

Lord's Day. Communion Sunday.

3Dec23

Call to Worship.

Ps. 95: 1-2, 6-7. (Vance)

Hymn 1. Doxology

Hymn2. Holy, Holy, Holy.

Announcements and Advent Scripture reading.

Is. 9:2-7. (Ron)

Hymn 3. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Hymn 4. Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.

Offering Prayer and Worship Reflection. (House music) (Tom)

Pastoral Prayer.

Sermon Text. John 17:13-19. The Marks of a Church: Truth.

Intro

This week we are looking again at Jesus Christ's High Priestly Prayer. And today we are looking at what I am calling **the 2nd mark** of a church.

Last week we looked at the first attribute that Jesus petitioned God for the church. It was joy. That 'My joy be made full in them'

The disciples are in a tumultuous time, they are trouble. Christ tells them 'let not your heart be troubled' Jn 14 – He is telling all of these things to them that their joy may be made full.

Today we are going even deeper. Today we are looking at what I would call, at least in this prayer as the second attribute in order of the church; **The Truth.**

Q: What is the point of church?

Is church just a place where people who live in the same social circles tend to gather?

I've observed that it seems like for some, church is a place where they gather because they seem to like this group of people slightly more than they like the other group. In other words, they select church, at least in their eyes on the lesser of two evils.

Well let me tell you, when you look to observe a church it's distinctive shouldn't be whether it tolerates one evil verse another. It should be based off its handling of the Truth.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

1 Tim. 3:15 'the church is pillar and support of the truth' – 'Great is the mystery of godliness'
Well How God works is a mystery to some, but it is always aligned with what is true.

Meaning, everything the church does and says is to provide the support beams the foundation and the plumbing and heating and air flow of the Truth. The Church is a house for the Truth!

Q:What is the point of the Church?

The Christian church is the safeguard of all truth.

Q: As a Church what should we do with the Truth?

If the truth unities, guard it.

If the truth builds, celebrate it.

If the truth refines, endure it.

If the truth offends, let it.

God establishes the Church and look at His character.

'let God be true' Rom. 3:4

'God is not a man, the He should lie' Num. 23:19

'God cannot lie' Tit. 1:2

'it is impossible for God to lie' Heb. 6:18

The Spirit of God that fills God's people is called the Spirit of Truth.

No absolute truth. 'What is Truth?' Pilate, Jn. 18

Now in a society trained and maintained in a relative view of truth, there is a constant pressure to conform to relativism, to adopt the belief that there is no absolute truth, you and I are met with immediate opposition.

We live in a world where we anticipate people lying to us. You can see this in all kinds of examples.

You can always tell when a Politician is lying because its when they are talking.

I had an older pastor tell me, You need to decide early on in ministry what you are going to be. You can either be Prophet or Politician but you cannot be both.

A Prophet simply tells the truth of God and lets the chips fall where they may.

A Politician simply collects the chips and keeps the Truth at bay.

Practically speaking, all that God does in the world, He does by the power of His Holy Spirit and it is all revealed through His truth – written revelation.

There is nothing that occurs that has not already been communicated to us in the Word of God.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

Cornelius Van Til, p. 4, Systematic Theology *'man in some respects knows something about everything. Why is that? Because of who God is. God is all-powerful, omnipresent, and self-contained in all His attributes. God can and does make Himself know to His creatures, God reveals Himself to His image bears, man and woman.'*

God has revealed Himself Truly in two ways; one through nature and two through Scripture.

Rom. 1 'those who suppress the truth in unrighteous' – those who suppress the truth know the truth, and they are suppress both the truth of God and the truth of God's church.

As Peter says, 'do not be surprised by the firey ordeal among you' 1 Peter 4

God has chosen to accomplish teh work of His True Church to be achieved by people of the Truth.

Jesus answered Piliate in Jn. 18 'I have come into the world to testify to the Truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'

When a church leaves the Truth, the Truth is, that is no longer a church.

Old quaint buildings do not make a church a church. It is the Truth of God that makes a church a church.

It is the truth of God that makes a Christian a Christian. There is no such thing as a lying Christian.

Turn to Acts 5.

Listen to this please and never forget it. You can be a lot things in the kingdom of God, but what you cannot be is a liar.

Truth of Salvation.

You can be immature, an 11th hour Christian and enter the kingdom of God.

You can ignore the vineyard call to labor early in the morning, coming at the earlier evening to work and still enter the kingdom of God.

You can be a convicted felony, tried and crucified for your very sin, and still enter Heaven through your confession of faith in Christ.

But the one attribute that will always keep you out of God's kingdom is lying! Whatever you do, do not be a liar.

