

4.10.20 Good Friday Sermon, the Way, the Truth, the Life

- The one great lie of this world has two faces
 - One face of the great lie of this world is that we as human beings have the wisdom to solve all the problems of humanity including the problem of life and death
 - And the other face of the great lie of this world is that we have enough goodness within us to make us worthy and deserving of God's love
- The past weeks and months of this coronavirus pandemic have been humbling, and it has revealed the hollowness of human wisdom
 - Even when an effective drug, or reliable vaccine is developed, it will come in the wake of months of missed opportunities, selfish hoarding, unnecessary social risks, recriminations and accusations, and blaming and falsehoods
 - This virus has brought out both the best and the worst in people, and while an effective drug or vaccine will save lives, they will not undo the messy way that humanity in every place has sometimes treated each other during these months
- Not only the virus, but human experience reminds us that while there are sterling examples of selfless serving and human goodness, we still cannot do enough to reach some kind of holy perfection
 - Now don't get me wrong, the daily selfless small acts of neighbors, and the huge public and even heroic acts of medical folks on the front line of care deserve our thanks
 - But somehow, holiness will ultimately elude us, because we are human – we are not God
- The gospel for Good Friday reminds us that we do not have the wisdom, and we do not have sufficient goodness within us, to overcome the world's great lie
 - Poor Pilate
 - He is a government official trying to get to the bottom of the truth
 - Pilate wants an answer – “are you the King of the Jews?”
 - For Pilate, that is a simple question that should have a simple answer, either a YES or NO

- The answer Pilate seeks would be a fact that he could write down on a post-it note
- The answer that Pilate asks for could be recorded in a ledger
- The answer that Pilate asks would pin down yet another bit of knowledge, so that historians could look back at the record and say, “This obscure Jesus of Nazareth on such and such date said that he WAS NOT the King of the Jews,” or “This Jesus of Nazareth said that he WAS the King of the Jews.”
- And life in this world would go on, undisturbed as usual
- But TRUTH was not a fact, or an answer, or a matter of record that would allow human life to go on, undisturbed thereafter by an apparent loser want-a-be king named Jesus from Galilee
- Instead, TRUTH WAS AND IS A PERSON, not a fact, or a post-it, or a snippet of information
- THE TRUTH that Pilate sought was standing right there before him in the very person of Jesus, as the truth of God in the flesh – a claim by the gospel of John that was proclaimed in the very beginning of the story, that the word that created the world “became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth. [Jn. 1:14]”
- And God taking on flesh to live among us, forever disturbed and changed the very world that the truth had made
- Instead of Pilate’s question, WHAT IS TRUTH? The claim of the Christian faith is that the answer is not WHAT? But WHO?
- In his ministry Jesus declared, “I AM the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [Jn. 14:6]”
- The world persists in the great lie that human wisdom and goodness will carry the day
- Instead, from outside the world, Jesus came to be born into this place to be the truth in the flesh for a world and a humanity that cannot find the truth or save itself
- And in the cross we remember that God would rather die, than to submit to the lie of human wisdom and human

goodness... so instead, God in the cross has exposed the folly of human wisdom and goodness, and when all seemed lost, also from outside our world, from outside our experience and plans, three days later came a gift that changed the world – the totally undeserved and free gift of the way, the truth, and the life who broke down the confines of cold stone, and brought true and abundant life that conquered even death