

## **The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth**

**Text: Zechariah 8:14-17**

**3.11.26**

What happens when you are called to testify in court? You appear in the courtroom and then make your way to the witness stand. Before you begin your testimony, you are sworn in. As a Christian, you place your hand on a bible and are asked “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?”. You take an oath that what you are about to say is true, and that is important. The only way justice can be administered is if the truth is spoken.

The truth and justice go together. Lies and injustice do too. This isn't true for just a courtroom setting but every facet of life. God wants the truth not just in a court setting but in all of life. He wants his people to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This is clear from this week's text from Zechariah 8:14-17.

This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Just as I had determined to bring disaster on you and showed no pity when your ancestors angered me,” says the LORD Almighty, “so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid. These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD.

To being our text, God references the previous failures of his people. His chosen people had failed to uphold God's law. Love him and their neighbor. They had false gods, they abused one another. Their worship had become tainted; their courts were corrupt.

For a time, the Lord had refrained from punishing Israel. But he eventually sent a foreign nation, Babylon as his instrument of justice. Disaster came and exiles were taken. For 70 years the exiles had to ponder God's truth that they had been rejecting. Eventually the Lord relented; and the exiles returned home.

As Zechariah spoke God's word to the those who had returned, he announced that the Lord was determined to do good again to Israel. He also expects that his chosen people practice truth in all their relationships and responsibilities, their interactions and their institutions. Five centuries after Zechariah delivered this truth, were the people listening?

Unlike our other Lenten texts from Zechariah, this one is not a direct prophecy of something that Jesus would do during Holy Week. But it calls to mind the disregard for truth during Holy Week and especially during Jesus trial.

We heard about this in our passion reading for today. Matthew took us the gathering of the Sanhedrin which was the high priest, teachers of the law and the elders for Jesus first trial. He tells us,

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. (Matthew 26:57,59-60)

Was there *anyone* in that assembly who could swear to be telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Where they upholding God's standards he had shared over 500 years ago. Let's check. What did Zechariah say.

- **Speak the truth to each other**—They seemed more interested in speaking whatever would bring them personal gain. If this Jesus was causing problems they were willing to massage the truth fit their purposes.
- **Render true and sound judgment in your courts**— The Sanhedrin was interested in judgments that would sound good to their own ears and keep them in control. Even if a guilty verdict was given for someone who had no guilt.
- **Do not plot evil against each other**—Clearly, Jesus was not included in “each other” because they had been plotting evil against him for years.
- **Do not love to swear falsely**— We hear that they were looking for false evidence and brought forward false witnesses to accomplish their goal.

God hated the disregard for the truth during that first Holy Week, and he hates the disregard for the truth in our day. Our legal system is supposed to seek the truth, but perjury and false witnesses remain a problem. Many who end up in court are there because they have plotted evil against a neighbor or because a neighbor has plotted evil against them. Like the Holy Judge, we hate it when clearly unjust verdicts are announced or when we experience injustice. We hate being lied to, whether by leaders, lenders, lawyers, or loved ones.

But we *love* the truth! We *always* tell the truth to family, to friends, to teachers, to neighbors, to authorities. Right! Until, that is, something less than the truth might work to our advantage.

Would you tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God, if you were asked the following?

- Did you report *all* your income on your tax return?
- Have you spoken well of your fellow Christians at this church behind closed doors?
- Have God's priorities matched your priorities?

When God's shares his standard of complete truth we don't measure up. God would be just to condemn us for every time we have bent the truth for our own benefit or ignored God's call for truth in our lives. Every time we have permeated injustice by our own self-preservation. Every time we have spoken ill to deflect and disguise our own insecurities.

This falsehood is worthy is death.

In our sin we cry out to our God **“Lord sanctify us by the truth, your word, it is the truth”**. We need our God to expose how lying and falsehood seeps into our lives and set us apart from it. Sanctify us from our ungodliness.

This is why our Saviour is willing to incur mock trials, injustice, false witnesses, and false testimony, because he has come to take your falsehood and perversion of truth upon himself. To cleanse you from it.

Your Saviour would rather face every false witness who fabricates stories of His unfaithfulness than for you to face God with every ounce of evidence for your unfaithfulness.

Your Saviour would rather face a guilty verdict for nothing he had done wrong than for you to face the verdict of guilty and condemned for eternity.

Your Saviour would rather face every bit of injustice and falsehood so that you and I might receive the truth of God’s promise of his love for us in Christ. God has given you a Saviour who is “The way, the truth, and the lift.” (Jn 14:6). The way back to God can only be found through Jesus. The truth of the matter is that you couldn’t fix and root out your sin, so your Saviour is condemned for you, all to give you life. Life now, and life eternally.

This new life is where God equips us to be purveyors of truth. This is how we express gratitude for his grace.

“Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely.”

Speak the truth of your sins to God and to those you have wronged, rejoicing in the truth of absolution. Speak the truth of forgiveness to those who have wronged you, rejoicing in the truth that God forgave you first. Speak the truth to your friend about the sin he or she is caught in; then speak the truth of the pardon purchased at the cross.

In other words: the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Help me do this, God.

Amen.