

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 164
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The Sermon: WHAT IS TRUTH?

Scripture: John 18:33-38

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me; what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

Truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this is the Spirit of that wicked one, who was a liar from the beginning.

When Pontius Pilate asked "What is truth?" he repeated one of the oldest and most significant philosophical questions to which men have turned their minds. The Sophists of ancient Greece had answered the question by saying that knowledge depends on the individual knower; that what seems to be true to him IS TRUE FOR HIM; that there is no objective or absolute truth, but only subjective or relative truth. Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things." In other words, what seems true to me, is true for me. What seems right to me is right for me. Morality is merely convention, or conforming to the will of the majority. Conforming to the majority, Protagoras said, was wrong. He believed that every man should be allowed to make his own laws and to act as he pleases, regardless of what others think is right and wrong, regardless of the consequences to others. This, of course, is anarchy.

Socrates and those who followed his lead in philosophy contended that there are rational principles of right and wrong, of truth and error, of good and bad, which can be agreed upon by thinking men using logical processes. Socrates held knowledge to be the highest good. He taught that right thinking is essential to right action -- that a knowledge of truth is essential to morality. If a man fully and completely understood what is absolute truth and absolute right, Socra-

tes believed he would order his actions in keeping with truth. Socrates did not believe that a man who knew truth and good would ever deliberately choose evil, because all men are searching for happiness, and should realize that happiness can be found only by obeying the truth.

Plato agreed that man's opinions of truth may vary -- that they may be right or wrong; but he also believed that there is a genuine, objective, and absolute truth which is based on reason, which can be authenticated by logical thought processes in which all men are agreed. Such absolute truth, said Plato, is based on concepts or ideas, rather than on perceptions or physical sensations. The world perceived by the five senses is changing, fleeting, ephemeral; the world of absolute truth is permanent, unchangeable, eternal. Knowledge, or truth, then, is the correspondence of thought and reality.

St. Augustine also believed that truth is objective -- that it remains the same whether you and I have it or understand it or not. The source of this eternal and changeless truth is God, an eternal, transcendent Being who is all-powerful, all-good, all-wise, absolute unity, absolute intelligence, absolute will, absolute spirit, absolutely free and holy. He also taught that the only knowledge worth having is the knowledge

of God and of self. He taught that faith in divine revelation is a source of knowledge of God. "Understand in order that you may believe; believe in order that you may understand," said St. Augustine.

Jesus came into the world to reveal the truth that is in God, and to bear witness to that truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And again; "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the worldthe light and the Redeemer of the worldthe Spirit of truth." "The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth." Intelligence is the light of truth --the faculty in man which makes it possible to apprehend truth. All intelligence is free and independent in its particular sphere to act for itself, either in keeping with truth, or in opposition to truth. When a man uses his innate intelligence to discover and to obey such truth as he has and knows, he will place himself in a position to know more and more truth. Because he loves truth, he will attempt to order his life in keeping with truth. He will forsake evil, because all evil is untruth, coming from him who is the father of all lies, and who was a liar from the beginning when he deceived our first parents with a half-truth. The man who conscientiously follows truth will be led to God, who is absolute truth, revealed through his Son, and through the Spirit of truth.

When Jesus was brought before Pilate he was charged with political treason or rebellion -- with setting himself up as king of the Jews in opposition to Caesar. He explained to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world; that he had been born into the world to bear witness to the truth. He had said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." His kingdom was a kingdom of truth. His reign was over truth, and over those who loved and obeyed truth. Those who were of the truth would hear his voice, and believe and obey the truth he taught. "Intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light....." (D.C. 85:10) His kingdom was not a kingdom where obedience was compelled by force, but a kingdom of those who

loved, received, and obeyed truth.

Pilate was representative of the many cynical and skeptical people, who because they do not believe in absolute truth, or in a God who is the personification of absolute truth, doubt the existence of any truth with the sneering question, "What is truth?" He is also representative of the many people who even today turn away from truth and light because their deeds and their motives are evil. "Every one who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he who loveth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest."

The word of the Lord to Joseph Smith in 1833 gave this definition of truth: "Truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." No mortal man can fully apprehend such truth. The finite man cannot comprehend all truth -- for to know all truth would be to know God himself in all his majesty, might, power, and glory. But we can know him in part. We can know him by knowing Jesus Christ, his Son, who came to reveal and to bear witness to the truth. We can know him by obeying the principles of life taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ, who not only taught truth but who was truth. We can know God in part by discovering, obeying, and applying the innumerable laws and principles of truth set in his universe to sustain, govern, and preserve it. For after all, right conduct, moral conduct, ethical conduct is not determined by the opinions of the majority. It is determined by God, who is the embodiment and impersonation of absolute truth. Right conduct is conformation to reality -- obedience to natural, spiritual, immutable law which is God's law. It is correspondence with environment. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Those who discover and obey God's truth have found the secret of eternal life, for the truth of God cleanses, heals, sanctifies, and sets men free from every bondage of sin and death. Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.