

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/17/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, April 18 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for truth. Ask GOD that truth might always rise to the top and that people everywhere might always seek the truth. Pray for those who work to bring the truth to the front. Ask also that the truth might guide us in the decisions we make each day.*

This week the trial based on the lawsuit from Dominion Voting Systems v. Fox News regarding Fox's allegations of voter fraud on the part of Dominion is set to begin. Some of the things this case will bring to the fore are freedom of speech and the responsibility of news agencies to share facts. News organizations have their biases and tend to report news or present news in such a way that supports their partialities. Fox News leans conservatively while MSNBC, for example, leans liberally. Studies on the accuracy of news agencies show that Fox News is only about 40% accurate in their reporting while MSNBC is only about 55% accurate. In the case of Fox News, the other 60% of what they share is opinion, but that opinion is often received as factual news. One report said that you were better informed if you watched no news than if you watched Fox News or MSNBC.

This isn't intended to be an attack on Fox News, or anyone else for that matter. But this upcoming trial got me thinking about what the Bible says about truth. The word "truth" (*aletheia* in Greek) is used twenty-five times in the Gospel of John, making it an important issue in that gospel. John also uses it nine times in I John, five times in II John, and six times in III John. Perhaps the most famous statement about truth in the Bible comes from John 8:31-32 where JESUS says, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

Truth is something that can be proved. So, what does JESUS mean when HE says "truth"? In John 14:6, JESUS says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* Can we prove the truth of JESUS? Yes, we can. In addition to the testimony of the Bible, there are several extra-biblical historical references to JESUS, proving that HE existed. HIS crucifixion is also reported in non-biblical histories, and so are reports of HIS resurrection. Historically, we can prove that JESUS lived and died, and that there were many claims of HIS resurrection.

But what more does JESUS mean when HE calls HIMSELF the truth? JESUS is saying that HE is the embodiment and fulfillment of GOD'S Word and the HE is the opposite of what is false and misleading. JESUS is assuring that following HIS teachings and coming to know JESUS leads to the truth of who JESUS is and what a relationship with HIM can mean for a person's life. History is filled with stories of those who knew or know JESUS, hold to HIS teachings, and have found joy and freedom in relationship with HIM.

One of the other more famous quotes in the Bible concern truth comes from Pontius Pilate as he questioned JESUS. In John 18:38, Pilate asks JESUS, "What is truth?" Pilate had just enquired of JESUS if HE was a king and JESUS replied, *"MY Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, MY servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my Kingdom is from another place."* Then JESUS tells him, *"You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to ME."* And then Pilate asks the question.

It was Pilate's question that came to mind as I thought about the Dominion v. Fox trial and news today. What is truth? My brother, Joel, and I always made a point of not allowing differences of opinion about things to impact our relationship. We would always say, "Seek the truth," and then would let it go until either one found the true answer to our debate. Once either one knew the truth, he would call the other and share that information. The truth was always more important than fighting for our personal bias on an issue. Pilate's problem was that the Jews often came to him to resolve issues. In the case of JESUS, they wanted to get rid of JESUS and execution required the permission of Rome. Pilate had no way of knowing whether the Jewish leaders were sharing truthful information or just making claims to get their way. His sense of JESUS was that JESUS was innocent. Unfortunately, keeping the peace and protecting his position as governor was more important to him than the truth, so Pilate agreed to the execution of JESUS.

As we receive information, we must always seek the truth. Doing so involves considering the source of the information and the reliability of that source. It is also worthwhile to search out the truth from different sources to see if what we have been told is supported by others. And once we know the truth, we can use that information to find the freedom that comes only from the genuine truth and not from hearsay or opinion. In everything, we would do well to always seek the truth.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey