

Series: *Signposts of Hope in a Suffering World*

Near the climax of John's gospel, Jesus stands trial before a Roman governor named Pontius Pilate. Jesus was on trial because the Jews had accused him of claiming to be their king, and plotting to rebel against the rule of the Roman Emperor.

So Pilate questions Jesus, and the following conversation ensues:

Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked.¹

You can almost hear the cynicism in his voice.

Is it even possible to know the truth? What is truth, anyway?

Pilate's question echoes down through the ages. It's a question on people's minds these days especially. Some even say that we're now living in a "Post-Truth" world.

In fact, in 2016, that hyphenated word "Post-Truth" was declared by Oxford Dictionary to be the Word of the Year. The term is meant to convey that we live in an era where the concept of truth has become unimportant, irrelevant, obsolete. We live in an age, it is said, where objective facts no longer hold sway in the court of public opinion in the way they once did. Instead, appeals to emotion, sound bites, tweets and commercial or political spin rule the day.

In an interview a few years back, Rudy Giuliani went as far as to say (and I quote), "Truth isn't truth."

Not long before that, a Counselor to the U.S. President coined the now-famous term, "alternative facts."

In the run-up to the Brexit referendum over in the U.K., the Minister of Justice at the time stated that people "have had enough of experts."

¹ John 18:37-38a (NLT)

Speaking of experts, historians remind us that confusion about truth is really nothing new. For example, following his defeat in battle in 31 BC, the Roman general Mark Antony heard that his beloved Cleopatra had committed suicide. Devastated, he stabbed himself in the gut, only to find out very shortly thereafter that Cleopatra was still very much alive, and that she herself had spread the rumour about her death. Mark Antony would die in her arms, a victim of what we now call *fake news*.

Many argue that truth is relative. My truth is true to me, and your truth is true to you, so live and let live. Which sounds all well and good until me living out my truth claim gets in the way of you living out your truth claim (or vice-versa). When truth claims collide, who gets to decide what's really true?

Which brings us right back to Pilate's question: *What is truth?*

Today, we're going to explore how the Gospel of John answers that question. Truth is one of seven major themes in John's gospel that we've been unpacking in our current series called *Signposts of Hope in a Suffering World*.

The theme of truth serves as a *signpost* in John's gospel.

And what a signpost does is point. It points beyond itself toward a particular reality or destination. The theme of truth points us to a few things— the same things the other signposts we've covered in this series point to as well.

First, truth points to *our deepest human longings*. Although we may resist the truth in many ways, at the end of the day most human beings don't want to build their lives on lies. Deep down we yearn for the freedom that can only come when we live according to what's true, what's real.

As a signpost, the theme of truth also points to the fact *the world is not as it should be*. Whether we're talking about fake news or Post-Truth or the claim that all truth is relative, it has become remarkably difficult these days to have constructive dialogue about what is actually true. We join Pilate in wondering, *what is truth?* But the fact that truth seems so very hard to pin down just doesn't sit right with us somehow, and we sense that things are not as they should be.

But thirdly, and most importantly, truth is a signpost of *hope* pointing to the fact that *God is at work in Jesus to set the world right*. And that's what we're going to talk about for the remainder of this message, as we dig into the Gospel of John once again.

Specifically, I'd like to unpack **two truths about Truth**. First, according to John's gospel:

1. Jesus reveals the definitive Truth about God.

Several times throughout this series, we've returned to John's prologue. In these opening words from the first chapter of his gospel, John speaks of a figure called the Word, who was with God from the beginning, who himself is God, and through whom everything has been created.²

The Word is Jesus Christ. And in verse 14, John tells us that:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.³

A few verses later, John says:

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.⁴

In these verses, we see a pairing of words used to describe Jesus Christ: *Grace and truth*. In the original Greek, the word "truth" literally means *not covered*. What truth does Jesus uncover for us?

Well, in verse 18 John tells us that Jesus is the one who makes God the Father known. In other words, *Jesus uncovers, he reveals, the truth of who God is*.

Contrast this with what happened in the book of Genesis. There, we learn that the origin of human sin and this world's brokenness can be traced to a moment when Satan gave Eve a *false* picture of who God is.⁵

No wonder Jesus tells us in John's gospel that:

² See John 1:1-3.

³ John 1:14 (NIV)

⁴ John 1:17-18 (NIV)

⁵ See Genesis 3.

[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.⁶

And the greatest lies that Satan tells—whether at the beginning of time or right now — are the lies he tells us about God:

Lies that God isn't real, or if he is, he isn't good.

Lies that God doesn't love you, that he doesn't care.

Lies that God is so, so disappointed in you, and has written you off.

Lies that God's an angry, vindictive tyrant who takes sick delight in condemning people.

Lies that God cannot be trusted, and therefore you're better off taking your destiny into your own hands.

