

Talk – 1 John 1:5-2:6; 1 John 2:18-27– Truth & Anti-Truth

Purpose of the Series:

The Christ is Jesus – and in him you may know that you have eternal life.

Central Truth

If we lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it is impossible to live by the truth of the gospel.

Purpose

I want to listener to recognise that truth and knowledge matter – and so does untruth and error. Both have consequences.

Bible Reading

1 John 1:5-2:6; 1 John 2:18-27

Although the sermon considers: 1 John 1:5-2:6 & 1 John 2:18-27 & 1 John 4:1-6

Today's issue:

Tolerance is more important than truth.

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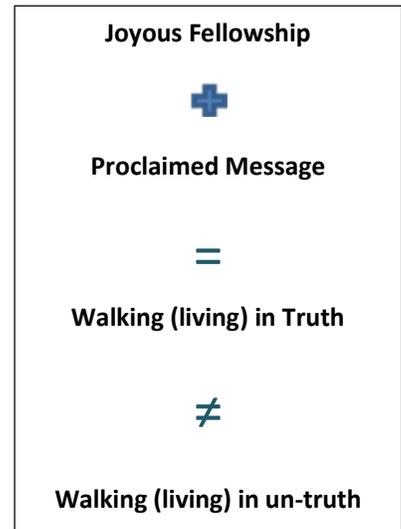
Outline

This is the Message declared – it helps believers walk

If we claim to have fellowship, yet walk in the darkness (1:6)

v.s.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves (1:8)



The antichrist (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 1:17) /man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:3-7)

denies – lies – disobeys – walks – doesn't remain in him

anointing - know – obey – walks – remain in him

What does John ask of you?

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CHECK TIME

Talk

This week in Year 2 at Kidman Park Primary school the spelling list included the words ‘equipment’, ‘treatment’, ‘agreement’, ‘employment’, and ‘basement’. Each of these words are spelt in a particular way – and if the students spell them *that* way they get marked with a tick and if they spell them differently, they get marked with a cross.

There is a right and there is a wrong way to spell.

It will not help the students who spell those words a different way to say to them, ‘that is fine, you can spell them anyway that you wish’, because at some point in life they will need to buy *equipment*, in order to give *treatment*, with the *agreement* of those who work in their *employment* and if they don’t they will likely end up in the *basement*!

PAUSE

The topic we look at today from the letter of 1 John is the contrast between ‘truth’ and ‘un-truth’– falsehood for those who would like to correct my grammar. [Visual – Truth & Un-truth Flower]

What John wants to say here is that *if we lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it is impossible to live by the truth of the gospel.*

If there just one message you got from this sermon – it should be: *if we lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it is impossible to live by the truth of the gospel.*

Across the ages, the question ‘what is truth?’ has perplexed many – and still does today.

We enter a minefield when we attempt to define truth, so allow me to wade in slowly and simply and give three rules to help us understand ‘truth’:

1. First, Truth matches its object.

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When I say ‘I feel cold’, and the person beside me says ‘I feel hot’ that may come down to a difference in personal temperature control. It does not mean that I am right and they are wrong. When a person says that they love curry, yet the next person finds that curry makes them sick, it doesn’t mean that one is more right than the other. That is subjective truth. That is not the kind of truth that John has in mind here.

2. Second, Truth is real – and it can be attested as real by others across the ages.

So when a mathematician added up a sum, it is quite possible to determine that there is a true answer and a false answer. And when a wordsmith writes down a word, it is possible to determine the correct way to spell it as opposed to the incorrect. That is objective truth. That is closer to the kind of truth that John refers to here.

3. Third, Truth states the facts.

In our courts of law, we work hard listening to evidence and argument to determine as carefully as possible what the facts of each case are and then make a ruling based on those witnessed and determined facts. Take the emotion out of it, and tell it like it is. That is verified truth. That is more like the kind of truth that John is suggesting in his letter.

