

The Federated Church of Hyannis
Sunday, April 11, 2021
Easter: Part 2

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

INTRODUCTION

For several weeks I have been leading a class called Starting Point. I didn't create the class, but Andy Stanley, who developed it, begins with the assertion that faith as an adult often seems different than the faith we had as children. Even Jesus shares this truth about the difference in being young and old when he says in John 21:18 *"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."*

First of all, I normally would never question Jesus, but I have to question the part about children dressing themselves. It must have been a different time and culture back then. But that is not the point here. The truth is when we are young, we see the world differently than when we get older. And faith as an adult can seem different than faith as a child. And so this class I have been teaching for several weeks shows how as adults we all need a new starting point in our faith journey.

PART 1: WE WANT TO BELIEVE

As adults we want to believe. When we were children we didn't want to believe, we just believed. We just did it when we were kids. If mom or dad said this is what we believe then we most likely believed it. If our teachers said this is true, we just

believed it. If the older neighborhood kids said it was true we believed it. But at some point in our journey we realized it wasn't good to believe everything that we were told. As young adults we began to question things. And if you were ever a teenager you questioned things. Maybe you are one of those people today who questions everything. You want to believe but there is now a high standard of proof that is needed to convince you. We want to believe like we did when we were children, **BUT** somewhere we discovered not everything we were told as children is the truth. And so having faith as an adult is different than having faith like a child. We need some stronger evidence to affirm what we believe is in fact the truth.

PART 2: DOES TRUTH EXIST TODAY?

The biggest problem most of us face today is understanding what truth looks like. We have twisted and corrupted words so much that it is sickening to think what passes for truth today. The level of absurdity on television nowadays and what the media reports on is disorienting. They say in the Gallup poll data study on religion that more than 50% of the people in America no longer believe in or identify with a religious tradition. When I first heard that I was surprised. But then I realized we as a nation have been drifting away from belief in anything for such a long time it probably is true. People are tired and fed up with believing the garbage that passes for news nowadays. What is truth? What does truth even look like anymore? Does the concept of truth even exist in today's world or have we all become so skeptical that belief is an outdated idea? Who can be trusted as having the truth?

PART 3: THERE IS ONE WHO CAN BE TRUSTED

There is Good News! There is one who can be trusted. His name is Jesus and he died two thousand years ago on the cross for our sins. And we know he can be trusted because we know he rose again from the grave. He promised eternal life and he delivered on it when on the third day he rose from the grave. That is some pretty strong evidence that Jesus is legit. That is what the Apostle Paul is getting at here in his letter to the church in Corinth. The evidence is so overwhelmingly strong that Jesus is the Messiah, that it would be crazy not to believe it as truth. Realize this, Corinth is a Greek city. At the time Paul is writing this letter the Greeks were obsessed with philosophy. Everything was a search for universal truth. They were obsessed with discovering the truths of the universe, and the Greeks were pretty good at it. We still look to many Greek Philosophers today as the great depositors of truth. The Greeks overwhelmingly converted to Christianity in the first century, over 180,000 by the end of the first century. The Greeks were skeptical people who questioned everything. Yet the message of Jesus' death and resurrection caught on like wildfire in Asia Minor (the Greek part of the world).

They accepted it as truth because they deeply valued and believed in truth. If it wasn't true they would have rejected it. What Paul writes in his letter to Corinth is full of evidence that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. Look at how many people living in that time could testify that they had seen Jesus after he was buried. Cephas (Peter) saw him first. Well, Peter and the three women at the empty tomb. Then all the twelve saw him. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers, many still alive at the time Paul wrote this letter. Then he appeared to James the brother of Jesus. Finally, Paul shares that he saw Jesus with his own eyes while he was still carrying out murderous threats against the early disciples of Jesus. Jesus is the **Way, the Truth,** and the Life. If there is one person in the history of the world who is believable, it has to be Jesus. There are many other believable people in the world, but Jesus is by far the one person who can be trusted with the real truth.

SIDE NOTE

Here is a little side note that comes from the Greek. You know that word we say at the end of every prayer. The word Amen. Amen is a Greek word and it means "verily, truly, truthfully". We say Amen at the end of a prayer because our prayers are supposed to be honest. Jesus always started his teachings with the "Amen". Every time you read a teaching of Jesus that starts with "truly I say unto you" or "verily I say unto you", that means the sentence begins with the word "Amen". Jesus preached the truth, and to emphasize that it should be accepted he started out by identifying his teachings with the word amen. It was like the oath a person takes when they are about to testify. Jesus' teachings didn't start with "well this is what I think". Jesus' teaching started with "this is the God's honest truth so take note".

PART 4: TRUST AND BELIEVE

I truly believe people today want to believe that Jesus' death and resurrection is true, but we live in a culture that makes trust and belief so difficult. We don't seek the truth, we seek entertainment and distraction from some really scary facts. What we know and believe to be real is often very frightening. C.S. Lewis came to faith in Christ because he believed evil existed in the world. Based on philosophy and reason he knew if evil existed, then the antithesis of evil also had to exist. Lewis could not deny the existence of evil, therefore he could not deny the existence of God. All languages are built upon the premise of antithetical correlations. Lewis was a literary genius, so this process of proof gave him the ability to believe Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He knew how to find truth in what he read. The Greeks had the tools to help them find truth, C.S. Lewis had the ability to see truth in literature, and justice once sought evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to prove

what is truth. But the tools to find the truth today is challenging. Let me demonstrate.

Me: “Siri, tell me what is the truth?” Siri, “*that may be beyond my abilities at the moment*”.

I tried asking Google the same question, but it gave me Wikipedia’s definition of truth. When I asked Alexa I got a song called “the truth” on Amazon Music. It is confirmed that Siri, Google, and Alexa can’t answer the question. Clearly the world today does not have the right tools to find the truth.

CONCLUSION:

I guess finding the truth requires doing it the old-fashioned way. It requires a book with written records of statements and testimonies to confirm what is the truth. The Bible is the written record. But even before the Bible was written there were people like Luke, Matthew, Mark, John, and Paul who saw the resurrection and confirmed it with many witnesses before they put it in writing. And even after these events were recorded in writing there were councils of the early church that canonized the writings. Canon is a Latin word that means measurement or measuring stick. The councils reviewed the accuracy of what was written to ensure it measured up to be the truth. For over two thousand years it has stood up as being true. It cannot be proven to be untrue, therefore it must be true. Here is the bottom line. The question isn’t, is the resurrection true or not. The real question we need to ask is, why did Jesus do it? Why did he die on the cross for us and then rise from the dead? The apostle Paul says, “*that is you profess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*” Romans 10:9. If you accept the resurrection as being true, then you’re on the right path. And that is God’s honest truth. Amen!