

Broken and Beloved

By: Meagan McLaughlin

February 17, 2021. What is truth? Tonight, as Lent begins, we ask God that question, and listen for the truth God reveals to us in scripture.

Readings: [Isaiah 58:1-12](#), [2 Corinthians 6:1-10](#), [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

*** Transcript ***

Many years ago, when I was just getting into twelve-step work in Al-Anon, I remember being told that we are “only as sick as our secrets,” and if that's true I must have been pretty ill when I got there. I was really good at hiding things I didn't want you to know, and especially good at hiding mistakes. I thought that the way to be okay, to be liked, to have friends, was to only let you know the good stuff. The last thing I wanted to do was let people know the truth.

When the Worship Team met last month to talk about Lent and we were trying to decide on a theme, we bounced around several ideas. And then someone said, “What about 'Called to Truth?'” And we all realized that was it: truth. That thing we often want to hide. That thing we sometimes think will be our undoing. That thing that Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John will set us free.

These days, it seems like there's so much misinformation, distortion, and outright lies being shared on social media and the news that the truth feels really elusive. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that I was reflecting on the situation we and our country are in, and Jesus' conversation with Pilate came to mind. Jesus tells Pilate he has come to testify to the truth, and Pilate says, “Truth? What is truth?” I found myself thinking yeah, what is truth? I'm sure I'm not the only one who has struggled with that recently.

Jesus came to testify to the truth — the truth that will set us free. And so in this time of Lent, when we are called to take a step back, to reflect on our lives and our relationship with God and others, to acknowledge the sin that binds us and grow more into the people God is calling us to be, we at Christ Lutheran will lean into God's call to truth. We will start with Pilate's very real question: what is truth? Tonight, as Lent begins, we ask God that question, and listen for the truth God reveals to us in scripture.

In all of our readings for today, we hear the truth that we have, all of us, turned away from God, in different ways at different times. We have chosen to depend on ourselves and our own power. We have taken advantage of the privileges we have in ways that have done harm to others. We have gotten lost in our attempts to seek approval from others instead of following the way of Christ. We have forgotten our call to care for God's creation, for the earth and all that lives on it. Tonight, as Lent begins, we hear the truth of our sin and brokenness.

And we also hear the truth proclaimed by the prophet Joel that while we are still lost, God is calling us to return, to seek God with our whole hearts. We hear the truth from Paul that now is the acceptable time, today is the day, and that there is always new life in Christ. Jesus tells us in Matthew that God is with us, knows all the things we hide, and calls us to trust in the love of God to lead us home. The God who sees in secret knows that we have sinned, and the God who sees in secret knows the desire we hold in our hearts to return to God.

We as Lutherans know that we are sinner and saint, and this truth is revealed to us over and over in scripture. Our brokenness and sin, the truth we want to bury, is uncovered. And the call of the God who shaped us out of the earth with their hands and breathed Spirit into us, that promise of faithfulness even when we stumble, the reality of our beloved-ness, the truth that we are sometimes unable to see, is revealed.

We journey these 40 days of Lent together, seeking to follow more closely Christ, who entered into our humanity to show us the ways of God. We follow Jesus of Nazareth, who came to testify to the truth. We receive ash tonight as a symbol of our brokenness and sin, and of our mortality — the truth that we came from dust and will return to dust. The ash traced on our foreheads or on our hands also reminds us of the truth of the forgiveness, faithfulness, and love promised us by the God who formed us out of the dust.

Over the years, I have come to believe and know the freedom that comes from truth. Our scriptures proclaim the promise that the God who created us will never abandon us. The God who sees in secret knows everything about us, and even when we stumble, calls us home. We are called to that truth. And that is good news indeed.

Thanks be to God.

*** Keywords ***

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