Truth matches its object, it is real, and it states the facts.

Christianity has always regarded theology as truth.

- Truth about God and his Son by the Spirit
- Truth that is right as opposed to the false
- Truth that is both historical and evident.

Yet, as I am sure you are aware, that does not mean that everyone sees Christianity as truth.

When John wrote this letter, one of his aims was to help establish the truth claims of Christianity, so that his reader would know how to walk with, how to live with, Jesus the Christ.

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John was concerned that if his reader lost sight of the truth of the gospel, then it would be impossible for them to live by the truth of the gospel.

In the opening four verses, which we looked at last week, John laid out some historical truth claims about Jesus – that he was heard, seen, touched. Backing those claims up were those who had travelled with him and been taught by him – such that they were able to testify about him.

For John, knowledge of Jesus was very important. It could be tested. It could be proclaimed. And if that knowledge was understood to be true, then logically it would also shape the way a person should live.

Over and over again – he talks about truth and often he does that in contrast to the person who lies.

1:6 – ‘if we walk in the darkness we lie and the *truth* is not in us’

1:8 – ‘if we claim to be without sin, we lie and the *truth* is not in us’

2:4 – ‘the person who says ‘I know him’ but does not do what he commands is a liar and the *truth* is not in him’

What John wants, is people who not only know the truth, but live by that truth.

2:8 – ‘the truth is seen in him *and you*’

2:20 – ‘you have an anointing from the Holy One and all of you know the truth’

2:21 – ‘you know the truth, because no lie comes from the truth’

3:18 – ‘Children, love with actions and *in truth*’

Clearly, one cannot live by the truth, if they don’t know the truth.

PAUSE

Why is this so important to John?

- It is thought, toward the end of the first century, around the time that John was writing, a heresy called *Gnosticism* was emerging.

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- Gnostics claimed that salvation could be gained through ‘secret knowledge’ – that only the select few, who could gain this higher understanding could be saved.
- And further to this heresy they suggested that the material world (that which could be seen and touched) was evil and in opposition to the spirit which was good.

- Gnosticism, attacked some of the truth claims about Jesus.
- Gnostics denied that Jesus could have come as a man, because that would mean that he would have to come into the material (evil) world. That which was spiritual and good could not become physical and remain pure.
- And further, they denied the plain message of the gospel, because it didn’t require some higher knowledge but in fact was plainly set out for all and anyone to test and understand.

- John writes, because he doesn’t want Christians to be led astray.
- Truth and knowledge do matter, and so does untruth and error – both have consequences. Those who stick with what is true remain in Jesus, those who accept that which is untrue are lost.

So with that backdrop, let’s consider some of what John says about living in fellowship with God.

First, we’ll look at what John says about living in the truth – that is living as ones saved by Jesus the Christ. And then consider what he warns about those who have given that truth away and who now deny that Jesus is the Christ.

Living in the Truth

So, living in the truth. Chapter 1:5 [READ 1:5]

- You will pick up the contrast between light and dark. One seems to be good, the other bad.
- John likes the light/dark themes, he uses them in his gospel as well – and here he says ‘God is light’, which is most likely a way of speaking of the good and pure character of God.

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- The ‘darkness’ here is not talking about ‘sin’ as such, but more is suggesting a way of living – when one lives without God and without the intention to have God in their life, then they walk in darkness.
- That helps us understand the logic behind the hypothetical statements that follow.
- Verse 6 ‘If we claim to have fellowship with God, but we are walking in the darkness, then we are not walking in the truth’. So in other words, if you call yourself a Christian, but your way of life is contrary to what God asks of you, then you are a liar – and the truth is not in you.
- That is backed up by the contrast in the next verse 7 – ‘but if you walk in the light, you have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from all sin.’ In other words, sin which is common to anyone who is human, is accounted for by Jesus for the ones who are trying to embrace a way of life that is pleasing to God.
- It is not that your attempt at living a good life saves you – that would deny the salvation that is given by grace, but that because you are saved, your intention is to live your life in a way pleasing to God.
- Can you see this is not about whether you are sinless but about the way you choose to live your life – those who try to live according to truth, walk in the light, and those who live denying that truth, walk in darkness.

