

The Reason I Came is to Bear Witness

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[0:00] Good morning, everybody. It's a new view here. Because this is my first time preaching down here on the fifth floor. So it's good to see you all.

! Thanks for coming out. It's good to gather together. And we've been adjusting to our new space here on the fifth floor. It's our third week here. And it's nice to have more space down here, more space for the kids upstairs.

And I know it's different. It's different. So I want you guys to know we're hearing your feedback. And we're listening. And specifically, a few people mentioned lighting.

Because on the 14th floor, we had those warm floor lamps. It was dimmer. It was cozy. It was more comfortable. And in fact, we still use the 14th floor for life groups, mainly on Thursdays and Fridays for our GU youth group at night.

And people like the dim mood lighting. So typically, we'll keep the lights off at GU. We'll keep the lights off and just use the lamps. Okay? But when the night's over, it's late.

[1:06] Everyone's heading home. We have to clean up. And so this happens almost every week. I walk over to the door. I flip the switch on. Immediately, 100% brightness. And almost every time, someone's going to scream.

Someone screams. I'm looking at Coco wherever she is. She's like, ah, turn it off. This happens almost every time. And why do they scream? It's because the light is a shock.

When we're used to the dark, when our eyes are adjusted to the dark, the light hurts. It burns. It's uncomfortable. Right? But aside from the shock, the light forces you to deal with what's in front of you.

What's true? What is reality? In the dim light, I can pretend that the room is clean. Whereas in reality, when the lights turn on, there's actually ketchup on the floor. There's candies wrapper scattered everywhere.

I don't know how this mess came about. But when the main switch turns on, you can't deny the mess in the room. The light reveals the truth. And we've been spending the past few weeks leading up to Christmas looking at reasons why Jesus came.

[2:09] Why did Jesus come into this world? Usually when we think of Christmas, we think of flickering candles and warm, colorful Christmas lights. In the dark. But today we see that Jesus didn't come to be comfortable moonlighting for us.

Jesus came to flip on the main switch. He came as light flooding a dark world with absolute truth. And just like at GU sometimes, the world screamed.

When the light turned on, the world screamed, turn it off. They screamed, crucify him. Today we'll be reading from John chapter 18. It's early morning on the day that Jesus was crucified.

That's the setting. And Jesus is standing trial before Pilate. In verse 37, John chapter 18, verse 37, Jesus tells us this. For this purpose, I was born.

And for this purpose, I've come into the world. To bear witness to the truth. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth. That's what he says. And we'll see today that Jesus is the truth.

[3:10] But the problem is that we, we all, like people sitting in a dark room, we all naturally hate the truth. We dislike the truth. And that's exactly why Jesus came into this world.

That's why Jesus was born and died. He came to die for people who hated him. And with that in mind, let's turn to John chapter 18. I'll invite JP up to read for us today.

We'll be reading from John chapter 18, verses 28 to verse 40. And if, I think the welcome team is passing out Bibles, but if anyone would like a Bible, please raise your hand.

There's Bibles in the white bookshelf up front, and you could grab one on the way in next time. But yeah, let's stand together also as we read together from the word of God, just as an act of just to

show our reverence for the word of God.

Let's stand as we read together. John chapter 18. Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.

[4:13] It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled, but could eat at the Passover. So Pilate went outside to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man?

They answered him, If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you. Pilate said to them, Take him yourself and judge him by your own law.

The Jews said to him, It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

[5:16] If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world. Then Pilate said to him, So you are a king?

Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

Pilate said to him, What is the truth? After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover.

So do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? They cried out again, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. This is the word of the Lord.

Please take a seat. Thank you, JP, for reading for us. So again, Jesus said, For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I've come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

[6:25] One question we can ask is, what is this truth? What is the truth Jesus is bearing witness to? And we see a clue in how Jesus says it, in that phrase. For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world.

So we're talking about this because we're celebrating Christmas. We're preparing our hearts for Christmas. And you know, for Christians, Christmas isn't just about Santa Claus and reindeers and snowflakes.

At Christmas we celebrate the reality that Jesus was born and came into this world. Now this week, we also celebrated another birthday. This week we celebrate Darren Zeeway and their baby girl, Avery, who was born this week.

