

Christ the King Sunday
Daniel 7:9-14
John 18:28-38

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“Truth, written all over it.”

“What is Truth?” These words of Pilate’s; words which were thrown back at Jesus in contempt, out of frustration and a lack of understanding, actually hold within them the key which we will use to enter into the deeper spiritual meanings of our Scripture readings.

We are celebrating the Reign of Christ Sunday, which has traditionally been called Christ the King Sunday. It is marked by our remembrance of the Easter story; our remembrance the resurrection of Christ, and the union of Divine Good and Divine Truth that is the church, and by church I mean the fullest expression of Divine Good and Truth operating within the world and through all of it’s inhabitants.

Our Gospel reading and our reading from the Hebrew Bible are each bursting full of representations of Divine Truth at every level of meaning that comes through the Word. From the literal imagery and the actual words that are written to the spiritual correspondences of the inner meanings of the Word, truth is present. Truth is present in the representations of garments and fire, snow and the colour white; truth is represented in the Gospel passage in Kingship of Jesus...Truth is written all over these passages, like an almost completed jigsaw puzzle that requires very little effort on our part to put it all together and see the full image that the individual pieces make. It’s all there in front of us, and yet the words of Pilate still ring in our ears...What is Truth?

Our human understanding of truth has changed over the centuries, often in relation to our attempts to understand Scripture. Church theologians have been debating for well over a thousand years the meaning of the truth of the Incarnation and the nature of Jesus Christ. Was Jesus human, or was Jesus Divine, or maybe both, But if both human and Divine then how? This debate carries on today in our seminaries and churches and within each one of us as we try, as individuals to understand our faith and understand what it means to live that faith in the world today.

Our understanding of truth is constantly evolving. We are currently, undergoing a shift in understanding, actually a complete shift in worldview called postmodernism. And postmodernism has implications for our current understandings of truth. The Postmodern view has been challenging the modern understanding of truth which came before it. The modern understanding of truth is couched in the Enlightenment understanding of knowledge. To modern thinkers knowledge is certain and objective. True knowledge was believed to lie in the intellect, therefore the intellect alone was the arbiter of truth. And through reason, and scientific method in combination with power of the intellect, modern thinkers believed we can be certain of the truth. And that if we just keep digging we can find the ultimate truth, theologians would call that ultimate truth,

God. Modern thinkers however, tend to focus on the individual and are suspect of all beliefs that seem to be based on some external authority, something other than human reason. So, to the modern mind truth is based solely in the intellect of the individual.

Now, under this new worldview, Postmodern thinkers question almost everything modern thinkers believed, including the idea that truth is certain. Some postmodern thinkers suggest that there is no objective truth; that all truth is relative, based on who we are and who we interact with. Postmoderns' believe that the universe is not mechanistic, but rather relational and personal, and therefore, truth is relative. Postmodern thinkers also acknowledge that there are other paths to knowledge besides reason alone, besides the intellect. Postmoderns believe that the emotions and our intuition are also arbiters of truth, and that we arrive at our own understanding of truth through the combinations of the intellect, the emotions and the intuition. Postmoderns' also recognize the importance of the community within which we participate as being extremely important to each individual's understanding of truth, that our own truth is shaped by the values, norms, habits and histories of the communities with which we are a part.

And so, the question still remains, "What is truth?" Within this community called the Swedenborgian church there is a particular understanding of truth that, as is often the case, may be able reconcile some of these ideas from modern and postmodern thinkers.

I began this morning by suggesting that our Scripture passages are loaded with correspondences of truth. In using correspondences to reveal the inner meanings of Scripture, the Swedenborgian church has a unique way of understanding the truth of Scripture. It is based in our communal understanding of our tradition – a very postmodern idea. Correspondences help us move beyond the literal meaning of Scripture, which holds one level of truth, and move to the inner spiritual meaning of Scripture, which holds a deeper level of that same truth.

