

What is Truth?

John 18:37, 38.

Address to Suffolk County Councillors, Ipswich, Thursday 18th July 2013.

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John 18 contains the last recorded conversation Jesus had with another individual before He was crucified. It tells us of two men with contrasting agendas.

On the one hand there is the Roman governor, who found himself in the middle of a bitter religious dispute. He looked for a compromise whereby he could pacify the people and yet show clemency to the accused.

On the other hand, the Lord Jesus used the hour of trial to reveal His true identity and preach salvation in such a way as to bring Pilate to the point of decision. He declared Himself a King and said, "I came into the world for this purpose, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice."

It was then that Pontius Pilate asked the great question which many are still asking today – "What is truth?"

Refusing the possibility of an absolute will result in a hopeless inability to make the right decision. If we think there is no truth, we are all at sea. Here is the challenge. Is truth whatever a man believes it to be, or is there an ultimate reality?

By a simple definition of the word, *truth* is what is *true to fact* and what *conforms to reality*.

In this free country, a man may believe whatever he chooses to believe. But believing something with all one's heart, does not necessarily make one's belief truth. The thing may be true to us, yet not true in reality. A long time ago, people believed the earth was flat and that you could sail off the edge. There is a Flat Earth Society today and people who argue passionately for their outdated notion. This is their truth but it is not truth. Real truth stands scrutiny, and will always be true, no matter how many refuse it in favour of something else.

The tragedy is if we take something to be true which isn't, and base life choices upon it, our foolishness will soon become apparent.

Abraham Lincoln had a humorous way of teaching people about the folly of making decisions based on mere supposition. One day, some people came to him with a decision based on supposition. After listening to their arguments, he asked, "How many legs would a sheep have if you called its tail a leg?"

They quickly answered, "Five!" The President then said, "No, it would only have four legs. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one!"

As well as having the right perception of truth, we need to know the power of truth.

Jesus said, "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). In speaking of the truth, He is the truth He speaks of. His claim is exclusive. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life..."

All of us can know Him if we only listen to His voice - just like He told the Roman governor. Knowing Him frees us from sin, doubt, fear and ignorance, and makes us wise in respect of our duties. He who is described in Isaiah's Advent prophecy as "the Wonderful Counsellor" and "the Mighty God" can only do us good. Let us therefore take Him and His Word to heart. If we do, we cannot go wrong. And He will, according to this county's motto, GUIDE OUR ENDEAVOURS.

A Prayer for Guidance :

*Since truth is always true
And only true can be
Keep me, O Lord
As true to truth
As truth is true to thee.*