**Truth Currents** **11-15-20**

**What is Truth?** It’s an ancient question but it’s more relevant today than ever before.

What is truth? The ancient Greeks pondered that question. The classic moment when it was spoken is in the gospel of John. A Roman governor by the name of Pilate was interviewing Jesus in the hours before the cross.

He said, “*Are You the king of the Jews?*”

And Jesus answered, “*Are you asking this on your own or have others told you about Me?*”

“*I’m not a Jew am I?*” Pilate replied. “*Your own nation and the chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?*”

“*My kingdom is not of this world*,” said Jesus. “*If My kingdom were of this world My servants would fight so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, My kingdom is not from here*.”

“*You are a king then?*” Pilate asked.

“*You say that I’m a king*,” Jesus replied. “*I was born for this. And I have come into the world for this, to testify to the truth*. *Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice*.”

“*What is truth?*” said Pilate.

It’s interesting this question is relevant today in an incredible way because more people than ever before are beginning to deny that truth even exists.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, a period called the Enlightenment produced what we call Modernism. Modernism was the transition from the ancient ways of trusting authority and believing the supernatural. Modernism became a period where the autonomy of the individual began to be celebrated. The idea was that man had a rational mind and that rational mind could put itself to the task of discovering objective truth. The problem was as modernism progressed society failed to account for the fact that the human mind, rational though it may be, is impacted by sin. It’s damaged by the fall of man and the brokenness of creation.

So, the idea was that man could use his rational mind and he could discover objective truth and live by that. The problem is the mind is not pure rationality. It is broken. It’s a part of a sinful nature. And so, society eventually began to be disturbed by some of the conclusions that man’s rational mind began to produce: for example, slavery or the Holocaust or global nuclear armament. Those were things that began to disturb society. And the question was, “*Is it possible to know objective truth?*”

Now there are two ways to approach that problem. The first is to say, “*Well, the rational mind of man is able to seek and find objective truth if you take into account its fallenness, its brokenness*.” And if we can attach man’s rational mind to a reference point, like the unchanging Word of God, now we’re on to something.

The other alternative was simply the conclusion that because man’s mind is broken that there must not be any objective or absolute truth that we can find.

The failure to account for the fallenness of man led to a movement called Post-Modernism. Now, the roots started in the 1930’s but it was really the 60’s and 70’s when it began to take real hold in American society. Post-Modernism is the fruit. It’s the result of man-centered modernity.

Since absolute truth is illusive rationally, they decided that there must be no such thing as absolute truth in reality. Without truth as a settled reference point, everything is relative. Our values, our morals, our behavior it’s all based on what an individual wants. They emphasize the autonomy that came out of the modern era but they threw out the idea of absolute truth as an object for man to look for. All ideas in relativism, now become equally valid as relativism embraces to the ultimate degree the idea that nobody is ever right and nobody is ever wrong. It’s just whatever works for you. Truth and morals are relative to the persons or the groups that hold them.

Now, here’s the social dilemma that flows out of Post-Modernism. Can human beings relate to one another, can we live in civilization without some sort of consensus about what’s true, about the ideals that we all reach and aspire to? Doesn’t Post-Modernism prohibit the very possibility of people living in community? The answer is, “**Yes**, absolutely it does.”

Because it’s impossible to have some consensus of ideals, because there’s no absolute standard, there’s no moral reference point, it becomes impossible for us to live together. Everybody is living by their own rules. Imagine playing a game with every person at the table playing by different rules. The game, no matter what game you’re trying to play, the game is chaos because you can never accomplish the goal of the game.

So, in order for society to survive we need a social consensus. But the only way for relativists, for Post-Modernists to ever come to some kind of consensus is to rally around their single absolute, which is self-contradictory. The only absolute truth in Post-Modernism is the rejection of absolute truth.

Now here’s the problem, besides the fact that that’s a self-contradictory statement. The lack of any way for us to evaluate what’s right and what’s wrong makes it impossible for us to live together.

Look at the election that we have just gone through and really are still going through. Republicans for example, are arguing that all the votes should be counted. That this election can’t be stolen. Democrats one the other hand, say, “*Listen you’ve got to accept the outcome. We won’t allow this election to be stolen*.”

I find it fascinating that it’s the same fear and the same anger on both sides of the discussion. It’s just different angles that come from different sources of information and ultimately flows out of different worldviews. Let me explain what I mean by that. In general, Republicans tend to be Modernists. That is, they argue that facts are facts. We need to let the facts play out. Democrats in general, are Post-Modernists. They say, “*Identity determines facts*.”