But in contrast to the devil's lies about God, Jesus comes to uncover—to personally reveal— the *truth* of who God is.

And as that truth is revealed in Jesus, we not only find God to be completely different than who the devil says he is. We also find him to be quite different than we fallen human beings often expect him to be.

As we've seen, John tells us that in Jesus, God came into the world full of *grace and truth*. In doing so, the *truth* he reveals is that *God is a God of grace*—a grace that flows from his infinite, unconditional and self-sacrificial *love* which we see so thoroughly embodied in the life of Jesus, not to mention his death and resurrection. The Jews of Jesus' day simply were not expecting this, and maybe we don't expect it either.

Jesus reveals the *one* true God, but God's oneness is that of perfect, eternal love shared between a divine community of three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the Trinity.

⁶ John 8:44b (NIV)

Jesus reveals God's holiness, but his holiness is that of his utterly unique love that leads him to become sin on our behalf (see 2 Cor. 5:21), in order to save us from our own sins.

Jesus reveals God's justice, but his justice flows from his unfathomable love that leads him to become a victim of profoundest injustice, as he is falsely accused and then cursed as a criminal, executed on a cross— in order to redeem you, me, and the world.

Jesus reveals God's glory, but his glory is the radiance of a perfect love that leads him to become what appears to be anything but glorious, as he was despised, humiliated, and forsaken on our behalf while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

Jesus reveals a God who doesn't change, but his changelessness is that of his eternal love that led him to change radically by putting on flesh and becoming one of us in Jesus.

So Jesus came full of *grace and truth* to reveal God to us, and the truth Jesus reveals about God is that *God is a God of grace— a God of love*.

You may struggle to believe that the true God is as good as Jesus reveals him to be. You may be tempted to view Jesus as *part* of what God is like, rather than the whole picture. Afflicted by Satan, the father of lies, who fills our minds with condemnation and fear, we wonder if there is "another side" to God that's going to show up, condemning and maybe even crushing us.

How desperately we need to know that *there is no other side to God* than what we see in Jesus Christ. In John, Jesus himself tells us:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."⁷

In other words, when you fix your eyes on Jesus, you see the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth of who God is. You see that God really is that beautiful, that gracious, that loving!

⁷ John 14:6-7, 9b (NIV)

The Bible puts it this way in the book of Hebrews:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...⁸

And when we come to know the God who is definitively revealed in Jesus— we find *hope*— hope for you, hope for me, and hope for a suffering world.

As we read in John, "For God so loved the *world* [the *cosmos*, the whole created order] that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."⁹

Whoever believes shall not *perish*. As New Testament scholar N.T. Wright says, death itself tells us lies about God, about Jesus, and about the world.¹⁰ But when Jesus is raised triumphant from death, he reveals the truth about a God whose love is so great, so powerful, that it has even overcome death. And this truth is a signpost of hope that God is at work in Jesus to set the whole world right, once and for all, including you and me.

Now let's move on, and look at a second "truth about Truth" that we find in John's gospel. For those who follow Jesus:

2. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.

As the rest of the message unfolds, I'll be sharing a few links to resources and opportunities at different points along the way. You'll want to have your phone ready so you can capture QR codes for any resources or opportunities that interest you.

With that in mind, let's check out what Jesus says to his disciples in John 14:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.¹¹

⁸ Hebrews 1:3a (NIV)

⁹ John 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, *Broken Signposts: How Christianity Makes Sense of the World*, p. 147-148.

¹¹ John 14:16-17, 26 (NIV)

This promise would be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of those who follow him. If you follow Jesus, it means that the Holy Spirit—the third person of the divine Trinity—lives in you. And he is the Spirit of Truth.

Jesus goes on to say:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.¹²

How does the indwelling Holy Spirit guide us into all truth? Well, he certainly guides us into the truth about who God is, like we talked about in the last point. Another way of saying it is that the Holy Spirit guides us into **true worship**.

In John 4, Jesus is conversing with a Samaritan woman at a well, and he tells her:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”¹³

So the Holy Spirit guides us into true worship. And true worship is always directed toward the one true God—the God who is definitely revealed in Jesus Christ. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to constantly point us to Jesus, which means Spirit-led worship will always be Jesus-centered.

Therefore, if Holy Spirit lives in you, he will guide you into a life of *public worship* with a church family such as Cornerstone, where each Sunday we gather both in person and online to lift up Jesus in song, in prayer, in the teaching of God’s word, in the Lord’s Supper, and in baptisms.

Is the Holy Spirit guiding you to commit to attending Sunday service not just now and then, not just when it’s convenient, not just when you’re in the mood, but every Sunday, so that you can live a life of worship in the Spirit and in truth?

The Holy Spirit will also guide you into a life of *private worship*. Do you have time alone with God each day for prayer and meditation on scripture?

