

Meditation -The Truth - 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022

Recently, I was asked to read at the funeral of a very dear, old friend. The text chosen was from St John's Gospel, Chapter 14, verses 1 to 6. As I prepared the familiar reading I was so moved by the words which contain the essence of our faith and offer us so much hope.

Since then I have pondered much on verse 5 and 6.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life..."

We are living in a world where truth is in short supply. Our society, our world, manipulates truth, gives us part truths and hides the truth from us.

We try to fight back sometimes and pursue and speak the truth; we hear and maybe use the phrase, "SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER". What does that mean?

An internet entry defines the phrase as "Stand up for what's right and tell people in charge what's what... an expression for courageously confronting an authority, calling out injustices on their watch, and demanding change".

Our Archbishops of Canterbury and York speak truth to power and are criticised for bringing politics into religion. Yet, we have the example of Jesus speaking truth to power throughout his ministry.

Many bishops, priests and lay readers, have preached on John chapter 14, verse 6 and often on the subject of truth.

The more I have read some of those sermons and gone back to Jesus' words, the more I learn that the four words – I am the Truth – can be read in a very strong and exciting way.

We can study what is meant by the single word *truth*, by the two words *the truth*, by the couplet *I am* and then the wholeness of the quartet *I am the Truth*.

On the **Crosswalk** Christian website ( <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/i-am-the-way-the-truth-and-the-life-what-jesus-really-meant.html> ) there is a sermon by Pastor Jason Soroski entitled *I am the Truth*. Pastor Soroski explores this question of truth, what is it, and how can we know truth, and Christ saying "I am The Truth".

Soroski takes us back to Pilate's conversation with Jesus...*Jesus answers Pilate "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 truth?'*

*Jesus answers this question in John 14, 6 with the disciples when he tells them "I am the truth". Jesus can testify to the truth and teach the truth because he himself is that truth. In him there is nothing false, nothing misleading, and nothing fake or uncertain.*

Justin Welby has recorded a very short video *Why do I believe Jesus is the Truth?*, in which he summarises his faith.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kV1e04KiWM8>

In conveying truth the actual words used are so important and the emphasis that is put on them.

In a sermon by Canon Mark Oakley, Dean of St John's College, Cambridge, given on 1<sup>st</sup>

November 2020 ( [greatstmarys.org/unisermons](http://greatstmarys.org/unisermons) ) he says ,

*“We are in the wake of an American election, a national Covid-driven lockdown, the ferment of Brexit, and a changing global, polarised political, climate. We are living with a sense of dismantling in the air — from liberal democracy to the environment itself; from life as we knew it and lived it to basic human encounter and relationship. At such a time, we need rich, awakened, and trustworthy language to connect for the common good, a compass to navigate us through the land of loss and fear. And yet language itself appears now, in the hands of some, to be equally dismantled — by a grave and dangerous abuse.*

*There is what Richard Baxter called “Truth Decay” (Poetical Fragments, 1681), and the haunting question whether, as a society, we are losing interest in the truth of words; whether the idea that there is objective truth is now less important to us than opinions, crisis chatter, or infotainment.”*

On 7th February 2021, Revd Dr Samuel Wells, Vicar of St Martin's in the Fields, delivered a sermon, *The Way, The Truth and the Life* at the University Church in Oxford.

<https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/sermons/way-truth-and-life>

He explores carefully the words in John 14, 1-14 (particularly in verse 6), throwing light on **I am The Truth** in the context of **The Way and The Life**.

I am still re-reading Wells' words, and, though it may be misleading to cut and paste quotations from his sermon since there may be a danger of being selective about particular ideas which need the other words around them to convey the full meaning of his argument, I do want to encourage you to read the full sermon because I believe it helps our understanding of Jesus's words – *I am the Truth*.

The following texts are taken from Well's sermon:

*“I am' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for the name of God, usually spelt Yhwh, and pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah, although it's so holy that Jews don't pronounce it at all, often substituting the word Elohim or Lord....*

*It's sometimes said that Jesus' words here in John 14, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,' and 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' are radical statements of Christ's divinity, but in truth it's already all here in these two little words, 'I am.' Jesus is cut from the same cloth as the Father. Everything that the Father is in the Old Testament is now embodied here in Jesus....*

*Which takes us back to what that ‘everything’ really is. Rather than get hung up on the first word, ‘way,’ we need to begin with the second word, ‘truth.’*

*Not ‘the one who speaks the truth’ or ‘the representative of the truth’ but – the truth.*

*‘I am’ is the truth – and the truth is ‘I am.’...*

*Jesus isn’t doing a deal with us. This isn’t a bargain. He’s not a ladder we toss away once we’re on the roof. He’s saying, ‘Make me your truth. Don’t use me to get what will turn out to be a false security. Enjoy me so deeply that you find a life that never runs out. Only then will you find your way.’*

To complete this meditation on *The Truth* I offer you words from two hymns:

**George Herbert - Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:**

Come, my Way, **my Truth**, my Life:  
such a way as gives us breath:  
such **a truth** as ends all strife;  
such a life as conquers death

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSxBFDfCY1A>

**Bernadette Farrell - Christ be our Light**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for **truth**, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?q=bernadette+farrell+christ+be+our+light+videos&rlz=1C1CHBF_enGB892GB892&oq=Bernadette+Farrell+Christ+be+our+Light&aqs=chrome.3.0i355i512j46i512j0i512i3j0i22i30i4.5753j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:838c5a6d,vid:qibAAo0JiEQ)

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