Application:

- A way to apply this, is to ask you if there is anything in your life that displeases God, that you are holding onto and you are unwilling to even consider changing? [PAUSE]
- That darkness in your life, is preventing you from walking freely in the light of what God says he will do for you.

But you then say, no matter what I do, I will still be a sinner! Yes!

- And John address that next in verses 8-10 – and again it is connected to what is true and what is not.
- Verse 8 – ‘If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just and will

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forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives’

- John encourages an honesty in the way that believers live.
- Don’t pretend to be sinless, to have it all together. No one has it all together.
- And further, the more Christians ignore the sin that does exist in their lives, the more they deceive themselves and live contrary to the truth.
- So John says, the antidote to that is confession – the willingness to confess sins.
- Walking in the light means being honest about our sin, confessing it, knowing that the blood of Jesus purifies and that the Father forgives.
- Let me apply this by asking you:
When was the last time you confessed your sin – to God – to another in fellowship?

PAUSE

What does this have to do with truth?

- Knowing what is true means you know how to live in truth.
- If you have lost sight of what is truth, then you are at risk of living in untruth because you don’t know any better.

At 9am Church

In this gathering we have folk who have grown up and become a Christian largely in one of two eras.

- Prior to the 1970’s we had the end of the *Modernist* period. Truth was possible and accepted as something that could be verified and determined. The working assumption when it came to faith was that God existed, the Bible was true, and that having a faith was credible.
- Somewhere in the 1970’s we entered the *Post-modern* period. Truth was challenged. Truth was watered down such that one could say ‘you believe what you want to believe and I will believe what I want to

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believe – and we can both be right!’ It didn’t matter if those two belief’s contradicted themselves, because truth could be self-determined.

- From a faith point of view, no longer could the starting assumption be that God exists, or that the Bible was true and so being a person of faith was only credible if you wanted it to be!
- The danger of the modernist period was that something could be accepted without it being verified. The danger of the post-modern period was that you didn’t have to accept anything at all.
- The age we live in now is different again.
- Somewhere following Sept 11, the idea that ‘you believe what you want to believe and I believe what I want to believe’ was shown to be faulty – and so we moved into what seems to be an age of *forced truth*.
- An age, where the truth that I believe, needs to be forced upon another until they agree and if they don’t then it is my job to accuse them of not listening or being arrogant or bigoted or fundamentalist.

At 5pm Church

- The age we live in now struggles to understand the importance of truth.
- It seems that truth has been divorced from fact and has been married to opinion.
- We seemed to be living in the age of forced truth.
- Secularly speaking, the truth that I believe, needs to be forced upon another until they agree with me – of if they don’t then it becomes my job to accuse them of not listening, or being arrogant or bigoted or fundamentalist.
- Truth, in this world is now more opinion-based, back-up by consensus or bias and often with little regard to fact.
- Regardless of the era – truth still exists.

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- That which is true – that which matches its’ object - that which is real — that which states the facts - exists.
- *If we lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it is impossible to live by the truth of the gospel.*
- If truth was in a bottle, and the contents of that bottle determined whether someone was saved – then it helps no one to remove the label and pretend that it is something else.
- Or it helps no one to pour out the contents and pour in something else and just call it ‘truth’ – all it will be, is a lie.
- What John wants to do is point out the lie, so that people will know how to walk in the truth.

Living in Un-truth

So let’s turn our attention to untruth, to falsehood and see what John says about those who have given that truth away and who now deny that Jesus is the Christ.