That deserves a round of applause. Zeeway gave birth to Avery this week. And now when Avery was born, we say sometimes Avery came into this world. But really what happened is Avery came into existence.

We'll spare the details, but Avery came into existence nine months ago when she was conceived. That's when she became a person with dignity, value, made in the image of God. Okay?

[7:31] And nine months later, several days ago, she was born. But Jesus' birth is different. When Jesus said, I came into the world, he literally came into this world.

John chapter one says, Jesus was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, through Jesus. And without him was not anything made that was made. You see, Jesus wasn't created.

He is the creator. When Jesus was born, he came into the world as the creator, stepping down into his creation, into the world he made. He came into the world by stepping down from his throne and entering time and space.

Jesus was eternally the son of God. Jesus is God, even before time began. But 2,000 years ago, when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in his mother Mary, Jesus, he kept his divine nature, but also took on a human nature.

That's what we call the incarnation. The son of God took on flesh without taking off God in any way. Jesus is one person with two natures.

[8:38] He is fully God and fully man. Each nature, the properties fully preserved without confusion or change. And the two natures coming together in one person without division or separation.

That's what we call the incarnation, which means that Jesus isn't just 50% God. He's not half God and half man. He's fully God, 100% God and 100% man. And this matters because when Jesus, because Jesus had to be fully man in order to be our substitute on the cross.

And he had to be fully God in order to give us eternal life. And this also matters because when Jesus said, I came to bear witness to the truth, he didn't just come as a good man with good teaching, giving just good advice.

Jesus came also as God, the author of reality, the one who was and is and is to come, the one who defines what is good and right and true. That's how he bears witness to the truth.

And at Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus lets us see the glory of God for what it is. John chapter one, verse 14 says, the word Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us.

[9:45] And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. We can't see God. We can't touch God.

We can't reach for God, except for the fact that God came down in the form of man. Colossians chapter one says, Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

When Jesus came in the flesh, he made the invisible God fully visible in all his glory. And at Christmas, we celebrate that the God of the universe, we can now see and hear and touch because Jesus took on flesh.

The man, Jesus is also the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. We can see God for who he is through Jesus. And when we look at the gospels and we look at the life of Jesus, we see that God is so, so good.

Jesus bore witness to God by what he taught. He proclaimed that the kingdom of God is here and the kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of this world. As it says in John 18, 36, Jesus says, my kingdom is not of this world.

[10:49] God's kingdom is better. In our world, we see people hoard power to serve themselves, to protect themselves and to enrich themselves. We see this on the global stage.

Rulers start wars, but they don't fight in them. They send people to die in the trenches while they sit safely, flexing their influence. In the kingdoms of this world, success often means climbing over someone else to get to the top.

Think of the scams. We see, we hear on the news or people risking lives just to cut corners and save a dollar. But the kingdom of God is not like this.

God's kingdom is upside down. Jesus says that the kingdom of God means good news to the poor, comfort to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom for those oppressed.

In the kingdom of God, the king stepped down from his throne. He was born in a manger. He should have been served by angels, but he was born in a lowly manger. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

[11:51] And Jesus didn't just talk about this. He demonstrated it in his miracles by healing a sick, raising Lazarus to life, feeding the hungry. And he also demonstrated it in how he lived.

Jesus is gentle and lowly. He didn't care so much for those who are influential and wealthy. He didn't care to be known by them and loved by them. Instead, Jesus was drawn to the outcast and those on the fringe.

As we heard two weeks ago, Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost. He went to those who are marginalized and hated by society. So much so that his enemies called him a friend of sinners.

They called him that to criticize him. But to those who know that we are lost, that is such a wonderful truth. But Jesus is a friend of sinners, sinners like you and me.

And that's the truth that Jesus proclaims. That God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and mercy. And we have life to the full in knowing God, in glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

[12:52] That's the beautiful truth that Jesus reveals to us. And when faced with the truth like that, we ought to embrace it. We ought to love it. We ought to treasure God and love him.

But remember when the light turns on, when the light of the world came as flesh, they didn't embrace him. They didn't love him. They screamed, turn it off.

And they wanted to kill him. And that's the tragedy we see in John chapter 18. Jesus bears witness to the truth, but Pilate, the high priests, and the crowd, they all reject the truth.

