:6

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 16:13

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

John 18:37b-38a

“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ ³⁸ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’”

What did Jesus mean by truth? Even Pilate asked that question of Jesus. Let’s look today at one of these scriptures more closely to see what Jesus wanted for his followers to know about truth.

This very scripture is often used to objectify truth and to make it sound as if Jesus was trying to say that his way was the only way. A couple of things could help us here. First, the location of the word truth between way and life. Eric Law invites us to look at all three words to get a fuller picture of what Jesus was talking about. He writes, “I often wonder why Jesus put the words ‘the truth’ between ‘the way’ and the ‘the life.’ If Jesus wanted to use a simple either-or interpretation of ‘the truth,’ wouldn’t saying, ‘I am the truth,’ be enough? Both ‘way’ and ‘life’ are multi-dimensional. A way is traveled through time; there is a direction, a movement from one place to another. A life is lived over a period of time in different places, and in relationships to other people. We do not take a moment in someone’s life and call that ‘a life.’ A life involves a past, a present, and a future. Neither do we take one step of a journey and call that ‘the way.’ The way also has a beginning, a movement through different environments, and a destination. Perhaps the meaning of ‘the truth’ being sandwiched in-between the multi-dimensional concepts of ‘the way’ and ‘the life’ ought to be understood in a similar way...the spirit of truth calls us to attempt to understand the multiple points of views. This truth discerning process is always complex and messy...the truth emerges out of the exploration and understanding of the many different points of view based on different experiences of the people in the community.”

This way of looking at the truth of Jesus expands our ability to lean into the mystery of God and all of life instead of putting them under our control. So the currency of truth becomes about authentic and caring conversations and the honoring of the different experiences of life.

Jesus was inviting his disciples to also see the truth of God through relationships. His relationship to them was the essence of that truth. Instead of looking for objective knowledge of life and of God, they were invited into a relationship. Jesus was issuing an invitation to the disciples to this sacred journey. He did not invite them to a set of beliefs and doctrines. His invitation was to a journey.

The Gospel of John was written around the year 90 C.E. which was after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem as part of the Jewish war with Rome in 66-73 CE. There was a growing sense of mutual alienation between the Jewish community and the Christian Jewish community. These early Christians saw themselves as part of the Jewish community but they were not accepted by the Jewish leaders. The Gospel writer was trying to explain the stories of the faith and Jesus Christ in light of that conflict to defend the followers of Christ. That is why we see the emphasis of the Gospel on the person of Christ and not just on the teachings. The Gospel writer was trying to help his people understand that the message of faith that Jesus taught was about a relationship, a way of life and not just the teachings or beliefs. The truth was to be found in relationships: A living/intimate relationship with God as our way of being and our way of life. This changes everything for us. The decisions and choices we make in life become based on this relationship.

In his book, *To Know As We are Known*, Parker J. Palmer asserts that truth is not an object to be viewed by those of us pursuing it, but rather it is a personal matter which is a part of us. He states that truth can only be found in our personal relationships and only to the extent that we allow ourselves to become vulnerable to it and when we honor

and listen to as many voices as possible. Truth according to Palmer is communal and relational. Palmer also looks at our text for today from John 18 and sees that Pilate is "obsessed with the 'whatness' of truth" to the point of missing truth altogether. The story is further explained to demonstrate that in Christian understanding truth is not simply an unattached object which is simply "out there", but rather that "truth is personal, and all truth is known through personal relationships." Jesus is viewed in this light as the embodiment of all that is truth. His living among us, as flesh with a human face, allows us to realize, if we are so inclined, that truth is not creeds or definitions or theologies, but instead, truth is a "call to community." Truth is not apart from us in some impersonal way. It "involves a vulnerable, faithful, and risk-filled interpenetration of the knower and the known."

Think of how powerful and transformative the currency of truth would be if we listened to all the different experiences of all groups in our own communities. Instead of thinking that there is one perspective that can express all the truth, we have to invite as many voices as possible to share and to be heard. Instead of our dualistic approaches of true or false to controversial issues, what if we listened to different perspectives and experiences about the issue while honoring each other. What might this look like in our own communities or families around difficult issues? How can our church help to host and to model such truth-seeking event?

Eric Law goes on to say that "Developing our currency of truth requires that we have the ability to recognize processes that are incomplete, partial, and divisive, and replace them with holistic truth-seeking processes -from debate mode to dialogue mode, from

premature judgment to clarification before judgment, from convincing to mutual understanding, from my-truth-versus-your-truth to shared truth, from mono-perspective to multi-perspectives, from either-or to both-and, from sinner or saint thinking to we-are-all-sinners-and-saints, from who is right to what is right, from accepting the viewpoint of the powerful to raising up the voices of the powerless, from standing in the center to circling around the margin, from divisive solutions to community-owned resolution, from denigrating differences to being curious about differences, and from targeting the other as the evil one to naming the unjust system.” (page 48)

A great example of this kind of truth seeking is from Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work to acknowledge and heal the mistakes of the past and the harm that was done to Native communities. “The [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#), the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, began to be implemented in 2007. One of the elements of the agreement was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to facilitate reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities and all Canadians.

Between 2007 and 2015, the Government of Canada provided about \$72 million to support the TRC’s work. The TRC spent 6 years travelling to all parts of Canada and heard from more than 6,500 witnesses. The TRC also hosted 7 national events across Canada to engage the Canadian public, educate people about the history and legacy of the residential schools system, and share and honour the experiences of former students and their families. The TRC created a historical record of the residential schools system. As part of this process, the Government of Canada provided over 5 million records to the TRC. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba now houses all of the documents collected by the TRC.



Namwayut: we are all one. Truth and reconciliation in Canada | Canada is ...

How Canada marked 1st National Day for Truth and Reconciliation



May we always seek Christ's way of the truth through loving and caring connections to all God's people with all their different voices and experiences. Amen.