Truth in the literal meaning of the Word comes through in the Gospel story of Jesus standing before Pilate. It is a courtroom drama, a place where truth rules and justice reigns. And yet, there is so much injustice that is happening in the world at that time, represented by this very trial of Jesus. His community has turned on Him, and they have sent Him to stand trial before Pilate, facing the death penalty for the capital charge of treason, for claiming to be king. And the irony is that, not only has Jesus only ever spoken the truth, He is the Truth. Divine Truth, incarnate in the world. But nobody understands. Pilate is not of the Jewish community. He says, "I'm not a Jew, am I?" No, he's not and he doesn't understand. As a Gentile Pilate represents those who are outside the church, those who do not have the Word and therefore can not understand.

Jesus continues to try and shed some light on the subject; he says, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" My truth does not come from this world. Jesus is saying that in the midst of the kingdoms of this world--the kingdoms of greed, status, ruthlessness, intimidation, and power--there also stands a kingdom of justice, truth, goodness, peace and love. Pilate doesn't get it, but we do. We get it, because we know the rest of the story. We know of the imminent passion on the cross, and the death and resurrection of

Jesus Christ. We know the truth of the vision in our scripture from Daniel. We know that the one like a human being, or like a son of man in other translations, the one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven, presented to the Ancient One represents the glorification of the Lord, the complete union of Divine Truth with Divine Goodness – the one like a human being, Jesus Christ, Divine Truth, and the Ancient One, Divine Goodness, together on the throne – manifest in the church. That’s what that passage means and we can know this because we have the Word and we know the Christian story, the church has kept these things alive for us to be able to access, and to learn and come to our own understanding of what is truth for us, and in our lives.

If we accept the postmodern view of truth as being relative, then we also recognize the reality of multiple versions of truth which we come across every day. And it’s not just the truth of other people that we experience, it’s the truth that is formed by all of the communities that we individually belong to which may or may not hold the same truth. So much of what we believe and what we value and what we understand to be true, is shaped by our family units, our church organizations, interest clubs that we choose to belong to, our political affiliations, our volunteer organizations, our peers and our classmates, etc, etc, etc. And sometimes these different organizations hold competing truths. And when that happens we can start to feel uncomfortable, or conflicted about what course of action to take when faced with a dilemma, or when we have to make a decision that is potentially based in two different truths. If we have community based ways of understanding truth then how do we reconcile the multiple versions of truth that we live with and experience every day?

Jesus said, *“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.”* By making his life a perfect witness to the truth Jesus became King. Became Divine Truth. The Word made flesh. There was Divine Wisdom present in all of His teachings, and those who heard him teach and were open to hearing the Truth, and allowing that Truth to enter into them, into their will and understanding, knew that. He was their King – Divine Truth operating in the world.

I ask you today “Is He our King?” On this Christ the King Sunday we can see, through the correspondence of Jesus as King being the Divine Truth, that what we are reflecting on is the presence of Christ in our lives as Divine Truth, operating within our hearts and within our minds drawing us ever closer to our spiritual center, wherein lies the union of love and wisdom, that tiny spark of the Divine which resides within each and every one of us.

And so when we feel confused or overwhelmed about what is the truth, we have not only the presence of the risen Christ in our lives, we have physical the Word to help us. Within Scripture:

We hear truth in the literal meaning of the words,
We see truth in the correspondences of the inner meaning of the passages,
And we can feel truth in our hearts, the truth of the Lord’s words speaking to our soul and enlightening our spirits.

I encourage everyone to remember this very real presence of the Divine that we have access to whenever we choose. I encourage you to invite Christ into your lives by reflecting on the Divine Truth as revealed by the Word. And to also remember the lesson from Daniel's vision, that it is ultimately the union of Divine Truth and Goodness manifest in the world that is what we are striving for. When truth is united with love we can feel it in our hearts, an intuitive way of knowing that reason can't explain, but that we can know for certain. Trust that presence of the risen Christ in your life. It is there, it is real and it is always available to us. Amen.