They want nothing to do with it. And it's not just them as we look at John. It's all of us too. All of us were lost. That's the natural state of our hearts. It's to reject God and to reject the truth.

How do we reject the truth? The first reason we see in John 18, as we see looking at the high priests, is that we assume the truth. We have prejudices about the truth.

[13:51] We assume that we know the truth and that the truth is defined according to our own thinking. Look at verse 28. It says, Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.

It was early morning. This all happened early morning on Good Friday, on the day that Jesus was crucified. Just several hours earlier, in the middle of the night, Judas had betrayed Jesus to the Jewish authorities.

For three years, they all heard Jesus preach. They heard him heal the sick, cast out demons. But at every turn, they hated it. They criticized him. They thought that Jesus was a false prophet, a fraud, deceiving the people.

And so they hatched a plan to have Judas betray him and arrested Jesus in the dark of the night. And the Jewish authorities, they wanted to kill Jesus, but they didn't have that authority.

Only the Romans did. So the Jewish authorities, they dragged Jesus before the Roman governor, named Pilate, and asked Pilate to crucify him, to kill Jesus.

[14:55] And so in verse 29, it says, Pilate went outside to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man? Pilate asks a very reasonable question.

Imagine you're Pilate. It's very early in the morning. You just woke up, brushed your teeth, and then you're greeted by this angry mob outside your door, banging on your door, asking you to kill this dangerous criminal. So naturally, Pilate asks, What did this guy do?

What's the crime? If you want to execute him, give me something. State the crime. But look at how the Jewish authorities respond in verse 30. They say, If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.

They don't answer the question. They bring Jesus to trial, but they don't bring any evidence. They don't bring any witnesses. So I know we have some lawyers here at our church. Imagine you go to court, you stand before the judge, and you say, Of course he's guilty.

Just trust me, your honor. If I say he's guilty, of course he's guilty. Right? These guys didn't do their homework. They just wanted Pilate to assume Jesus guilty, listen to them, and judge Jesus guilty without giving him anything.

[16:06] Well, it turns out that doesn't work, and they need to give more details. So specifically, they accuse Jesus of blasphemy. In John chapter 10, and later in chapter 19, they say that Jesus deserves to die because he has made himself God.

He has made himself the son of God, and like God. But here's the problem. It's only blasphemy. It's only speaking against God if it's not true, if Jesus' claims were not true.

It's only a crime to say you're the son of God if you're not, in fact, the son of God. They saw all the signs. They saw the wonders, but their hearts were so hard that they didn't believe who Jesus was who he was claiming to be.

And they assumed, they just assumed the lie that he's blaspheming. Now for us, I want to ask us, do we also have assumptions about the truth, about who God is? For the Pharisees, they assumed a view of God based on their religious tradition, not just on scripture, but the practices they had handed down year after year.

Now for us in Hong Kong, we may be looking at God from the worldview of naturalism, that the physical world is all that there is. If you can't measure it in a lab, it isn't real.

[17:23] So when you read the Bible, you might think, that's impossible. Science disproves miracles. But I'd like to invite you to challenge that assumption today. Look at the historical evidence that there is for Jesus.

Read the eyewitness accounts in the Bible. And looking around in this room, ask the people in this room whose lives have been flipped upside down by this man, Jesus.

For me personally, I like to consider myself, I like to think of myself as a pretty rational person. In high school, one of my favorite subjects were math, physics, and computer science. Okay? And I was working, I cut my teeth in stock trading, learning about my cognitive biases, how to overcome them, and see the world in terms of numbers, in terms of probabilities.

But I stand here today because I want to testify to you, I'm convinced that Jesus rose from the dead. From what I see, I'm convinced that Jesus was a man who lived. He is the son of God and he rose from the dead.

So could I invite you also to ask and investigate, challenge the assumptions you have, if you have any. However, for many of us, the hurdle isn't always just intellectual.

[18:30] Sometimes it's moral. There are moral objections. Think about how, when you read the Bible, it's easy to read passages that align with our thoughts and feelings.

Like God is love or love your neighbor as yourself. We love verses like that. But what about when God says something that clashes with our modern sensibilities? When Jesus says, you can't serve both God and money, do we think that's too radical?