- Chapter 2:18. [READ 2:18-19]
- Whenever you read about the ‘antichrist’ in the Bible our attention is grabbed.
 - perhaps that is because we want to know who the antichrist is?
 - perhaps that is because we associate the anti-christ with what it means to live in the last moments before the final judgement.
 - maybe it is just because Hollywood loves to promote the idea!
- Let’s not get too caught up on the term.
- It is John who coins the phrase and it is only John who uses the phrase – three times in this letter and once in 2 John (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 1:17).
- The apostle Paul doesn’t use the word ‘antichrist’ but he captures the idea when he speaks of ‘the man of lawlessness’ in 2 Thessalonians 2 – for him it is someone who is evil and who is already at work in the world.
- Who is the anti-christ?

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- For John, it is anyone who no longer walks in the truth. It is not necessarily a single entity as he says that many antichrists have come.
- In the context of the gnostic heresies, it is probably more helpful to take the term on face value – the antichrist, is anyone who is anti Christ!
- The gnostics wanted to deny that Jesus was from God, so they denied that he was the Messiah, the Christ. They were anti Christ.
- John’s concern was probably more that these antichrist’s had at one time been part of the fellowship of believers, but had gone out from them – they had no longer remained with them.

Look at the contrast he draws between those who have left and those who have remained – in verse 20 [READ 2:20-25]

- Again, can you see that truth matters?
- Those who know the truth – are those who have an anointing from the Holy One - I take that to be a reference to having the Holy Spirit – which he will go on and explain further in the early verses of chapter 4.
- So those who know the truth and hold to it remain in the truth.
- But, those who deny the truth are liars and no longer remain in the truth – nor do they remain in the fellowship.
- In verse 22, John gives you the diagnostic tool to determine the difference. If anyone denies that Jesus is the Christ, then such a person is the antichrist.
- They have lost sight of the truth about Jesus, and so it is impossible to live by the truth of Jesus.
- He who denies, lies, they disobey, which means as they walk, they walk in darkness and they don’t remain in Jesus.

- John wants his readers to do the opposite.
- He who holds to the truth, lives according to their anointing, they know the truth, they obey it and so they walk in the light and as such remain in him.
- *If you lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it is impossible to live by the truth of the gospel.*

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PAUSE

- The most dangerous false teachers are the ones who at one time held to what was true about Jesus, but gave it away.
- They are dangerous, because they have the relationships with other believers, and so as they deny the truth, they take people with them away from the truth.
- It might be subtle, it might be overt.

Illustration

- What is it that makes a spy so dangerous to a nation's interests?
- It is that they pretend to be nationalistic, but then betray that trust. Whilst living *in* one country, they are actually living *for* another.
- John highlights the spy among believers.
- They are the ones who have lived among believers, but who don't hold to the truth about Jesus. They are liars and deny that Jesus is the Christ.

PAUSE

What does this mean for us as a church and for us as individuals?

We need to recognise that the way we walk in faith matters! It needs to be based on truth.

- *Walking in darkness* – is characterised by deceit, deception and rejection of truth – and in that context we have no claim to fellowship with God,
- Whereas *walking in the light* – is characterised by truth, confession of sin, the cleansing of sin and forgiveness of God - and in that we do have a claim to continued fellowship with God
- Central to what we believe, must be the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Our concern should be for helping one another know and then live out what the gospel asks of us – and to do that we need to continually return to the truth.
- Whatever we do that grounds us in that truth should be helpful.
- At times it will simply mean reading that truth.

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- At times it will mean we need to examine that truth
At times it will mean we need to be reminded of that truth.
At times it will mean we need to defend that truth,
At times it means we will need to show what it means
to live out that truth
and at times it will mean being willing to speak out about
that truth.
- Not everyone will like what they hear from you or like what they see in
you.
At times that truth will seem out of step with the world around.
- *But if we lose sight of the truth of the gospel, then it will be impossible to
live by the truth of the gospel.*
- What does John ask of you? Remain in his truth and live it.

Pray