

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, who is
The Truth, amen.

There's an old saying: "A lie travels halfway around the world before the truth can put its pants on." The saying is attributed to Mark Twain. There's only one problem. The famous American humorist probably never said it. Twain scholars have scoured his writings and have never been able to find it. Yet, if you Google the quotation, the first thing that comes up is this quote attributed to Mark Twain. If you scroll down, you'll find out that it might have been said by Sir Winston Churchill. The truth is we have no idea who first coined the phrase. Ironical, isn't it? That the citation of who first said this quote about a lie traveling halfway around the world — is very likely a lie itself...

One of the most famous lines from any movie was the one delivered by Jack Nicholson's character Col Nathan R. Jessup in the movie A Few Good Men...

(VIDEO) Truth is frightening and sometimes we can't handle it... Pontius Pilate knew that, and washed his hands of truth when he washed his hands of Jesus. Truth is demanding. It won't let us sit comfortably. It knocks out our cozy smugness and casual condemnation. It makes us move. The truth is sometimes hard. I noticed that even Jesus didn't have an answer when Pilate asked him "What is truth?" Pilate asked a really big question. Huge really... He could have

asked: “What is the meaning of life?” or “Why am I here” or well, you have your big questions and I have mine...

I think the question posed for us today is do you belong to the truth? Or as Col Jessup might ask, “Can you handle the truth?” Jesus said, “I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Elsewhere Jesus said, “I Am the Truth and the life.” All of us here would certainly claim to belong to the truth, but do we really? I mean it takes more than listening to the words of Jesus to be a follower of Jesus. It takes more than coming to church on Sunday, saying a few prayers, singing a song or two, listening to a sermon, that better not be more than 12-15 minutes in duration, and then going about the rest of our week with hardly a thought of the one who died on a cross for our sin. I think I know what I’m talking about. I’m sorry if this makes you uncomfortable, but even before Covid hit we had to cancel our mid-week Lenten and Advent services because it just didn’t make sense to continue them with 3 or 4 people attending. How can we claim to belong to the truth when the rest of the week we act as if the truth belongs to us? Some Christians think they’re belonging to the truth because they scan the QR Code, transfer some money to the Church, but then Monday through Friday they’re rude to the waitress or waiter who is overworked and takes a few minutes too long to bring their food. Do you belong to the truth if you secretly watch pornographic images on your computer while

claiming to be faithful to your spouse? People, even those who claim the name Christian, who live according to one lifestyle on Sunday, but quite another the rest of the week, must believe the truth belongs to them rather than the other way around.

Are we willing to seriously study what exactly Jesus is calling is to be? He said those who belong to the truth listen to my voice. We're in the middle of the season of the Church year set aside for examining our lives and repenting of any sin. This is the time to make course corrections, to adjust our game plan. Sometimes a satellite or spaceship slips out of orbit, and it needs a boost to return to the correct orbital pathway. Sometimes, wellness requires regular, if not frequent, checkups. So, you visit your health care professional. The doctor tells you that you need to modify your lifestyle. Maybe to quit smoking, or go on a diet to lose a few extra pounds or to eat more vegetables to get your cholesterol or your blood sugar under control. The same holds true for Christians. From time to time, we need to take our spiritual blood pressure, to get a soul check-up and make the changes that our Lord has commanded. Your doctor might make suggested changes to your lifestyle, but God makes commandments and our Lord Jesus lived out his life as an example for us to follow.

Let's not fool ourselves. We can stipulate that we know what the truth is. The better question Pilate should have asked is not "What is Truth", but rather how

can I handle the truth?" How can we handle this truth sent from God? Jesus and all the prophets before him have laid out the case for exactly what our God expects of us. Read just about any book from the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah. They all say the same thing. Take care of the orphans, the widow, those who are sick, and the unjustly imprisoned. In other words, take care of all the ones the world wants to leave behind. Many who call themselves Christians haven't been inside a Church building except for weddings and funerals in years. Still more "Christians" only come on Christmas and Easter... How can they belong to the truth when they aren't even regular members of His Church Family? How can they know what Jesus would do if they're never present to hear him speak? I mourn for the ones who we've lost, but we all have a choice. That's one of the ever-present themes throughout John's Gospel. Jesus calls us to make a choice. Will you follow and belong to the truth or wallow in your sin thinking you own the truth? The choice is yours...

Even though Jesus didn't give an answer to Pilate when he asked, "What is truth?", as it turns out "What is truth?" is not an unanswerable question. Christ is the truth. Jesus didn't answer that question when Pilate asked it, because Pilate wasn't interested in the truth. "You can't handle the truth," Jack Nicholson's character booms in *A Few Good Men* (1992). Jesus might have said the same thing. But he answered it elsewhere when he said, "I am the way, the truth and the

life” (14:6). And he answers it in what we experience when we receive him into our lives. Christ is the truth. All the lesser truths of what should be done in the complex situations of life can best be found not just by consulting the rules and the precedents, but also by listening for Christ's voice. We hear that best in those places where He promised us he would always be, where two or more are gathered together in His name. Have you ever noticed at every Worship Service we begin in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That’s quite on purpose because when we gather in His Name He is here with us and that’s the truth!

The Law tells us, because of your sin you do not belong to the truth, but the Gospel says that is why Jesus came to earth. So that sinners, like all of us, might have a way out of our debauchery. Jesus came so we might have forgiveness and a new life. A life not bound up in the sins of our past, but created totally new and we even get a bonus called the Holy Spirit. The job of the Holy Spirit is to continually wash us clean from the sin we continue to commit. So that in the end, we do belong to the truth... This Lenten season we are all called to examine our lives, to make the necessary corrections, and to thank the Lord God for the truth that Jesus Christ is our Savior and the Savior of the whole world.

May you hear the voice of the master, Jesus and heed His message. May you never become a truth shape-shifter and live one way on Sunday and another

the other days. May your walk with Jesus lead you to the truth that you are his
beloved child and He will never leave you. Amen.