That's too demanding? When Jesus teaches on marriage and sexuality, do we think that's oppressed and outdated? That's oppressive and outdated. When Jesus says, no one comes to the Father except through me, do we think that's not inclusive?

When Jesus teaches on sin and hell, do we think sometimes a loving God can never do that? Like the authorities judging Jesus according to their own assumptions, sometimes we also put God on trial.

Sometimes we say in our hearts, if Jesus doesn't fit into my mold, then he must be wrong. But we have to conform our thoughts to his, not the other way around. At the end of the day, Jesus is the standard of truth, not us.

[19:38] And yes, it's okay to have questions. It's okay to wrestle and not fully understand. And again, sometimes the truth is uncomfortable. Sometimes the light is a shock to our eyes.

But I encourage you, press into that discomfort. Don't just shrink back and close your eyes. We assume the truth. And next, we also ignore the truth.

Let's read on in verse 33. It says, So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you king of the Jews? And Jesus responds to this saying, Do you say this of your own accord?

Or did others say this about me? And to that, Pilate responds in verse 35. Am I a Jew? And in saying that, in other words, Pilate is saying, Do I care?

Am I a Jew? Is another word of saying, Do I care? He didn't really care to know whether Jesus was king. He's saying, Do I really care if you're king of the Jews? I'm not a Jew.

[20:37] Doesn't matter. Either way, you're not my king. I'm the governor. Pilate ignores the truth. It doesn't matter to Pilate whether Jesus is king at all or not.

He doesn't care. Pilate's only concern is to get these constituents off his back. Pilate says, Your nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me.

What have you done? And asking, Pilate only cares to get rid of the crowd outside his door. And Jesus responds, My kingdom is not of this world.

In saying this, Jesus hints that his kingdom is different and bigger from what Pilate has in mind. But Pilate doesn't understand. He asks in verse 37, So you are a king.

And to that, Jesus doesn't give a direct answer. He says, You say that I am a king. And then that's when he drops his mission statement that we read earlier.

[21:34] For this purpose, I was born and for this purpose, I've come into the world to bear witness to the truth. So again, in verse 37, we see that Pilate has no regard for the truth. He responds in verse 38 saying, What is truth?

And taking that question, What is truth at face value? It might sound like Pilate wants to know. He's asking this question. But we see that Pilate isn't asking, Jesus, What is truth?

Please tell me. He's not asking like that. He asks more like this. Like, Jesus, Man, What is truth anyways? And then he just walks right out the room.

Right? Because when we read verse 38, Pilate asks, What is truth? But he doesn't wait for a response. It says, After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews.

He didn't ask because he cared. He only asked to end the conversation. He asked, What is truth? And then he just walked right out the room. This is tragic.

[22:43] Pilate came so close. He looked the son of God directly in the face, the radiance of the glory of God. He had private time. He had one-on-one time with Jesus to ask God anything.

And he even asked the right questions. Are you king of the Jews? You are a king. What is truth? But the tragedy is that Pilate didn't care. He didn't care at all.

The tragedy is that if Pilate really cared to know, and he asked those exact same questions, Jesus would have been so glad to answer him. He would have given him the straight answer. Jesus would have showed him that he is king of kings and lord of lords.

But the problem is that Pilate didn't care. And so he turned his back to the creator of the universe and walked away from the greatest news he would ever hear, simply because he didn't care.

I was talking to someone who recently believed in Jesus. And credit to her, she was sharing her faith with those around her. And she said, one person responded like this, I'm so happy for you that you found Jesus.

[23:47] I could tell that you need a direction in life and something to anchor you. It's great that Jesus is your thing, but I'm happy. My life's good and I don't need him. That's also tragic.

That's exactly what Pilate did. And that's the mindset of relativism. Relativism says, it's great that Christianity is good for you. It's wonderful if Jesus gives you peace.

I respect that, but I disagree that Jesus is the truth. He's simply your truth. You do you and I'll do me. Sometimes people treat Jesus as a lifestyle choice.

Like if your friend turned to veganism, they became vegan, or suddenly started training for high rocks. Like that's so cool, I'm happy for you, but that's got nothing to do with me. If you don't know Jesus, I would hate for you to make the same mistake as Pilate.

