

Sermon Notes

January 3, 2021

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

For This I Was Born

John 18:37

Jesus Speaks of His Birth

- ❖ Among the 4 gospels, Jesus mentions His birth only once
 - even though this comes from the end of Jesus' life on earth rather than the beginning, this is a great Christmas text
 - Jesus gives testimony to
 - the uniqueness of His birth
 - the purpose of His birth
- ❖ The uniqueness of Jesus' birth is that Jesus did not originate at his birth
 - before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Jesus was
 - the personhood, character and personality of Jesus of Nazareth existed BEFORE the man, Jesus of Nazareth was born
 - the mystery and miracle of Jesus' birth is not JUST that He is born of a virgin, but that this child who is born at Christmas is a person who existed from of old
 - Jesus **came into** the world

The purpose of Jesus' birth

- Jesus says He was born in order to *bear witness to the truth*
- the truth Jesus reveals is that He is the way to the Father (John 14:6-9)
- the life and ministry of Jesus is all about bringing glory to the Father by offering fallen humans the gift of eternal life (John 17:3)

Responding To The Truth

- ❖ Truth requires a response
 - Jesus deals in facts, not fiction
 - Jesus' words convey infinite reality that is not to be trifled with, minimized or ignored
- ❖ Jesus' teaching is pure light, and there is no darkness in it whatsoever
- ❖ The truth Jesus reveals comes from outside the world but gives meaning to the world
 - truth does not come from within
 - truth exists outside of me
 - I do not control truth, truth controls me
- ❖ Most people in the world today not only reject or ridicule the idea of absolute truth, they see any such notion as being immoral
 - absolute truth = the height of arrogance, bigotry, small-mindedness and intolerance ("hate speech")

- today, the prevailing notion of what it means to be a virtuous and moral person is predicated on relativism
- John Piper: “The biblical message of Christmas in America today not only runs into the obstacle that Christ has been taken out of Christmas, but also the deeper problem that truth has been taken out of reality.”
- that someone dares to entertain thoughts of a conflicting or competing version of truth than someone else is seen as a dangerous threat that needs to be suppressed and stamped out
- ❖ The problem with relativism is that it is both self-contradictory and unbiblical
 - “We will not tolerate intolerance.”
 - the spirit of the age is on a collision course with Jesus’ truth claims
- ❖ Pilate’s response
 - jaded? cynical? hopeless?
 - “I don’t want to take a position on this. Just leave me out of the discussion.”
- ❖ Your response
 - are you more likely to take Jesus at His Word or follow Pilate’s noncommittal example?
 - do you typically suspend judgment and/or plead ignorance when it comes to issues that really matter to you or when your personal interest is at stake?
 - when your own personal interests are at stake, you aren’t likely to act like you don’t know what truth is or say, “I don’t think I can find out what truth is.”
- ❖ Although Jesus has returned to heaven the record of what He said and did is still available to you today, written in His Word
 - read the first four books in the New Testament
 - ask God to help you see the truth
- ❖ If you are convinced that Jesus’ voice is the voice of truth, then you will want to embrace Him as Savior and partner with Him in bearing witness to the truth

Personal Application

1. As we come to the end of this Christmas season, ponder once more the mystery and miracle of Jesus’ birth. How closely do your thoughts about the uniqueness and purpose of Jesus’ birth align with Jesus’ summary of them in John 18:37?
2. Do you believe that truth is absolute? Why or why not? How would you explain your conclusion about this to someone who holds a different point of view than yours?
3. Truth requires a response. Jesus says, ***Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*** Do you accept Jesus’ voice as the voice of truth? If not, why not? If yes, to what extent are you partnering with Jesus to be a witness of the truth?