

1 John 2:18-27

"What is the Truth?"

Growing up in a household with a young brother we have went around and around on things, such as my brother getting into my room and my playing with my things or making a mess in my room with various things. It was a common thing that all brothers would go through, but at the time it seemed that it was a situation that only my brother and I faced. Perspective isn't the first thing on your mind when you are 11 and your brother is 3. But we would push through it.

Sometimes though, my brother and I would get into a real situation, where we would simply go back and forth accusing the other of doing various things to each other's rooms. It would take my parents stepping in and mediating a resolution to the spat between my brother and I. Typically a question they would ask both of us is, what is the truth? Who did what? How can I believe you? These questions were sometimes difficult to answer, but they were my parents attempt at resolving brotherly disputes.

These questions though are questions that go beyond a sibling argument. Quite often we are faced with these questions in our faith journey. We are challenged by the greater culture on whether our faith is true, on whether we believe the right things, or whether we have the ability to know that our faith is true. These are very real issues for us as a people of faith, as a people that believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Quite often in our faith journeys we will be challenged in our faith and truly experience these questions first hand. Today I plan on looking at our faith from the perspective of 1 John, and discuss how we can accept our faith as being true, on whether we can believe that Jesus Christ is true, especially on the subject on Christ being a part of the Father. We have great

sources of truth that we can rely upon in exploring these ideas, and the end result is that we can better proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ.

In the early Christian communities, there were many folks going about spreading false news and information about Christ and the early Christian communities. Many of these folks were deemed heretics or people who did not follow the common beliefs of the communities. There were many challenges to the faith from these individuals, and it took some time for the beliefs to be formed into a common statement.

Some of the folks in the early Christian communities were spreading false information about Christ. Some of these folks we've heard of, such as the Gnostics. These were people that believed that in order to obtain salvation that you needed to know secret information about Christ. They believed things about God that were not consistent with the beliefs of the Old Testament and things about Christ that were not a part of our current understanding of Christ, such as the fact that Christ never died and was never resurrected, but transformed into a new being instead.

There were some people in the early Christian community that believe that Christ was man completely, and was never of a substance of the Father. Christ never had any of the divine elements presented in the gospel, and was a common man who had a gift for doing certain special things only. These folks believed that Christ merely left the cross and never went through the resurrection, which is contrary to the gospels completely.

These are just a few of the example of the false things about Christ that were being spread in the early Christian communities. The writer of the letters of John, saw these false truths being spread, and called out these people and instead pushed them towards the correct belief of Christ in accordance with the scriptures.

I think the passage that stands out the most in declaring where false truth comes from is found at the beginning of the sermon passage. (Read 1 John 2:18-19). Here in this passage we see how that people who bear false truths, actually come from people who were a part of the community. They started with the truth of Christ, but they went out from the community to glorify themselves and proclaim a false message about Christ. Their intentions were not good at all.

I think this stands out that we need to be vigilant about the truths that we proclaim about Christ. For in the beginning even the early Christian communities struggled on truth, and they had the recent experience of Christ's life. Imagine the difficulty that we can face when it comes to the truth about Christ in our day and age, two thousand years after the fact. This brings us to where we can begin to find out what we believe is true.

We believe as Christians in our faith community that we believe that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, who was fully human and fully divine. We believe that the life of Christ is true and that all that he did is true. Have you ever thought of how we believe these things as a community? The answer is right in front of us.

We believe these things about Christ, we believe the true things about Christ because we are a community that immerses itself in scripture. Whenever we have difficulty in our faith, we turn to scripture to learn from our faith story and learn from the story of Christ. We have the story of the Old and New Testaments, which stand to the continuous narrative of God's love for us. I believe we as a community can stand behind the truth of scripture and use it as a guide in our faith journeys.

This shows us the personal aspects of the scripture. For not only do we interpret scripture as a community, but on a personal level. We can dive into the scriptures on our own and learn

about our faith on our own. There is no secret key or password to access the scriptures. They stand in plain sight for us to look into and for us to examine and us for the development of our own personal understanding of Christ in our lives.

I spoke with a person recently who was talking about how to stand with a brother or sister in Christ when we feel that they might be erring in the faith or that they might be lost in their interpretation of the faith story. I think when we approach others out of concern for their faith and we feel the need to help them on their faith journey we should not approach this situation lightly.

My friend suggested that when we feel the need to proclaim truth to our friends and neighbors, we do this not in an accusingly way and across from them pointing a finger, but next to them, with the scriptures in hand. The scriptures contain truth, and by diving into the scriptures together next to each other, then we can experience the truth of our faith journey. This allows the Holy Spirit to work together with the two of you in learning about Christ. It's a way of understanding truth in the way of love, rather than out of an emotion of anger or accusation.

I believe that 1 John points us in the direction of this act, this act of learning truth together with the Holy Spirit. The scriptures state that as believers we have an anointing of the Holy One or the Holy Spirit in our faith. As believers in Christ then we have the Holy Spirit with us and the Holy Spirit will guide us in our understanding of the truth in our faith. By being in constant communication with God and by deepening our spiritual lives then we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our understanding of truth, so that we may share the truth of Christ in love to our neighbor and to our fellow brother and sister in Christ.

I think that understanding the truth in all of this requires an act on our part, which is the act of faith. The foundation for our truth comes from our faith in Jesus Christ. It is through our

believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came for our salvation then we will experience the Good News and the new life that comes through a relationship with Christ. Our understanding of the truth of Christ is rooted in our personal faith in Christ. Our faith as Christians comes forth from our story of faith contained in the scriptures.

We have to have faith if we are going to spread the Good News of Christ. The world that we live in is a world that challenges faith and wants us to give in to the world. We live in a world that disregards faith as a true act and instead wants us to give in to the false truths that are proclaimed. There are many challenges to faith, things that we will encounter once we leave these four walls of the church. But do not despair, for take the words of the scriptures. 1 John 24-25 states that (Read 1 John 24-25).

Stand in the truth that is in Christ Jesus. Live in the truth that is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The challenges to our faith will come and go but what will stand long after the heresies and false truths is the truth that is found in Jesus Christ. The writer of the letters of John saw this happen in his time and it is something that still exists today. Immerse yourself in the truth that is found in God's word. Immerse yourself in the Good News that is available to all people.

Christ is with us wherever we go. Christ is with us in all the hardships we will face. Remember that Christ is truth, the only truth that will stand the test of all the false things of the world. Take the faith with you into the world, so that others may have the new life and new hope that is found in Jesus Christ. Amen.