Please don't walk out of this room the same way you walked in. Don't walk away from your savior. From the greatest news you could ever hear. Just because you didn't care.

[24:54] Because getting to the truth wasn't important enough to ask. And if you still have questions, that's okay. If you still have doubts, that's okay. God can address your questions. He can answer your doubts.

If you care to listen. Just know, I want you to know that the truth matters and knowing Jesus matters for you. That's ignoring the truth.

We see that. We assume the truth. Sometimes we ignore the truth. And yet we also go one step further. We don't just ignore the truth. We also despise it.

We despise the truth. Let's read on. At the end of verse 38, Pilate admits, I find no guilt in him.

Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent, but the Jews are on his back.

He wants to let Jesus go, but he also, at the same time, wants to keep his people happy. And so he thinks of a plan. He thinks of a way to get out of this. And so Pilate says in verse 39, he cites this custom that they had.

[25:51] You have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. That was a tradition that they had at the time. Every year at Passover, the Jews could ask the Romans to set one man free.

Okay? So they have a choice on who they could set free. Clearly, Pilate wanted them to choose Jesus. That would make his problem go away completely. He could have this innocent man set free and the crowds would be off his back.

However, they have another option. They could instead choose to set free a criminal named Barabbas. And in verse 40 here, we see that Barabbas is a robber.

The other gospels give more details about Barabbas. They say that Barabbas was also someone who started a rebellion and was a murderer. He was someone who committed murder. He was a dangerous guy.

So given these options, you couldn't stack the deck anymore in favor of Jesus. The options are Jesus, the son of God, or Barabbas, a murderer. And so it's an easy choice.

[26:52] In verse 30, what do they choose? Of course they say, not this man, not Jesus, but Barabbas. They say, we don't want Jesus. We want Barabbas.

Instead of the Messiah, they choose a murderer. Instead of the author of life, they pick an agent of death. Acts 3 verse 14 describes it like this. You denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

They despised the truth. To despise means to devalue, to treat as worthless, to hate. And in that moment, they looked at the son of God, the radiance of the glory of God, and said, we prefer the murderer.

They despised the truth. It seems crazy. And we look at the crowd and maybe think, how could they? How could they? But we make that choice, the same choice all the time.

When we sin, we stand among the crowd saying, not this man, not God, but I choose Barabbas. Because at the heart of sin is a contempt for the truth that God is good.

[28:02] Sin is a contempt for the truth that God created you. He loves you. He is better than anything else in the world. And in his presence, there's fullness of joy. And in fact, despising the truth isn't the final step.

It's actually the root of everything else. It's the root of every mistake that we make. It's the reason for assuming the truth and for ignoring the truth. We have prejudices about the truth of God because we don't want him as king.

If there is no God, then we don't have to submit to him. We can be God of our own lives. Our hearts want to say, as they do in chapter 19, verse 15, we have no king but Caesar. And we don't care about the truth.

We ignore the truth about God because we don't value God. We just don't care about God. And that's the root of sin. Sin is more than making a mistake. The heart of sin is when we consider the glory of God and say, no, I don't want God.

I choose Brabus. I choose money. I choose sex. I choose party. I choose power. I choose partying. I choose control. I choose status. I choose to be the God of my own life and do whatever I want to do.

[29:08] I want that instead of God. And when we make that choice, it's no surprise that our lives are empty and hollow and broken.

It's no wonder that the world is full of greed, violence, corruption, because we've exchanged the truth about God for a lie. Rather than the God who loves us and gives us life, we choose counterfeits that bring us death.

We want Brabus the murderer, and that's what we get. That's why sin results in death. When we sin, God's judgment is to allow us to go our own way. When we reject God, his punishment is to say, okay, have it your own way.

When we reject God, we choose death. We choose to separate ourselves from God, the God of life. And so we die, because that's what it means to be separated from God, to be separated from life and to die.

That's the punishment for sin, that the souls who sins shall die. But the story doesn't stop here. What happens next is the crowd turns into a mob and they scream, crucify him, crucify him, crucify Jesus.

[30:14] And so at Pilate's command, they force Jesus to carry his own cross to a place named Calvary. And just hours after they say, give us Brabus, they nail Jesus to a cross and kill him.

