

November 25, 2018

John 18:33-38a

The Gospel lesson from John was today's given lectionary reading. I chose to use it today as I have always felt answering Pilate's question was one of the most important challenges we, as followers of Jesus Christ, face.

Looking for answers to this question I googled quotes for truth and found lots; some of which I used in today's bulletin. But it wasn't until I really struggled with putting this sermon into words that the quote from the author of The Little Prince made the most sense:

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

Francis Bacon may have been right. Pilate – in frustration, impatience, or ignorance – just did not wait for Jesus to answer. But more than likely, Pilate knew that one's understanding of "truth" is subjective. It is equally possible that Jesus, having heard Pilate's question, chose to remain silent, refusing to answer.

What is more than likely in this story is that Jesus knew there was no point in continuing the conversation. Pilate was asking a question about Jesus' royalty based on a human power structure perspective and Jesus' royalty came from a perspective based on an understanding of God's power structure.

How was Pilate to understand that God's "king" was servant to all? Pilate had too much power over

other people to be able or willing to grasp the idea of "letting go and letting God."

And Jesus knew that the truth for which he "came into the world, to testify to" could not be put into words and, like morality, could not be legislated.

Jesus' testimony "to the truth" was his life – his deeds, more than his words. Recognizing this leads me to share with you how the world often testifies to the truth:

- The world tells us about "self-made people", people who have pulled themselves, by themselves, up by their bootstraps. Rugged individuals.
- The world tells us "it is a dog-eat-dog world" and we have to be more thick-skinned and take and horde what we can, when we can.
- The world tells us "might makes right" and "walk softly, but carry a big stick."
- The world tells us "the one with the most toys at the end wins."

All this leads to royalty and worldly rulers.

God's truth tells a different story:

- God's truth says power lies in servanthood
- God's truth says we are interconnected and interdependent; when we lift up our neighbor we lift ourselves
- God's truth says to love your neighbor

- God's truth says turn the other cheek and pray for those who persecute you
- God's truth says sell all you have and give to the poor; don't allow your possessions to possess you

As followers of Jesus we, like Jesus, are called to testify to this truth. Given this is the end of our liturgical year, here is a look back at how we here at Amicable Church testified to this truth:

- Which one of us, alone, could organize and feed well over 700 people by giving out 170 turkeys and lots of fixings? This could only happen, when we work together in community.
- Recognizing that "there but for the grace of God go I" we fill our Mitten Trees with warmth for the winter and, miraculously, we too are warmed
- Welcoming anyone and everyone into our building by making it accessible is a group effort.
- Some of us spend a night outdoors in winter in order to better understand some of our neighbors' pain.
- We hear of loss and send support to victims of natural disasters
- In the midst of loss, we offer comfort, in many forms. One of the most powerful is the gift of a collation.
- In the midst of very busy lives, we find time to visit those homebound or lonely.

This is only a partial list. I didn't speak of the power of Sunday School and your love and support of our children and youth, as well as our many members and friends of all ages.

Truth is subjective. This means we have to choose all the time from which lens we will look at the world; whose truth are we going to live by and testify too.

We gather here on Sunday mornings to count our blessings and to give God's thanks for those many blessings.

We gather, because we know we are not independent persons, but dependent on one another and all God's creation. So we come to be in a community that completes us and supports us.

We gather, too, to find guidance and strength for living out God's truth in our daily lives.

Lao Tzu is reported to have said, "The highest truth cannot be put into words."

He is right, which is why Jesus remained silent and Pilate left frustrated.

Truth can only be known, when we live it out and experience it. I am proud of how Amicable Church – year in, year out – testifies to the truth. And I look forward to how we will continue to testify in the coming new liturgical year.

May God continue to bless us, as we seek to be the answer to the question, "What is truth?" Amen.