

## True or Truth?

### *Has Your Opinion of Truth Changed?*

Years ago when I was a kid, maybe seven years old or so, my family went to Disneyland. It was a beautiful, grand fantasy world where imagination came to life. One of my favorite rides was the submarine. With great anticipation I climbed on board with my parents and brother and sat in one of the seats and like everyone else, gazed out the window. Down we sank under the sea and all sorts of spectacular plants and sea creatures greeted me and the rest. I was mesmerized by the sights and when we all too soon returned to the surface, I was completely awed by our little trip under the ocean. As we climbed out, I stood on the dock and watched as another group of “mariners” climbed down into the submarine. My parents waited as I continued to follow the submarine when it left the dock and began its journey. However to my complete shock and disappointment, I discovered that the submarine never actually went under water. It simply floated above the surface and all of the wonderful sights that entranced me before were actually fake props planted just below the surface of the water. It was all a hoax. A beautiful hoax I must admit but fake, nonetheless. Never in the history of the world has there been a time where the rules of reality are as bent as they are now, and it is sometimes nearly impossible to know what is real. Our big idea for the message today is this. Live one truth at a time.

We have begun our journey examining closely the armor of God as described in Ephesians 6. Our starting point is truth. Here is our key verse today. **Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist** (Ephesians 6: 14a NIV) A literal translation of this important command reads, **Stand therefore, you girding your loins in truth.** The idea here may be more putting on the underwear of truth but that doesn’t sound quite as noble as putting the belt of truth around your waist but nonetheless, the meaning is clear. “Get ready for battle, making sure you have on truth.” This is in fact a command of God and it makes it clear that you are to be certain you have truth in place as you face the “day of evil” described in the previous verse. We have thoroughly discussed in last Sunday’s sermon the day of evil but let us take a closer look at this matter of truth. The Greek word “aleythia” can be translated truth, truthfulness and even reality. The idea behind the term is what is actual, what is really so. Reality is more than an idea; it is what in fact is. What chromosomes do you have? Reality informs you. How did the car accident occur? Reality is the answer. Did you kiss your wife before you left for work?. Again, reality tells you. Reality is not a philosophical concept; it is what actually is. The difference between one in a coma and someone not is that one is experiencing reality and not in a dreamland of visions concocted in the brain. Reality is one of the indicators of mental health. There is no such thing as “your reality” vs “my reality”. Reality is decided by what is, not by what one would like it to be.

It is quite difficult to figure out what is reality or truth in the world outside our personal experience. The news has been warping the actual facts of reality for years, using bits and pieces of information to persuade or shape opinions of matters. Reality shows are anything but real reality. They are scripted and managed telling of stories that are intended to grab interest and generate audiences. You along with nearly every other person in the world has an insatiable desire for information. However, it is very difficult to be certain that the information you are gathering in your head is reality, is true truth. Who hasn’t bought something online and when it arrived found it to be nothing like what it was advertised? How many times do we hear of events around the world and eyewitnesses claim that what is reported isn’t what really took place? It has become so difficult to find out what actually is the truth that many have given up trying and simply fall back on “my truth” rather than truth truth. The old axiom that three witnesses to an accident will give three different accounts of what happened is often the case but that does not mean that not behind it all is reality and true truth.

A famous conversation occurred between the cruel Roman governor Pontius Pilate and Jesus as the former interrogated the later. Jesus gave Pilate a provocative and unexpected reply to the question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” **Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”** (John 18: 37 NIV) This is quite informative in that Jesus asserts that the reason He came to us was to testify or bear witness to the truth. It is not a truth or personal truth but real, actual truth. He does not clarify the details of the truth He came to provide. It is His entire life and all His actions that are the testimony of truth. As He stated earlier, **Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life.** (John 14: 6a NIV) Truth begins and ends with Jesus and all truth is of Him. If you stumble upon something true, it has its origin in Jesus. In contrast, all lies have a starting place too. During His heated verbal battle

with the Pharisees, Jesus told them that they were aligned with the devil, in fact that the devil was their father. **You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** (John 8: 44 NIV)