Ex. 20:16 'you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor' – that is you shall not lie.

To have a lie on the tongue is to have the devil in the heart. Lying is Satanic.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

Ps. 35:11 'malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things I do not know' – Friends only a liar can ask questions a wise man cannot answer.

Wise people live in the truth. When liars fabricate reality, even wise men cannot help them.

Augustine, 'The tongue inflicts greater wounds than the sword'

In Jeremiah's persecution they said 'come let us strike at him with our tongue' Jer. 18:18

Lying is the opposite of truth. Truth is a primary marker of the Christian church.

Any church that participates in lying

Look at this story in Acts 5 of the Story of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. This story takes place mere months after this prayer.

Please turn to 1 Jn. But before we look there I want to tell you a story.

Acts 5:1-14.

The principle is not to give every one of your dollars to the church. The Principle is do not lie to God.

The reason for that is that God intends the Truth to be a primary marker of the Church.

In the early church, the establishment of Truth was so severe that God would simply kill a couple who continued to live a lie and attempt to pass that off as reality.

The result was that the punishment of death that the Holy Spirit gave resulted in the fear of the Lord and the church increased in size.

Telling the truth of God and the fear of the Lord is a principle of church growth.

1 Jn. 5:17 'there is a sin which leads to death'

John tells us that there is a sin that leads to death, many theologian and Bible commentaries state that it is unconvincing what John means. Well, I think we can at the very least conclude Biblically, that Ananias and Sapphira are aware of the sin that leads to death.

'there is a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death' Prov. 14

Turn to **1 Jn 1:6-10.** Eón clauses. If clauses. There are over **600 formal conditional sentences** in the NT. That's about one per page.

Conditional statements based off a spiritual principle. There are **5 of these Truth clauses** right here in John's epistle. Look what they are based in.

v. 6 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

v. 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (Is. 1:18) 'Come now, let us reason together'

v. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

v. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

v. 10 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.'

With every conditional statement there is a principle to grasp. Here's three principles.

Principle 1.

Q: How can we begin to recognize that the truth is in us? First criteria is to recognize we are sinners. Sinners are people who have done wrong against God's will. Q: What is sin? Anything in thought, affection, or deed that is against the will of God.

Charles Spurgeon once toward a congregation 'Do you feel miserable and incapable? Do you feel like you do not measure up? Good. You have now arrived at the truth.

If we are looking for a religion that has to do with our Self-Esteem, that is not Christiany. Chrsitian is not about self-esteem it is about self-denial.

'Whoever would follow me must deny Himself' Matt. 10 Jesus Christ

Principle 2.

Q: What do you do with such negative outlooks? Well, I'm glad you asked. That is what I've been wanted to talk to you about. Look at v. 9 again.

Principle 3.

Fellowship is based off truth. To have fellowship with falsehood is not Christian. All Christian fellowship must be based off truth.

'if a blind man leads a blind man they both fall into the ditch' **Matt. 15:14** – you can forgive a man who is spiritual blind but you can't have fellowship with him .

'do not be deceived; evil company corrupts good manners' **1 Cor. 15:33**

Look by at John's Gospel in Chapter 8. The Truth is a Primary Marker of the Truth.

At the very in of the Bible.

Rev. 21:6-8 'Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'

A liar is locked out of Heaven. Heaven is not a Open Borders Society. It is a exclusive privilege to those who do not liar against the truth of God.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

Alpha and Omega. The Word. The Logos. The Eternal Truth.

Q: How do you know if something is true?

He is called a true businessman who can turn a profit.

He is called a true athlete who can turn a ball.

He is called a true Christian who does not turn from the Truth.

College Professor.

There was a professor at the college he was teaching his students that there are no absolutes.

He would teach, 'there are no absolutes. No moral absolutes. No absolute truth. There is nothing that you can know with absolute certainty. – A student raised his hand and said 'Are you sure about that?' – The Professor responded 'Absolutely!'

Friends to the world Absolute truth is bigoted, it is narrow-minded. Oh it's so closed minded is what they will say.

Well be careful, some people have become so open minded they run the risk of their brains falling out.

The Marker of the Church is that it is the Pillar of Truth. If you can't find truth at the church you won't be able to find it anywhere.

Lying is Satanic.

Turn to John 8. Notice the conditional clause again. Looking at v. 31-47

'If you continue'

I know that it is a popular notion to teach that God' is unconditional. But I have to teach that that is not true.

If God in His wisdom saw fit to explain Himself on every page of the NT in a conditional way, it only stands to reason that He has conditions and expectations associated with our relationship to Him and to His church. A primary mark of our relationship with God is that it is True.