But remember what Jesus said in verse 37, he came to bear witness to the truth. And when Jesus died, he didn't fail in his mission.

Rather, the cross is the pinnacle of God's revelation. This is when Jesus finished his mission of bearing witness to the truth. On the cross, we see most clearly the truth of God's grace towards undeserving sinners.

On the cross, Jesus bore witness to the truth by his blood, by his life shed for us. And on the cross, he showed, he proved four absolute truths, four absolute realities.

First, the cross shows the truth that sin is serious. There's an instinct in our hearts, in the human heart that wants to work and earn and prove that we're good enough.

[31:19] But the cross says, no, if we could save ourselves, Jesus wouldn't have to die. The fact that Jesus came to die proves that we're all sinners and we can do nothing to save ourselves. The truth is that Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserve for a sin so that everyone who calls on his name may be forgiven.

The cross also shows the truth that God loves us. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, even when we wanted nothing to do with him. We screamed, give us Barabbas.

But Jesus said, Father, forgive them. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And he did that on the cross because God loves us.

The cross also shows the truth that Jesus truly is the son of God. Remember that they killed Jesus on account for blasphemy, for claiming that he was the son of God. They thought that was a lie. But after being crucified, Jesus didn't just die. He rose from the dead. Jesus rose on the third day. Death could not hold him. And when God raised Jesus from the dead, that was God

vindicating him.

[32 : 30] That was the father saying, Jesus told the truth. He wasn't blaspheming. He is my son. He's my beloved son. The resurrection proves that Jesus is who he said he was, that he is the son of God.

And lastly, the cross shows us the truth that we have eternal life. Because Jesus lives, we also will live. The same spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is working in us to make us more like Jesus every day.

And one day when Jesus returns, there'll be no more sin. There'll be no more pain, no more sorrow. And we'll be in the presence of God forever. That's the truth that Jesus revealed for us on the cross. That's the truth for everyone who believes in Jesus, who calls on the name of Jesus. And now I want to finish us off. I want to finish off by revisiting what Jesus said in verse 37.

Jesus said, he came to bear witness to the truth. And at the end of that verse, he continues and says this. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

[33 : 36] So I urge you today, if you hear his voice, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. Listen to him. To those who don't yet know Jesus, he's calling to you.

He's saying, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus died to show you that there is a God. And there's nothing better in this world than to know him and enjoy him.

Don't follow in the footsteps of Pilate who turned around and walked away from the truth. Don't shrink back from the light and close your eyes. I invite you, ask questions, be curious, and turn to Christ today.

And if you do know his voice, then listen to it. Live according to the truth. Don't just ignore it. If you love the truth that Jesus is Lord of all, that he is better than anything else in the world, then let us live like it.

Listen to his voice and live in the truth. We hear his voice in the Bible. When we're tempted to chase the comfort of money, we can be content with what we have because he said, I will never leave you or forsake you.

[34 : 47] That's the truth. When we're crushed by guilt and shame, we feel unworthy. We can be free because he said, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

That is the truth. When we're grieved, looking at pain and looking at injustice in the world, we can have hope because Jesus said, surely I am coming soon.

That is the truth he reveals. The truth is that the God of the universe, that's what we celebrate at Christmas, that Jesus, the God of the universe, stepped down into creation, died for you so that you could know him, to reveal the truth about God as a person, that you may know him, enjoy him.

That's why we sang earlier, joy to the world, because the light of the world has come. He shows us who God is. So today, let's listen to his voice.

If you hear his voice, listen. Let us go and live like we believe him, like we believe the truth. Let's pray. God, we simply praise you.

[36 : 02] We thank you that you sent your son Jesus into the world. You were living in darkness, but the light of the world has come. Thank you.

We would have no hope without you, but you sent your son to show us, you, to bring us to you, to reconcile enemies to you.

Jesus died for the unrighteous to bring us to God. Thank you. Thank you that Jesus didn't just come to this world, but he went to the cross to show us the truth that you love us.

And there's life, eternal life in your name. And Lord, we pray that that truth, we wouldn't just hear today, but it would sink into our hearts. Pray for your spirit to make the truth alive into us, cut in our hearts.