Maybe the Holy Spirit is guiding you to do so, but you don’t know where to start. The other month I recommended a daily prayer app called **Lectio 365**, and I’ve been so encouraged to hear how many folks in this church have been using it and finding it really helpful for their daily time with God. It includes wonderful morning and evening prayers each day,

¹² John 16:13a (NIV)

¹³ John 4:23-24 (NIV)

along with rich scripture meditations and helpful reflections. You can read the prayers, or use the audio version which allows you to pray along as you listen. It's available to download for free in your app store—check it out!

Next, the Holy Spirit also guides you into **the truth about yourself**. How does he do it?

Well, for one thing, the Holy Spirit guides you into being honest with God and with yourself about your own sins and shortcomings. In John, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit:

And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin...¹⁴

In what ways is the Holy Spirit guiding you right now to confess—to be honest with God and with yourself— about where you've been falling short, about where you've sinned in thought, word or deed?

Later in the New Testament, John writes in his first letter that:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.¹⁵

Now it's super-important to note just because the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, it doesn't mean that he's into condemning or shaming you or guilt-tripping you or any such thing. On the contrary, when the Holy Spirit guides you into the truth about yourself, the main thing he does is *reinforce your identity as a beloved child of God*.

As John tells us in the prologue of his gospel:

But to all who believed [Jesus] and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.¹⁶

And in the book of Romans we read that:

For [God's] Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.¹⁷

¹⁴ John 16:8a (NLT)

¹⁵ 1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)

¹⁶ John 1:12 (NLT)

¹⁷ Romans 8:16 (NLT)

God knows you fully, including your flaws. But in Jesus, he loves you just the same, completely so. And as Tim Keller writes:

To be fully known and truly loved... is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us. ¹⁸

In Jesus, the core truth of who you are—of your very identity— is that you are God’s beloved child. And the Holy Spirit’s job is to reinforce this truth in your life. Because as Keller says, when you know the truth of your belovedness in Christ, you’re free from having to perform to try to prove your worth to others. You become freer and freer from the opinions that other people have of you. You become less anxious and more at ease with yourself, because you know you’re fully known and yet loved by God. As Jesus says in John:

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ¹⁹

Maybe the Holy Spirit is whispering to you that the truth about yourself as a beloved child of God needs reinforcement in your life. We have a web page loaded with resources and opportunities dedicated to helping you live into your identity in Jesus. I encourage you to check it out: www.cornerstonechurch.ca/establish.

Another way the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth is by **calling us to be truth-tellers**. If the Spirit of Truth lives within you, it means that you’re called to be God’s agent of truth in this world. You’re called to share with others the truth of Jesus Christ that sets people free.

In John 17, Jesus is praying for his disciples—including us—and he says to God the Father:

Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ²⁰

Jesus came into the world to reveal the truth of who God is, and now he sends you into the world to do the same. In this way, you and I become agents of hope in a suffering world, through the words we say, and the lives we live.

¹⁸ Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*.

¹⁹ John 8:32 (NLT)

²⁰ John 17:17-18 (NLT)

To help you live into your calling to be a truth-teller— so that the Holy Spirit can guide others into the truth of Jesus Christ through you— I'd like to share a special resource you can download called [Ten Best Practices for Sharing Your Faith](#). No matter where you are in your walk with Jesus, you'll be able to find at least one of these best practices that you can get started with today.

Our Sunday worship service at Cornerstone is a huge way that we, as a church community, share the truth about Jesus with the world around us. As you've been hearing, there is huge demand for us to return to two in-person Sunday worship services like we had before the pandemic. I mean, this Sunday, we had over 50 people on the waiting list just to get in.

But in order to add a second worship service, we need folks like you to serve—to help out on Sunday mornings especially, both here in person, as well as online. So far, out of the 104 volunteers we need to make a second service doable, 65 have signed up. So we're over 60% of the way there, a great start. But we still have some roles that need to be filled in:

- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Production Ministry
- Sunday Chat Room Hosts (online)

Just go to the web page you see on the screen to learn more and to sign up:
www.cornerstonechurch.ca/serve.

If the Holy Spirit guiding you to help with one of these roles, please don't delay signing up, because after October 31, we're going to be making the decision about whether or not to move forward with a second service.

Well today, we've seen two truths about Truth in the Gospel of John. First, *Jesus reveals the definitive truth about God*. And second, if you follow Jesus, *the Holy Spirit guides you into all truth*. If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I encourage you to explore what it means to follow him. To help you with that, we have yet another great webpage with a range of resources and opportunities: www.cornerstonechurch.ca/seekers.

As the worship team makes their way back up, consider: *What's the one thing that God is calling you to take away from this message?* Lock in on that, and with God's help, make sure to put it into practice in the days ahead. God bless you, church.