

## TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Christmas Sermons*. Zondervan, 2005; p.p. 63 – 73  
Berlin, Germany / July 24, 1932

**Text:** John 8.31 - 36 (in pew Bible p. 1060 / in large print Bible p. 1649)

### **Intro:**

- **illust.** Jacob's Family: bondage of the lie / power of the truth.
- the focus of our first Advent sermon was on receiving Christ.
  - wait for God to come to you and to open your life to his call.
- the focus of our second Advent sermon was on how we are to wait for Christ's coming.
  - **watching** in darkness, expectation, and submission.
- today's theme deals with Christ ushering in Truth & freedom from sin's tyranny.

### **Take Home Point:**

- be free from slavery of self-centredness by abiding in Christ's truth.

### **1. ADVENT OF THE TRUTH**

- truth will set you free = most revolutionary phrase in the N.T.
  - **illust.** Dawning Of Hitler's Rise To Power
- examples of those who are living in the freedom of truth.
  - Irrepressible Child
  - Honest Joker
  - Crucified Jesus
- in each case, the people have no interest in truth but instead, truth tests them.
  - Mary's Song (Luke 1.51 – 53).
  - Once to every man and nation
- in human experience, the truth is strange, unusual, and exceptional.
  - actual arrival of the truth is not safe – *it's untimely & unpredictable*.
    - **illust.** High Definition TV
  - communication of truth is unnerving.
    - we don't believe were up to the task of proclaiming or performing.
    - we think we are too limited and unskillful.
- however, Jesus' Advent coming brings hope – *he is the way to proclaim & perform*.
  - John 14.6 "I am the way, the **truth** and the life. No one comes ..."

## 2. WALKING IN THE TRUTH

-abide in Christ's Word (v. 31):

- calls us to tell others the truth we know and experience in spite of misgivings.
- calls us to suffer for the truth – *elicits hatred of the world*.
- calls us to sacrifice for the truth – *reputation & resources*.
  - e.g. shepherds – seeing the Truth & glorifying God. (Luke 2.15, 20).
  - read the Word regularly, study the Word carefully, obey the Word daily.
  - be involved in Alpha.

-know the truth (v. 32):

- liberates us from being self-centred to loving God's creation and other people.
- only God's truth can enable me to see my neighbour as she / he really is.
  - truth clarifies distortions.
  - see Jesus in the naked, hungry, thirsty, stranger (Matthew 25.35, 36).
- swim against culture's current.
  - help the needy, lonely, and forgotten.

-be made free from sin (v. 36):

- God's truth is God's love.
  - Jesus' coming to our lives makes us free from ourselves for others.
  - to be free from sin means nothing less than to be in love with God.
- the woman / man who loves is the most revolutionary being on earth.
  - challenges all values – as the irrepressible **Child**, the honest **Joker**, the crucified **Jesus**.

-the abode of the free woman / man is always the stable & the cross.

### Conclusion:

-the coming of Christ ushered in the coming of Truth.

-be free from slavery of self-centeredness by abiding in Christ's truth.

- truth will set you free = most revolutionary phrase in the N.T.

-how can we, in this time, express freedom from self-centredness?

- elderly and physically disabled – show an interest in others and pray for them.
  - phone & write with positive messages that are not self-centred.
- young and older adults - show an interest in others and serve them.
  - generous investment of time helping those around you.
  - fight selfishness in your work, leisure, and home routines.
  - serve your Church family – be available for positions on Serving Board and in ministry programs.
  - our focus is on being better not bigger.

-be made free from sinful deception (v. 36):

- as the irrepressible **Child**, the honest **Joker**, the crucified **Jesus**.

O God, we all feel the pressing weight of our chains. O Lord protect us, that we are not entranced by the deceitful image of freedom and the temptation to remain in our lies. Give us that freedom which throws us upon You and your grace. Heavenly Father, with Your truth, make us truly free. We wait upon Your truth. Amen.

-ponder the mystery and power of Christ's coming and never forget that he came to bring truth so that we might be free to love.

**-Closing Hymn:** #139 I Wonder As I Wander (all verses).

## Dawning Of Hitler's Power

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was democratically elected Chancellor of Germany. The door of German history swung on its hinges and revealed a monstrous tyranny, which for twelve years rose and fell, destroying European civilization as we had known it. There were those who saw it coming and none more perceptively than the Bonhoeffer family.

The coming of this prince of darkness led Bonhoeffer to sound a note of advent judgment in all subsequent sermons.

Today, we behold the coming of the Prince of Light and with his coming is the demand for the church to rise in the hour of darkness and danger:

"The time is coming for our church when the blood of martyrs will be required. But this blood, if ever we have the courage and truth to spill it, will not be shining and pure like that of the first martyrs" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Christmas Sermons* p. 62).

## Irrepressible Child

Child in midst of adults who suppress and argue about a subject.

- child knows something which the adults are afraid to mention.
  - surprised that others do not seem to know.
  - blurts out what adults are afraid to acknowledge.
  - adults aghast / child laughs & happy that he's done the right thing.
- irreversible effect – falsehood has been cut off at a stroke.
  - **illust.** Dr. Faught's dismissal.

## Honest Joker

Picture a royal court where knights, singers, & poets surround king with patronizing lies.

- one person who is clearly out of place – clothing & method of relating to the court.
  - treated as if he is of no account.
  - nevertheless, the court needs this exception – he is indispensable.
  - jester is the only one who dares to tell the truth about those in the court.
- like the irrepressible child, the jester is the only free man at court.

## Crucified Jesus

Not surprising that our third example is of a man who has been flogged and humiliated.

- he, who is the king of truth, stands before clever Pilate.
  - insincere question = "what is truth?"
  - truth is not recognized and it is crucified.
- only Christ is free in the Passion Story.

## Mary's Song

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
(Luke 1.51 – 53)

## Once to every man and nation

Once to every man and nation,  
Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with false-hood,  
For the good or evil side;

Some great cause, some great decision,  
Offering each *[one]* the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes ... *[on]* ... forever,  
'Twixt that darkness and that light.

Then to side with truth is noble,  
When we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,  
And 'tis prosperous to be just;

Then it is the brave man ... *[or nation]* ... chooses,  
While the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue,  
Of the faith they had denied.

Though the cause of evil prosper,  
Yet the truth alone is strong:  
Though ... *[truth's]* ... portion be the scaffold,  
And upon the throne be ... *[the]* ... wrong,

... *[Yes on]* ... that scaffold sways the future,  
AND, BEHIND THE DIM UNKNOWN,  
STANDETH GOD WITHIN THE SHADOW,  
KEEPING WATCH ABOVE HIS OWN.

(James Russell Lowell 1819-1891)

## High Definition TV

When the new technology of high-definition television came on the scene, it immediately changed how things were done in the studio.

Low-tech television had such poor picture resolution that the visual details of a studio did not show up on the screen. Actors and newscasters wore thick pancake makeup to hide wrinkles, moles, and blemishes, because the makeup was invisible to the relatively crude camera.

Fake books rested on shelves, and cardboard backdrops with painted wood grain stood as walls. With low-tech television, the viewer was none the wiser ... With the old TV, you could get away with murder.

But with the coming of high-definition television, high-resolution digital technology changed all that. The camera picked up everything from scratches on the desk to blemishes on the skin. That forced a change in how things were done.

Like television personalities facing the precision of a high-definition camera, when we come to God, we come to the one who sees us as we really are. We must be completely truthful with him (*750 Engaging Illustrations* Craig Brian Larson, p. 595).