These conditions are so severe that life and death is on the line.

In a world of lies, it makes no sense for a man or woman to tell the truth unless they are under Divine compulsion.

Next week we look at the 3rd mark of the church, Holiness. Or as you could put it, Sanctification. Consecration. It's different words but the same concept. Set Apart.

A unique vessel set apart for a unique purpose.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

What you really want in your life is to be Holy. It is what each one of you want. You want that because that is the marker of your salvation. That you personal desire and crave to be holy as God is holy.

Q: But how do you and I become Holy? 1 trait, truthfulness. You can only become holy if you are true.

I do believe that churches lack regular conversions to Christ because of untrue witnesses in the community.

I actually believe, and I do believe I have seen, that if a true Christian church is in a town long enough, more and more people will begin to be won over to following Jesus Christ.

Are there Leodacian towns? Yes. But there there are also Thessalonians and Ephesians.
Are there Corinthian towns? Yes. But they too need to be taught to obey.

It is not enough for those who are saved to Criticize. We must actively correct in order to convert.

Man in a promiscuous relationship.

I was talking to a man about Christ who is living in a promiscuous relationship. He knows that I am a pastor and I said to him, 'You do understand that what you are doing is sin against God?' He said yes. I said ok, well I am not criticizing you for it, but I am correcting you, and letting you know that Christ died for that sin and if you would you can be forgiven but you cannot be both forgiven and continue to do it!

Q: What is the point of the Church?

It is the establish, build upon, guard, defend, and proclaim the Truth. Well what is that?

I got to tell you what – I rather die than live a lie. But there are some people that hold these deep lies inside that they do not want any Gospel truth to penetrate.

It is still our duty to tell them. Not to Criticize, but to Correct in order to Convert.

If someone asks you, are you trying to Convert me? Just tell them, Yes! I care you. I want you to go to heaven. 'they will know we are Christians by our love'

Deep down in their heart they hold to a lie, and as soon as you speak the truth to them you hit a nerve that is connected to the lie.

It is easy to tell a person who is living a lie because they are always doing the things needed to cover it up.

They drink the drink to mask the conscience. They take the pill that will dull their wits.

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Anxious man.

I was talking to a man a short time ago, he asked me if he should take a certain medication. I said why would you take it? He said I'm anxious all time.

I said, that's because you're on to something. You're bright. You're aware. You're like bloodhound on scent. Why would you take medication that would dull your conscience? The anxiety you have might be the very tool God gave you to drive you back to Christ.

Sometime's the truth can make us depressed. It's depressing to hear that learn that over ½ million abortions were reported last year alone in America. It's depressing to learn that In 2019, 4500 churches closes. That's depressing – until you remember that Christ said 'I will build My church'

Sometimes the truth can make you anxious. It can make us anxious. But it is only the truth that will save us from death.

That anxiety is a tool God has built into the human conscience to lead us back to trust Him. Depression is a symton God has given our psyche to teach us to not love this world.

We avoid the truth because we don't like where it is leading. The reality is that if we follow the truth, despite its difficulties it will lead us to Heaven.

I AM the way the truth and the life no man comes to the Father but by me. Jn. 14

It is better to tell the Truth that Hurts, then heals, Than a lie that hinders and then kills.

The Truth is...

It hurts. It hurts to learn the truth.

But it helps to learn the truth.

And it heals to learn the truth.

As a Christian, the truth doesn't have to hurt because Christ already took the hurt.

'Death where is your sting' 1 Cor. 15:55 'The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

The Truth is...

Christ died for our sin.

Christ has won the day.

God is true.

God expects of us to live in the truth of His counsel.

'THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.' 1 Cor. 15:58

If you would like to live in the fullness of God, you must live in the Truth.

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH; TRUTH

This leaves us a final consideration.

Q: If the Church is to be marked by the Truth we have to ask ourselves these questions; Where are we lacking truth?

- 1. Where are we lacking truth in our understanding of God's will?**
- 2. Where are we lacking truth in our application of God's will?**

You and I each play a vital role in the building of the Church and the marker of the truth.

How will Christ build the house? On many foundations and one support beam? NO! Christ will build the house with many support beams and one foundation.

You and I are the support beams Christ uses to carry the load of the church. The foundation we all stand on is the truth.

Friends, these are the questions that must be ever present on our mind.

If the church will be true, then it will not be hard to prove that every man is a liar.

That there is One True God.

Communion.

1 Cor. 11. Teaching.

Communion Reflection (House Music)

Communion taking.

Prayer.

Hymn 5. In Christ Alone.

Hymn 6. To God Be the Glory.

Benediction and Closing Prayer. (Vance)

Jude 24-25.