It would be easy to agree with the philosophic premise that life is comprised of grays that each person navigates in his or her own way. You find your own truth and make the most of it. Christianity, and in particular Jesus Christ, despite what many try to make of it, and Him, is not a proponent of a universe filled with grays. It is either truth or lie, of Christ or of the Devil. All lies originate with the devil and they may or may not be obvious. Many are cool and lovely both intellectually and emotionally. Truth on the other hand, regardless of who promotes it, is from Jesus and provided by Him. It is true that what at one moment may seem to be a fact may later be found to be untrue. That doesn't mean that truth is not somewhere to be uncovered and discovered. Let's admit it. Even Christian teachers have gotten it wrong but eventually if they belong to God, they will get it right. Jesus made it clear there is a demarcation between two groups of people. There are those who listen to Jesus and those who don't, and it all depends on who leads them...either God or the devil. **He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.**" (John 8: 47 NIV)

Let me give an example that is at the center of Christianity as a whole. When Thomas the disciple questioned the validity of the resurrection of Christ, he was not alone in the world. He was simply the first that we know who did not believe the resurrection of Jesus was possible. What turned him around was true facts. Jesus literally came to Thomas alive and gave him the opportunity to touch His wounds and feel, not just see and hear His aliveness. Countless millions do not believe that happened. Why? For the same reason Thomas did not. They have never seen anyone come to life after being killed. I have never seen a blue whale or talked with George Washington but my experiences or even my feelings about matters don't determine the realness of what is in the universe. Christianity is not merely a religion of values and moral opinions although many think that is all it is. It is what has happened in history and is true, or to use our Greek word *aleythia*, it is real. If you simply use scientific methods for determining the realness of reported events in history, then the resurrection of Jesus is beyond repute. What stands in the way of those who doubt it is the desire, a Satan inspired desire, to not have Jesus still alive, still Lord over all. They want Him dead or non-existent and the trouble with true facts is you cannot simply wish them away. They are there, like a rock resisting the ocean waves, like a sun that is steadfast in the sky.

You will stand against the schemes of Satan and not be toppled in the days of evil that come if you make sure you have made truth the very first item protecting your mind and way of life. That is a very simple matter for you. Jesus Christ becomes the Lord of each part of your life. No aspect of you is not in submission to Him and His guidance and protection. Let us take a brief look at the resurrection as we consider the truth of Christ and the record we have of Him. When Jesus died on the cross, that was a very public and carefully witnessed event. The Roman government and all those who mingled about were certain of His death. When Jesus rose from the dead, at least twelve men witnessed Him alive again along with a number of women. After that, more than five hundred different people were certain Jesus rose from the dead because He came to them. What if none of this happened, no real witnesses in Jerusalem. Christianity would have ended; the worship of Jesus would have stopped. After all, the most vicious enemies of Jesus Christ were there who held great power to shut it down. But they could not. In fact, the very center of hatred and powerful forces aligned against loyalty to Jesus became the epicenter within days of the explosion of Christian practice and devotion. Men and women who were deathly afraid of the Roman governor and the Jewish leaders boldly proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. Why? Because they knew it was true and you cannot stop truth from coming forward. The disciples all died terrible deaths because they refused to renounce the true facts of Jesus raised from the dead. The greatest critic and most awful persecutor of the early church, Paul, died a martyr's death, going to the grave with the knowledge that he too saw irrefutably Jesus raised from the dead. He suffered brutal persecution and terrible circumstances for what reason? Because he thought it was cool to lie about a mythological religious figure? Who does that? It was because Paul knew the facts were the facts and Jesus was alive and truly God. Our big idea is this. Live one truth at a time. The truth for today is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after being crucified and He is alive now to see you through whatever you face. Believe Jesus is Lord and live that way this week. The facts are the facts.