

SERMON – Nov. 26, 2006  
John 18 “Truth – Child of God”

G&P

I have been looking for the truth these days. I watched the national and local news. I must admit that the news of late has not been very good. I looked at the front page of yesterdays paper and this what I read:

“Black Friday's thrill ride not for the faint heart.”

In Bloomington the police were called to handle three parking lot disputes. At the south-town shopping center, two drivers wedge their cars into the same parking spot and each refused to move until the police showed up and told them both to leave. “No fists were thrown but we did have cases of people acting like five year olds,” said the police officer interviewed.

At 5:45 am at the Burnsville Target, an employee laid down some ground rules for the crowd of over 100 shoppers. He said:

“I just want every one here to stay safe.”

His plea for civility was soon abandoned when the doors opened for the crowd. The crush of people descended on a cart piled high with 19 inch flat panel TV's for \$179.

“Get out of the way!” came the voice of a woman who already had a cart stuffed with 2 TV's and a DVD player.

Another shopper said,

“God, I wished I had a stun gun.” As he weaved his way down the aisle threw the carts of other shoppers.

At the Best Buy store in Roseville, there were shouts of “Back of the Line,” reverberated almost in unison as customers tried to protect their hard earned turf by weeding out suspected line cutters.

“Hey, get to the back of the line,” one woman shouted at a man who was taking cuts. She then turned to the Best Buy employees and told them that he was cutting in line. She was mad.

The truth is that as human beings we can look pretty stupid. Truth is that left to ourselves we can get pretty ugly. Truth is that we have the ability to take an innocent celebration like the birth of a savior and turn it into something that gives us pause.

The truth is that we have been looking in the wrong place for the truth. Truth is not going to be

found in newspaper or tv or in the actions of humanity. Truth is going to be found in only one place and in only one person: Jesus Christ.

**Jesus said,**

**"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."**

**"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.**

**Jesus answered,**

**"You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."**

**"What is truth?" Pilate asked.**

Pilate asks the question that reverberates down through time. What is truth? For Jesus, He is God's truth in the world. He is the truth of God's grace that was in the world before time began. He was the Word that was with God and was God. He is the truth of Grace that has come to save creation, to save the world.

Jesus wants all to know that he is the truth of God. For this he was born, for this he came into the world. To testify to the truth. Here the ancient language means to reveal, not conceal or hide. For all to see. God has revealed God's love for us in Jesus Christ. God has revealed the grace that saves. God has revealed this truth:

**"We are worth saving."**

**"For so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."**

Powerful words that many of us have put to memory. Words of the truth that saves. The truth that created the world. But not a truth that condemns but one that reveals that we are in need of Jesus. We are in need of God's grace. This is the truth that Pilate could not understand. The only truth that he knew was the truth that comes with power of the sword. The truth that comes with "those in power make the rules and make the history." The truth of Pilate that says:

**"What is mine is mine and what is yours is negotiable."** The truth of Pilate is the truth of the Emperor. It is the truth of the shoppers who had to have what they saw as theirs!. They are out there to take care of Me, Myself and I. The truth of Pilate is the truth that comes out of the mouth of the serpent at the Garden. Remember the words of the serpent: You will not die but be like God. Sin is replacing God in our life with something else. It is seeing the neighbor as an adversary, someone to

fight over a parking spot with or getting that third TV in the price reduction cart at Target.

We are sinners and left to ourselves it is going to get pretty ugly. That is the Truth. We will accumulate more and more stuff looking and seeking a truth that will bring fulfillment to our lives.

**There is the cartoon that I saw the other day in which the worship committee at a church had a meeting decided that the word 'sinner' was too harsh and so they went to the pastor and told him:**

**We think that sinner is too harsh a word, we would like instead that you refer to it as being morally challenged.**

The truth of the matter is that it is both.

**Philip Yancey tells this story:**

**I've become more convinced than ever that God finds ways to communicate with those who truly seek him, especially when we lower the volume of the surrounding static. I remember reading the account of a spiritual seeker who interrupted a busy life to spend a few days in a monastery.**

**"I hope your stay is a blessed one," said the monk who showed the visitor to his cell. "If you need anything, let us know, and we'll teach you how to live without it."**

Philip Yancey, "What 147 Elk Taught Me About Prayer," Christianity Today (March 2006)

We are sinners in the hands of a gracious God. The truth is that you and I are children of God. The truth is "Jesus loves me this I know." The truth is that you are worth dying for. What Pilate doesn't know is that God's truth is one that gives life out of death, death on a cross.

The truth of Jesus, the truth that is Jesus is this: There is not a life, not a child, not man, not a woman that is not worth saving.

**Tragically, Cynthia's story is typical for the streets of Nashville, Tennessee. "I was introduced to moonshine at 5-years-old," she says, "to smoking weed at 6, and was raped by my first cousin at 8." To make matters worse, her father died when she was 9. Angry and afraid, Cynthia left home and began living her life on the streets.**

**"At 13, I had my first child," she muses, "thinking that a baby would give me the love I was yearning for. I didn't have anybody to show me the way." Things continued to decline over the next several years. She had two more children, but bounced in and out of drug treatment programs. At one point she weighed only 64 pounds. Having hit rock bottom, she asked God to either take her life or send her to jail.**

**She was soon arrested. In prison, she prayed fervently for a month before she "finally found a sense of God." After being released from prison, Cynthia was led to Magdalene—a two-year residential community for women with a criminal history of prostitution and drug abuse that was founded in 1997 by Rev. Becca Stevens. For the first time in her life, Cynthia experienced the love of a caring community. In April 2006, she celebrated her 19th month of being clean from drug addiction and continued working as the store manager for Thistle Farms—Magdalene's cottage business that sells bath and beauty products.**

**According to Rev. Stevens, women like Cynthia find themselves in similar situations because of a combination of family failures, community breakdowns, and poor choices. "But you don't make a lot of choices if you get raped at 8-years-old," she adds. Drugs become a way to escape the pain, and prostitution the means to acquire the drugs. Even so, Stevens is quick to emphasize that nobody's situation is hopeless. "There's a myth that once you are a prostitute, you're never going to get better," she says. "It's not true."**

**Cynthia agrees, thinking back to the first day of her recovery at Magdalene. "From that day forward, I was blessed," she says. "These people didn't know me, and yet the love was so unconditional."**

Sam O'Neal, St. Charles, Illinois; source: Jane Lampman, "Where Women Build New Lives," Christian Science Monitor (4-13-06), p. 13-1

This is the truth of Jesus. Every child no matter the age is valuable in the sight of God. Yes we are morally challenged, but we rest in that arms of a loving God of grace. Grace for the journey!!

AMEN