

“Rethinking Life: Be a Truth Teller”  
John 8:31-32, 18:33-38a

Today I want to invite you to consider for a moment the profound impact of truth and deception on our lives. One of the most well-known stories about lying is that of Pinocchio, the little wooden puppet, carved by the loving hands of Geppetto, who longs to be a real boy. But Pinocchio, in his desire for easy answers, finds himself constantly entangled in falsehoods. With each lie he tells, his nose grows longer, a visible, undeniable manifestation of his deceit. This physical burden of his lies not only makes him a spectacle but also separates him from those who care for him. He learns, through painful experience and the guidance of the Blue Fairy, that true freedom and the realization of his deepest desires — to be a real boy, to be loved and accepted — are only achievable through honesty and authenticity. Here is a short clip from Pinocchio: [YouTube Clip](#)

This story mirrors the human experience of longing to be real and to live out the truth of our souls which God has put on our hearts. This is a story about love and deep and authentic connections. Yet, it is also about the stumbling blocks along the way. We so long to be authentic, and yet, due to our wounding along the path of life, we become separated from our own selves and from others. We end up struggling with accepting our own goodness and our mistakes.

Here is another example about this disconnect. In his book, *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are*, Seth Stephens-Davidowitz notes that humans lie about most everything. In fact, we tell lies about 1/3 of the time. Studies have shown that we are consistently fudging the facts, even in anonymous Internet surveys. For example, fewer than 2% of college graduates say they finished college with less than a 2.5 GPA, when actually 11% of graduates fall below this GPA. We consistently lie to ourselves about being above average. One company survey found that 40% of its engineers said they are in the top 5% of performers. One quarter of high school students think they are in the top 1% in their ability to get along with other people. It is interesting that the research shows that teenagers lie the most of any age group, while people over 60 lie the least. Somehow with age and maturity, we find our way to be more truthful.

Yet, we spend a lot of our time separate from our own hearts and the truth of who we are as those created in the image of God. The social pressures and the wounding we get when we are young make us shrink from being the people God created us to be. This also shows up on a larger scale, when you think of how it is so hard to get countries or institutions to admit to making mistakes and to repent.

Today's challenge of rethinking life in light of our belonging to God is that we are invited to see and proclaim the deeper truth of life. Being preoccupied by appearances and power often leads us to deny the truth of who we are and who others are. It reduces the glory of God and replaces it with a façade of who we are called to be. And the culture

around us often rewards us when we fit into the molds of power, security, and esteem; the preoccupations of the ego.

In our Bible reading for today, we hear about a confrontation between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus had proclaimed the following about the importance of truth, according to John 8:31-32 “Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’” The relational truth which Jesus came proclaiming was about love, care, justice, and compassion. And this truth came into sharp contrast when he was put on trial before Pilate, the Roman governor of the land.

People in his position knew how to play the games of power and how to exploit others in order to keep and expand their power. Pilate represented the culture demands and pressures to fit in and to succeed by accumulating wealth, being esteemed, and knowing how to use violence to subdue and exploit others. Like many leaders of his time, he justified his actions and the actions of his nation as necessary to civilizing the world. He was an agent of “Pax Romana,” the peace treaty of Rome which brought a period of tranquility and peace that spread all over the empire from Persia, North Africa, the Middle East, to Europe. They believed that they were God’s agents on earth. Even though the prosperity and peace they brought came at the price of freedom and exploitation, the Romans believed in their cause.

In the year 6 CE, the Romans crushed a revolt from the north by crucifying 2000 Jewish insurgents and selling into slavery about 20,000 others. When Pilate was appointed governor of Judea, Herod Antipas was appointed governor of Galilee. Pilate had to show the emperor in Rome that he was capable of keeping the peace in his region. He did everything he could to succeed in his mission. He had on his payroll informants, leaders, and religious authorities. He also put images of the emperor everywhere, especially in the temple.

On the day of the trial of Jesus, Pilate was ready to make sure that he did not get away. He knew that the execution of John the Baptist by Herod in the north had caused a major upheaval for him, so he tried to make sure that it looked like Pilate was just doing the will of the people. He saw Jesus as a rabble-rouser who was filling people’s heads with hope for freedom and justice. Jesus kept teaching about the peace he was bringing and his vision of a different kind of kingdom, a kingdom under the rule of God, a kingdom of justice and peace for all. He was challenging the emperor and king.

We can dismiss Pilate as a violent and evil man, but in reality, his kind of perspective is not that different from the perspective of many of our world leaders today. He believed the ideology of his culture just like we are led to believe the ideologies of our own cultures. He believed in his heart that he was doing the right thing because he was eliminating an imminent threat to his country. In the final analysis, the question of “what is truth?” which Pilate asked Jesus was not a philosophical question. It reflected the threat of the truth of the kingdom of God to the dominant truth of the violence of the empire and Pilate. Let’s listen to John 18:33-38a:

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did

others tell you about me?" 35 Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. 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?"

Imagine Pilate, the man who had all the answers according to the standards of power in the world, wondering, "what is truth?" Jesus, the supposedly humble and powerless man from Galilee was the one who knew about the truth of life because of his connection to the source of all life, while Pilate had lost his connection to his own soul on the way to the top of the ladder of power and success. By the standards of the world, Pilate had it all and Jesus had nothing!

The good news is that we know how the story ends. We know that the truth which Jesus proclaimed was more enduring than all the power plays and armies of Pilate. And today we are invited to embrace this truth of love and of connection to God. We are also invited to live by its wisdom and not be afraid to let it guide us even when the path ahead seems like a failure by the standards of the world.

I invite you to pay attention to your words, thoughts, and reactions especially when you are under pressure or stress. Do they connect you to the truth of God's love or keep you hostage to the illusion of the emotional programs for happiness of power, security, and esteem? Do this kind of examination with a commitment to compassion for yourself but also for others.

### **Prayer Practice: Embracing Truth**

Let us now take a moment to connect with the truth of our own hearts. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

- Feel the presence of God within you, the source of all truth and love.
- Reflect on a time when you struggled with honesty or authenticity.
- Acknowledge any feelings of shame or guilt, and release them with compassion.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you toward greater truthfulness in your life.
- Ask for the courage to speak your truth, even when it is difficult.
- Affirm your commitment to living with integrity, in alignment with God's love.

Let us pray:

*Loving God, we thank you for the gift of truth. Help us to embrace it fully, in our thoughts, words, our actions, and our relationships. Give us the courage to be authentic,*

*even when it makes us vulnerable. May we always seek your wisdom and guidance, so that we may live in the light of your love. Amen.*

May this week be a journey into deeper truth, both within ourselves and in our world. May we, like Jesus, choose love and connection over power and appearances. And may we always remember that the truth will set us free. Amen.