

St Martins C3 – August 25, 2024

Who are You to Tell Me What is True? – Answering Big Questions

Sermon Summary:

Read Colossians 1:9-11

Growing in knowledge should increase our confidence. Knowledge grounded in the heart of God; will help us to be confident without being obnoxious.

Our modern world says that is “absurd” to believe in Jesus as the truth (John 14:6), there is no absolute truth, and even if there is who says Christians know it and others don't?

This is clear in the familiar statement: “That may be true for you, but not for me.” This is a statement of moral relativism. This idea is that truth is held solely within the individual. That there is no universal truth that exists outside of ourselves and the constructs of our reality, our culture and experience.

However, Christianity passes the three tests of absolute truth.

1 – Internally self-consistent

Those who are experts in the field of understanding ancient texts, archaeology and the like, whether they believe in Jesus or not, are almost all in agreement on the internal consistency of the contents of the Bible and its messages.

2 – Observable

What the Christian Faith claims about Jesus – his life, death, and resurrection are all grounded in the real world with lots of witnesses. 2000 years later the effects of the truth are still observable in the lives of the followers of Jesus.

Read Luke 1:1-13; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

3 – Agree with Reality

Science shows that there must be a first cause. Therefore, belief in God is the most consistent with reality. Also, the reality of evil requires the existence of a way things are supposed to be, a standard of what is right. And a standard requires a standard giver – which leads to God.

For more evidence of God see the following websites:

www.WhyChristiansBelieve.nz

www.GotQuestions.org

www.thinkingmatters.org.nz

How to Have the Conversation:

- (a) Remember God's heart, love the world
- (b) Understand that what we believe is robust
- (c) Own your perspective
- (d) Start from common ground
- (e) Enjoy your Faith

Read Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15

We want to move beyond defensiveness to a soft and gentle reaching and teaching. Our manner is so important, as our truth claims about Jesus will not appear very true if our manner is not like His at all.

Connect Group Material:

Key Point

Christianity passes the test of absolute truth and is for all people of all time.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

When is "it's true for you but not for me" a good phrase?
When is it not?

What would you say to someone who says there is no such thing as absolute truth?

How can we be confident about knowing the truth about anything?

Using the criteria from the sermon, how can we seek that Christianity is absolutely true?

How can we go about sharing and defending our faith in Jesus, when confronted with questions of truth?

Should we be insistent about the truth of the gospel or should we present it as a "take it or leave it"? Why?

What has this series taught you about having conversations with others that lead them to Christ?

Monday Devotion: Love is God's Nature

Read Exodus 33:12-14:8

As we conclude our series on answering big questions and consider how we can answer other people's questions with gentleness and respect, we must ground ourselves in the love of God.

One of the most awesome scenes in all of Scripture plays out in Exodus 33 – 34. Moses is struggling to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. He is desperate for God to go with him and to know God more.

So, God allows His glory to pass before Moses, and He reveals to Moses His name. In doing so, He reveals His nature and His personality. God reveals His Power, Holiness and judgment of sin, but more weight is given to the centrality of His Love.

He is the God of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, filled with unfailing love and faithfulness, lavishing love to a thousand generations.

Entrenched in every quark and atom, in every sunrise and new flower, is the love of God. It is His Supreme characteristic. Therefore, it is no wonder that God wants us to bring love to others when we speak of Him. This week pray that you would be able to reflect God's character in your life and love others well.

Tuesday Devotion: Hear and Do

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Ancient Israelites had a prayer that they treated just like Christians do the Lord's Prayer. Many Israelites still say this prayer every day. It is known as "the Sh' ma", which is the first word of this verse in Hebrew, meaning "hear".

Each day they would pray and remind themselves that at the centre of their lives was Y'hwh and that He was Lord of all. They would then remind themselves that their response was to love Him in return.

"Ahavah" is love in Hebrew, and at its most basic level, it means to have affection toward someone. But biblically speaking, love is more than sentiment—it is also action. In the Sh' ma, Israel is supposed to respond to God's love by showing love to him in return with all of their heart, soul and strength. It is the most natural response there is to the things God had done for them.

We too have been shown God's great love – in fact; we have had a more pure expression of it found in the love of Jesus.

Today let us consider how our heart (our thoughts and emotions), our soul (our inner life), and our strength (the upper limits of our abilities and passion) can be entirely devoted to God in adoration and obedience; both to Him and the people He has made.

Wednesday Devotion: Real Love

Read 1 John 3:10-18

If you only had one word to describe love, what word would you use? I came across a list this week of twenty-somethings who answered this question. Here are their answers:

“Warm” - Sarah

“Happiness” - Krista

“Unconditional” - Brianna

“Passion” - John

“Beautiful” - Dee

“Worth waiting for” - Sonja

“Loyalty” - Miranda

“Magical” - Corey

“Wild” - Allegra

“Powerful” – Jess

These responses show our world’s view of love – emphasising the way we look to love to fulfil us. Jesus, however, offers a different way. We know what love is because Jesus laid down his life for us. One of the twenty-somethings got this (but misunderstood the task), they said: “Putting someone’s needs and happiness before your own” – Courtney.

When we hold ourselves up to this standard, we are spurred on to remove all the selfishness and pride that gets in the way of our ability to love.

May you bring this selfless love to others as you seek to share the gospel with them.

Thursday Devotion: The Apologetic of Love

Read 1 John 4:7-21

In this week's sermon we saw how the existence of evil is a great proof of the truth of the gospel. Love is another great defence of the gospel.

In one article, the author defines love as the Supreme Emotion, showing that it does not make sense as a mindless accident but only from a Christian mindset, pointing to these passages in 1 John 4, which give the definition and example of love. The author then says:

All humans feel, experience, give and receive love ... love is at the heart of the Christian message: to declare God is love is to acknowledge that God is Trinity. Thus, if we begin to talk about love as a concept, it creates a natural bridge for us to then speak about love as a reality in the person and works of Jesus Christ.

So why not be an apologist of love? To ask our friends and colleagues what they believe love to be—as this may give us opportunities to speak of the God who is love.¹

Let us not only take the opportunity to speak of this love but let us take every moment to display it through the way that we love. May our ability to do this grow more and more through the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for people as you do so.

¹ <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/love-a-surprisingly-underutilised-apologetic/>

Friday Devotion: Really Love People

Read Romans 12:9-16; Colossians 3:1-14

If you read the New Testament letters, you discover there are three main concerns they are trying to address with followers of Jesus. The first is ensuring they understand the truth about Jesus and what he achieved. The second is promoting obedience and holiness in conduct. The third is ensuring the church is a strong, loving community.

These last two areas can, at times, seem at odds with each other. How do you promote a moral standard and be accepting of others? Yet, both are essential. Ethical living is not only about personal moral standards; it is just as much about the way we love and care for the disadvantaged in our world and our churches.

So, Paul will tell the people of Rome to really love others and not pretend, whilst at the same time holding to what is morally right (Romans 12:9). He also tells the good folks in Colossae to make allowances for others faults and forgive those who offend you (Colossians 3:13). This he does straight after listing the things which are morally unacceptable for them as Christians (Colossians 3:5-9).

Today, consider the people in your life who are most in need of compassion, forgiveness, or a listening ear. Begin by praying for those people and then let your prayers move you towards action in bringing God's care to them.