

**“The Truth Sets You Free” (St. John 8:31-36)**

For Your Life in Christ the Week of Festival of the Reformation,  
October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)  
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**Introduction: Truth Can Be a Contentious Thing**

- A. Two strangers started up a conversation at a dinner party, both feeling rather isolated as neither one knew very many people there. The first-time encounter got off to a great start as both realized they were speaking to another devout Christian. The man in the blue suit said to the man in the grey suit: “So are you Protestant or Catholic?” “Protestant!” was the answer from grey. Blue was excited, “So am I!” He continued his inquiry, “Are you from a liturgical or revivalist tradition?” Grey answered, “Liturgical all the way!” Blue was starting to believe that these dinner parties weren’t so bad after all! “So am I!” he roared. “Are you Lutheran, Episcopalian or Reformed?” Grey was happy to share, “Lutheran!” Ecstatic, blue said, “So am I!” Blue wondered if he and grey might become good friends some day. Then he asked, “Are you Wisconsin, ELCA or Missouri?” Without missing a beat, grey said, “Wisconsin!” To which blue’s entire countenance changed. Upon having his highest hopes dashed to the ground, he spouted off: “Heretic! I pray you come to the knowledge of the truth!”
- B. What is truth?
1. Pilate had put this question to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 18:38), but it wasn’t so much a question as it was a statement about his total and utter skepticism.
  2. The spirit of Pilate remains in our veins.
    - a. In our sinful nature, we reject the idea of absolute truth as it goes against every politically correct fiber within our being! “No exclusive truth! Boo! Hiss!”
    - b. Instead, we want to be inclusivists to the point of going along with everything. That way, we can always get

along with people at dinner parties and never offend anyone.

- c. Or even worse, we go along with the idea of pluralists who say there is truth in all things, so as to suggest that all religions – even those that contradict the teachings of other religions – are all true at the same time.
- d. That is like saying that if you combine potassium with oxygen, there will be a chemical reaction and there will *not* be a chemical reaction at the same time! Both are true.  $2 + 2 = 4$  and  $2 + 2 = 7$ , both are true. Resurrection and reincarnation which completely contradict each other are both true. The Angels did not play in this year’s World Series and they did, both are true. These are nonsensical and illogical. Such a state of affairs is impossible!
- e. But this is what people want to do with religion and faith. This idea and practice, however, is NOT true and is extremely dangerous and deadly to the soul!

**Part I: Luther Stood for the Truth**

- A. At Luther’s trial at the Diet of Worms on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1521, they wanted Luther to reject the truth he had written, the truth based on the Word of God. He had to give a final answer, so he did:

*“Since Your Majesty and your lordships want a simple, clear, and true answer, I will give it. Unless I am convinced by the teachings of Holy Scripture or by sound reasoning – for I do not believe either the pope or councils alone, since they have often made mistakes and have even said the exact opposite about the same point – I am tied by the Scriptures I have quoted and by my conscience. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither safe nor right. Here I stand. God help me! Amen.”*

- B. Essentially, in speaking these words, Luther pretty much put a death warrant around his neck and he knew it. But he spoke the truth and would not let it go!

**Part II: What are the Biblical Definitions of Truth?**

- A. A relativist society says, "Truth is whatever you want it to be!
- B. No! That is the devil's version of "truth."
- C. The Word of God, however, has these nuances of actual truth:
  1. Truth is that which gives certainty and confidence.

**Ephesians 4:21 (NIV): "Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus."**

2. Truth is that upon which you can rely and will always pan out.

**Romans 3:4: "Let God be true...;" and then goes on to quote Psalm 51:4: "so that [He] may be justified in [His] words and blameless in [His] judgment."**

3. Truth opposes lies.

**Romans 1:25: "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie."**

4. Truth is reliable teaching and confession.

**Acts 26:25: "I am speaking true and rational words."**

5. Truth as something real that can be rejected.

**Daniel 8:12: "[transgression] will throw truth to the ground."**

6. Truth as the reality of God and as God Himself.

**John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."**

- D. In this last definition, truth is also put forth in our Gospel for Reformation Sunday; here, if you know the truth, you know Jesus Christ:

**John 8:31-32: "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"**

- E. But this reception of truth and of Jesus Himself must be GIVEN to you by God; it must be RECEIVED by the Christian.
- F. When it is, it is something that becomes a part of you; it becomes cemented in you. This is why Christians are said to HOLD to the truth. Think of a man and wife who love each

other; who HOLD to each other. Or -- think of Bandit the dog -- my father-in-law used to have a dog named "Bandit" who had the most tenacious grip on his pull-toy I had ever seen. He would NEVER LET GO! No matter where you pushed or pulled or lifted that pull-toy, Bandit was always on the other end!

**Conclusion: May You Always Be Tenacious in Your Hold of the Truth!**

- A. Here is Luther describing the Gospel to which you cling to, because it is the truth of God that you have come to know and to love. It was also the basis for the Reformation that put the focus of salvation back upon Jesus and nothing we do:

*"What more is the Lamb [of God/Jesus Christ] to do? He says: 'You are all condemned, but I will take your sins upon Myself. I have become the whole world. I have incorporated all people since Adam into My person.' Thus He wants to give us righteousness in exchange for the sins we have received from Adam. And I should reply: 'I will believe that my dear, dear Lord, the Lamb of God, has taken all sins upon Himself.'...[so] cling to the words which guarantee you and all believers forgiveness of sin through the Lamb. Don't you hear? There is nothing missing from the Lamb. He bears all the sins of the world from its inception; this implies that He also bears yours, and offers you grace." (Luther's Works, American Edition, Volume 22, 168-169)*

- B. By the Holy Spirit we see the truth of the Gospel, and therefore we apply it to ourselves, we believe and we cling to the truth of the Gospel for us! You now say, "I am Christ's and Christ is mine!"
- C. Then we know truth in the best sense: It is Christ! And in Him, we are set free from sin, from death, and the devil. We are His free children in the sense that our consciences have been cleansed. Sin, death, fear, anguish, guilt, shame are no longer our task masters, no longer our spiritual prisons, these we have been set free from. This is the truth. This is our freedom in the Gospel. This is the power of God in your life.