And so, the response is, Republicans say, “*We’re going to challenge this in court. We’re going to let the facts play out. And when all the facts are known then we’ll have an answer*.”

Democrats, on the other hand say, “*No. The only way for competing facts to win out is by sheer power.*” So, we see riots in the streets and burning buildings.

It’s not a Democrat and Republican issue. Ultimately, it’s not about political party. It’s about worldview.

The Modernists says, “*We can find the facts. And the facts will lead us to what’s true*.”

The Post-Modernists says, “*It’s doesn’t matter what the facts are because the facts are only reflections of competing identities. And power is the only way to decide*.”

Well, what is truth?

In the Bible we have two primary languages. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew. The New Testament is written in Greek. In Hebrew the word for truth is “***ameth***.” Ameth is a word that translates “***durable*** or ***constant***.” It’s the idea that truth is something that is unshakeable. It’s something that stands and can’t be toppled over.

When you go to the New Testament the Greek word for truth is “***alethia***.” It means unhidden or revealed. It’s the idea that truth is out there for everyone to see. You just have to look at it. The idea here is that truth simply telling it like it is and it reflects a sure and certain reality that God has made known to us.

If truth is something constant and unchanging, if truth is something revealed and able to be discovered then we have the ability to find out what’s true and align our lives with truth and live that way. If, however there is no such thing as absolute truth and it’s all about power and group identity, society cannot and will not survive because you cannot live in a world where everybody is playing the same game but playing by different rules.

So, what’s the Christian response? Well, first of all you need to understand why people are Post-Modernists. Sometimes it’s spiritual deception. They have a misunderstanding of what truth really is. Sometimes it’s a love of sin that rejects absolute truth because they don’t want the standards. Sometimes Post-Modernism is coping mechanism to justify a guilty conscience. “*I don’t have to accept my guilt for my behavior if I can convince my mind that it doesn’t really break any rules or laws*.” Sometimes Post-Modernists are just the victim of secularists education. Try and assess why the person you’re approaching is a Post-Modernists. Because some are more ready to talk than others.

Here’s the questions that you might ask. I ask more questions that I issue arguments when I talk to Post-Modernists. The first question is, “***How do you know that’s true?***” Whatever it is you’re talking about, whatever the issue is that’s under discussion, “*How do you know that’s true?*” I press that question again and again and again because what happens is inevitably, we make our way back to some absolute statement. And once we’ve discovered the absolute statement behind what they think, now we can talk. It’s usually not the issues at the surface level that are important. It’s the absolutes. It’s the worldview that’s necessary for the discussion. If you can lead somebody to see the self-contradictory reality of their worldview, sometimes that helps.

A second question is, “***Where did you get your information?***” That leads us often to a discussion of the worldview of the source. One of our real struggles now a days is we are flooded with sources of information but we often don’t know which ones to trust. And so, we accept what agrees with us and we go with that. And it puts people at odds. If we can ask the question, “*Where do you get your information?*” If we can examine the trustworthiness of the source, sometimes that helps in the conversation.

The third question is, “***What if you’re wrong?***” It’s a great question to try and reveal the stakes of belief. What if what you believe about this is wrong? What will be the consequences to be paid? Let’s say the idea is, “*There is no God*.” What if you’re wrong? What if you die and open your eyes and find out there is a God?

We need to seek careful discussion whenever it’s possible. Although it’s not always possible. Pilate in this story asks, “What is truth?” But he really doesn’t want an answer. He cuts off the conversation at that point. Jesus doesn’t have the opportunity to speak to him further.

We have to prepare ourselves for the intellectual and even physical opposition that is probably coming in the days ahead for anybody who has the intolerance of a conviction about absolute truth. We have to be ready for that.

But here’s what we really need to do. We need to lean hard into the Word of God. You need to read the word of God. But more than that you need to study the Word of God. You need to understand the Word of God. And I would say, even more than that, you need to memorize the Word of God. I know it’s hard to imagine an America where the Bible is outlawed and the Word of God is not available to us except in underground kind of ways. But see, the Bible was never ever meant to be left on our shelves. It was meant to be implanted in our souls. So, for all the time that you’re spending watching the news and the media and fretting about the election, let me ask you to build into your schedule more time in the Word of God. Read it. Study it. Learn it. And memorize it.

No matter who are president is, ultimately our future, our ability to survive successfully in the next generation will come down to this question, “***How have we handled the Word of God?***” And how well do we grasp the answer to the question, “***What is truth?***”

This is Truth Currents.