Change how we live, change how we think and feel. We want to worship you, Lord. We want to know you. Help us, God. Pray in Jesus' name.

[37 : 06] Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning, everyone. We've finished slightly a bit early because I have the pleasure of doing a few things for us today.

The first is just to even have a chance to respond to the message that Gabe just preached. That question, we were talking about it this week. That question of what is truth is such a powerful question.

It's been so compelling to me to even hear those words. Maybe another way to put it is those words are, what is real? Don't you ask that question?

What is real? God, are you real? Or you look at the incident in Typo and you go, God, are you for real? Humans, are you for real? Is this really it? I don't know.

When you see the brokenness in the world, it makes you question what is true and what is real.

When you look on your social media account and you see the likes that you have, you go, well, do they actually like me? Is that love for real?

[38 : 11] And you watch people's life savings just completely wiped out, their whole lives wiped out in one state and you go, what has been real? Christina and I, we went up to, we went to pray and just to be there and in Typo, where we looked at those buildings and what is real?

What is truth? Isn't that the question of the day? I've had the pleasure of talking with people over the years about what is real, asking questions of the faith and going, why do we believe in God?

Why do we believe in Christianity? Is it because it makes us feel warm and fuzzy? Is it an emotional crutch that we need to help us get us through the day? Is it the fact that we need people around us? Is it the fact that we have no lives and so we have nowhere to go on a Sunday, so we might as well come to church?

Or is it because you think, oh, well, actually Jesus helps me give me purpose or Jesus helps explain things? I would say don't believe in God because of any of those things. They're all great things.

But believe in God because he is real. And what actually Gabe helped me see, because actually I looked at that passage, I loved that question. It's such an emphatic question that he asks.

[39 : 16] What is truth? And I thought if I was being lazy and I was preaching a sermon from that, I'd be like, that is the question that we're all asking. But then Gabe helped me see that actually he asks it, but he doesn't actually care.

He literally walks off. And Gabe said it. I was like, really? Is that what happened? And then I read. I was like, he asked it, but then he didn't really care. And it made me think, well, as I look and see everything that's going on in this world, how much do I really care for the truth?

And how does that truth that Jesus died and resurrected impact how I live right now? If you look at that account, there's a few things that can be true.

We are the Pharisees. We are the Jews that chose the criminal. We chose the way that doesn't lead to life. We can have that.

We can almost even be Pilate. There's some truth in that. And we can say, well, actually, we might ask, but really we're asking in a kind of like a dismissive kind of way. We don't really care. Why? Because we have our own things. This isn't for me.

[40 : 22] But I'll tell you, I think the ultimate truth, the true message of the gospel, is that we are not just Pilate. We are not just the Jews and the Pharisees. We are Barabbas.

We ourselves, we're in need of saving. We ourselves deserve punishment. That's the mercy that we need. Do you understand that?

I mean, I know that's quite rude and offensive for me to tell you that you are a murderer and you have led a rebellion, but essentially the moment we choose the way of sin, the way of death, we rebel against the Lord.

Until we truly understand that we are Barabbas, we don't really understand the good news is that someone died for us, died in our place. If you understand that truth, that frees you.

You're like, oh my goodness. And then you understand when Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. He's saying, I am the only real and living way. I am the only one who is going to take your place.

[41 : 23] I'm the only one who can take your place. Because I have no debt. You have debt. And every single person in here has debt. And no one can pay for someone else's debt because you have debt. Apart from one.

The sinless one. And he came to bear witness to that truth. Can we respond with our eyes to that truth? There's only one way.

There's only one door. There's only one God. How do we experience that? One of the ways is community.

One of the ways is through his people. I think, I hope, I pray. That's why we gather here. And it's got to be one of our priorities.

Why do we sit in a circle and awkwardly force us to look at each other whilst we're gathering? It's because in some ways you are here for each other.

[42:23] Because otherwise, you can listen to a YouTube sermon at home. And you can sing to great worship music. Actually, Paul Roth is on Spotify. You could just, if you liked his voice, you could just listen to him at home.

And you don't need to see his face. But yet his face is beautiful. Thanks Mel. And only Mel. So that's why we gather.

That's why we're here. And as with that.