

Truth or Lies

Easter 7

Pastor Josh Frazee

1 John 5:9-15

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus told a group of Jews who had believed in Him, “‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God (John 8:42b-47).’”

In this account, Jesus lays down the gauntlet: there is only truth or lies. One either believes His Word, the Word of His Father God the Father, or one follows the lies of the Father of lies. What is more, if you are a mother or father yourself—on this Mothers’ Day or any day—you are one to whom children look for an example of how to live a life in the faith—or how not to.

Ultimately, there is either truth or lies.

Verse 1

“If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.”

We go to others for advice; John doesn’t deny this fact. We go to lawyers for assistance concerning legal matters. We go to historians regarding what has happened in the past. We go to our pastor for guidance on the Word of God. And we go to our mothers and fathers for help on many things, too. This not only going to others but also trusting their testimony implies some wisdom—that we have learned that these people are not lying but are speaking the truth regarding the topics of which they are speaking.

So John also points to the fact that God’s testimony is greater than that of any of these others. And God’s testimony concerns His Son—more than just His Name, but everything that Jesus has said in His Word, which we find in the Scriptures. But if we turn from God at any point of His Word, we are in trouble. The commentator Lenski rightly wrote: “It is making God a liar when one refuses to believe God’s testimony regarding other matters; it is making God a liar in the worst possible way when one refuses to believe God’s testimony about his own Son (Lenski, p.530).”

We might turn away from a lawyer who is proven to not know his practice in law. By so doing, we show that he is a liar: that he doesn’t know what he is talking about and that he is not trustworthy or truthful. We do the same if we turn from God’s Word about anything recorded in the Scriptures. There is some wisdom needed, to be certain, since by taking certain verses out of context, heresies have been born over the centuries—and since Satan, the father of lies, quotes Scripture himself—only incorrectly and perversely—we must learn the proper understanding of God’s Word. But when we are taught God’s Word and turn from it, we lead others away from it—maybe even our own children—and we ultimately call God a liar. That’s what God told John to write in this letter: “Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar.” We continue.

Verse 2

“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”

John wrote that whoever has the Son of God has life—how do we have the Son of God? By hearing and believing and keeping His Word—His whole Word. It is the unfortunate truth that not everyone will believe and keep His Word, or remain in it, either. Jesus has said, “‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).’” Jesus said this in the Gospel of John shortly after the people had demonstrated their unbelief. The people demonstrated their unbelief after He had completed a teaching. John wrote: “When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God (John 12:36b-43).”

Even earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus had demonstrated that He knew not everyone would follow Him. After the bread of life discourse, many of the disciples said His Words were a hard saying; to which Jesus replied, “‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some among you who do not believe.’... ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.’ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve (Yes, even to the Twelve!), ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God (John 6:61b-69).’”

These passages ought to remind each of us of the cost of following Jesus: we are to put God above everyone else, even brothers, sisters, fathers, or mothers who do not keep Him first. That’s why John wrote his words to you: so that you might have Jesus and, with Him, life, even life eternal.

Verse 3

Are some of you starting to doubt your confidence in your faith now? Remember that you have faith because God gave it to you. He called you, through His Word and through the washing of Holy Baptism. And hear again the Word from the end of our text: “(T)his is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests we have asked of him.”

Those who flee or turn back from God and His Son have neither confidence nor the truth. But for we who continue steadfast in His Word, which is all about His Son, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary, we know that we have the requests that we have made according to His will.

The simple fact that a believer will not ask for something against God's will is not brought up here because it is unnecessary. The only ones who can ask for something according to God's will are those who believe. The only way they can be believers is by the faith God has given them in His Son Jesus Christ—everything which Jesus has done and said through His Word.

Again, a believer is one who confesses what God's Word confesses: that they were sinners who had been dead in their trespasses; that God sent His Son Jesus to pay for their sins on the cross of Calvary; that God called them to faith through His Word and through the waters of Baptism; and that now they are saints and sinners looking forward to the day when God's promises will no longer be "now, not yet," but simply "now." Such people are still sinners by nature but saints by God's Word who repent of their sin and, as a result, desire to do good. They confess and trust God's Word as the truth; and they refute and refuse the lies of the devil, even those which use Scripture in twisted ways. Such people are you and me, through the faith given us by God's Holy Spirit for the sake of Jesus' death and resurrection. You and I have been made such people—people of the truth—freely. In Jesus' Name. Amen.