

John 18:33-37

Many years ago there was a popular TV show called “*Truth or Consequences*.” The contestants on that show had to give the correct answer to a **trivia** question, and if they **failed**, they had to pay the **consequences**. Of course, the **consequences** were always something **fun** and **silly**. But there is **another** game of truth or consequences in which you and I are **all** involved, and it has to do with our **eternal** destiny. If you don’t know the **truth** about your deliverance from **sin**, then you will have to pay the **consequences** - and there’s **nothing** fun or silly about **those** consequences. It’s really **no game** at all, and the **stakes** are not just **fantasy**. We can’t just walk away and shrug off the consequences of **sin**. We need to know the **truth**. And we **learn** about that truth through **The King Of Truth** - our Lord Jesus Himself. **Failing** to know and believe the **truth** about Jesus and His work will result in spending all eternity in **hell** - a suffering from which there is **no escape**. Only the **truth** will set us **free**.

Of course as **Christians**, you and I know where to **go** to **find** the truth about **The King Of Truth** and our salvation. All we need to do is flip through the pages of the **Bible**. The Apostle Paul told **Timothy**, “*From infancy you have known the **Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for **salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training** in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.*” We know that we can **trust** the teachings which we find in the Bible because the Psalmist tells us, “*The Word of the LORD is **right and true**.*”

We **also** know that God’s truth is not **only** found on the pages of the **Bible** - but that this truth was also **lived** in the person of **Jesus Christ**. Jesus Himself said, “*I am the Way, the **Truth**, and the Life.*” And here in our text, during His interrogation before the Pontius Pilate He said, “*For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to **testify** to the **truth**.*” No wonder that the disciples said to Jesus, “*Lord, to whom shall we **go**? **You** have the words of eternal life.*” Everyone who listens to **Jesus** is on the side of **truth**.

Today, as we celebrate **Christ the King** Sunday, we will look for **assurance**, and **find** it in the **truths** which we know in **Jesus** - truths which let us live free from the **consequences** of **ignorance**. First of all, knowing **Jesus** we know the **truth** about our **lost condition**. Before anything **else** becomes important, we need to know the **truth** that we are all **sinners**. The Bible tells us, “*All have sinned, and fall **short of the glory of God**.*” The tragic **truth** about each of us, is that we have been so indelibly **stained** with personal **guilt**, that **none** of us has the ability to **release** himself from sin. Just like a person who has been caught in **quicksand**, we learn that

the more we **struggle** to free ourselves, the more we realize that we **can't** free ourselves. God's challenge to be **perfect** is met with nothing but **imperfect** efforts. And that **truth** becomes even **more** evident as we compare **our** lives with the life of **Jesus**. In **reality**, there **is** no comparison at all, because Jesus is **without** sin.

Knowing Jesus, we learn the **truth** of God's amazing **love** for us sinners. St. Paul tells us, "*Here is a **trustworthy** saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**.*" That's **precisely** the reason why Jesus allowed Himself to be **arrested** and falsely **accused** on that first **Maundy Thursday** so many centuries ago - that's why He was willing to be **condemned** and **crucified**. He did it all to **save sinners**. That's the **truth**, and we can **trust** it. Knowing **Jesus**, we learn the **truth** of our own **release** from the burden of sin, for "*whoever believes in **Him** shall not **perish**, but have eternal life.*" Our Lord Jesus **never tired** of testifying to the truth of our **sin**, nor of God's loving plan to **save** sinners through Jesus' own **sacrifice** for sin.

Once again today, God gives you and me concrete **assurance** of the truth of our **salvation**. No, no one has discovered a long-lost **video** of the actual crucifixion, nor has a piece of Jesus' **cross** or the blood-stained crown of **thorns** ever been authenticated. Instead, we find that assurance in the **Lord's Supper**. Luther helped us understand the **structure** of this wonderful sacrament when he wrote in the Catechism, "*What is the sacrament of Holy Communion? It is the true **body** and **blood** of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the **bread** and **wine**, instituted by **Christ** for us Christians to **eat** and **drink**. Jesus took **bread**, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said, '**This is My body**.' He took the **cup** and gave it to them saying, '**This cup is the new covenant in My blood**.'*"

In the **bread**, the **body** of Christ is really and truly **present**. And also in the **wine**, Christ's **blood** is really and truly **present**. Therefore, in Holy Communion, the **LORD** takes the **substance** of His redeeming work - His own body and blood - and He **gives** them to us, to **assure** and **convince** us of the **truth** of our salvation. We call this teaching the **Real Presence**, because that's what it **is**. In this sacrament, Christ's body and blood once given on the **cross** are truly **present** - in, with, and under the physical elements of bread and wine. Jesus' body and blood are **not** merely **symbolized** or **implied**, but they are actually **present**, as He Himself so clearly said, "*This is My body ... This is My blood.*" Jesus also goes on to explain **why** He has put His true body and blood into the sacrament with the words, "*Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.*" It's important for us to remember that Jesus didn't do His redeeming work in the **abstract** - but rather, it was with you and me in mind. He wants to make us **sure**, beyond any **doubt**, that His death on the cross counts for **us**.

How do you and I **benefit** from all this? Luther explained that nicely for us too with the words, *“It is certainly **not** the eating and drinking that does such things, but the **words**, ‘Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ These **words** are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever **believes** these words **has** what they plainly say, the **forgiveness of sins.**”* The words of **Jesus** and the explanation of **Luther** are both very **clear** and **plain**. But you know how **some** folks get - they’re really **skeptical** - they won’t believe **anything**, until they **see** it. Thank God that we know the **truth** about our natural spiritual condition - that we are **sinners** - otherwise we would never bother to even **look** for a **Savior**. Thank God that we know the **truth** about our **Savior** - that Jesus Christ came into the world to **save** sinners. And thank God that we know the **truth** about the **Real Presence** of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper - that there we are **assured** of our salvation, and **set free** from the consequences of **sin**. We know the **truth** about **The King Of Truth** and the **salvation** which He brings - and we can **count** on that truth **eternally**.

So today, let’s be **renewed** and **refreshed** in the forgiveness of sins which was purchased through Jesus’ body and blood, given into **death** on the cross of Calvary, because knowing this **truth**, and **relying** on it, sets us **free** from the eternal **consequences** of sin. Amen.