

MIDWEEK LENTEN VESPERS  
Harmony of the Four Gospels: Crucified under Pontius Pilate

Sometimes people will ask me if I believe in premarital sex. Do you want to guess my answer? I absolutely do believe in premarital sex. In fact, I've baptized incontrovertible evidence of it. But what do people really mean when they ask me that? They want to know if I think premarital sex is all right. You know my answer to that.

But here's the thing: Who am I to say that what isn't right for me isn't right for someone else, right? What's true for me might not be true for you, don't you think? Many think that way, but is it right? Can something be true for one person and not for another simply because one person believes it and the other doesn't? If I drive south on I-75 will I somehow avoid Ohio if I just don't believe there's any such state? We can certainly both be wrong about a reality, but can we also both be right even if we have contradictory beliefs?

No one would speak that way of math, would they? If you asked me to break a five, and I gave you six quarters, you wouldn't put up with my mathematical beliefs, would you? If I stole your car and you confronted me, would you let me keep it if I explained that, while you think stealing cars is wrong, I think it's fine and dandy? If I kicked your kid in the head and explained that kicking kids in the head was part of my religion, would you answer, "Who am I to judge?" If your doctor told you that you shouldn't worry about the cancer they've found or bother with treatment because people thought cancer was bad back in the day but we live in a different time now, would you take his advice?

So let me ask you this: is where you spend eternity and how you stand with God more or less important than how many quarters you get for a five? Is it not indeed a sad commentary upon our faith if we investigate our next car or shoe purchase more than the revelation of God? And if God is simply whatever we want Him to be, do we have God at all or a mere figment of our imagination.

No one here is named Otto, right? I hope not. Let's say Otto weighs four hundred pounds. Bob says Otto is overweight. Brenda says Otto is skinny as a rail. Which is it? Is Brenda's cockamamie opinion that a four hundred pound man is skinny correct because she believes it or is Otto's gut still spilling over his belt? If Otto is a real person, facts must be facts. Otto needs to lay off the Doritos.

God is no less three real persons in one real God than Otto is Otto is a real person who needs to hit the gym. And that is the only way we should want it. A figment of your imagination can't truly create, provide for, save, and preserve you anymore than your invisible friend as a child, a Care Bear, the man on the moon, or the cow that jumped over it.

***What is truth?*** Pilate's answer was standing right in front of Him. The answer wasn't some convoluted philosophical formula, a theory from physics, or a fairy tale. No, the answer was the ***Word become flesh***, Jesus Christ, ***the Way, the Truth, and the Life***. And that answer was as certain as two plus two equals four or what goes up must come down. In fact, it was more certain, because our Lord is the Truth behind all truth.

Sometimes when a Christian doesn't like something that God has to say, he or she will respond, "Well, that's your interpretation, and I have my interpretation." It's a fancy way of scoffing "***What is truth?***" with Pilate. When I hear someone say that, I'm often tempted to ask who in the world asked him or her to interpret the Scriptures? Would you lecture Einstein on his theory of relativity? Who are we then to lecture God on what is no theory at all but as real as the hair on Jesus' head? We make Jesus out to be a fool when we allow ourselves to think that Jesus died for sins that are actually and indeed only sins so long as we think they are. We are not called to interpret Scripture. Scripture interprets the Scripture. Do we need to use sanctified reason and sound judgment in allowing them to do so? Most certainly. But the true Christian dare never arrogantly stand over the Scriptures in judgment. No, the true Christian submits to the Scriptures in humble faith.

The Bible doesn't expire like a prescription and it doesn't change like spring fashions. The Bible isn't play dough for us to mold or a blank for us to fill in. The Word is Christ and Christ is the Word, and so the Word is as personal and real as the flesh and blood Jesus before Pilate today. And thanks be to God for that, because this is the message that Word proclaims to us today: for our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He loves us. He gives Himself for us. He is bound to set us free. He is beaten to heal us. He is knocked down to raise us up. He is crowned with thorns to crown us with life. ***What is truth?*** That is truth. Amen.

\*\*Typed from a preaching outline. Please forgive any typos.