

What is **TRUTH**?

Pastor Matt Schultz

This is the last week, it's the final installment,
Of a series of sermons on **TRUTH**, and I've called it:
"What is Truth?" — a question that Pilate asked Christ,
And it can be tricky, no matter how it's sliced.
 It's not simple to worship the king of the Jews!
 We're deluged and infused and confused by fake news.
 Though we follow the teachings of the Gospels and Acts,
 It's hard to steer clear of alternative facts.
From Noah to David, on to Jeremiah,
From Adam and Abel on through Zephaniah,
From Moses to Micah, from Esther to Ruth,
Now more than ever, we all want the **TRUTH**.

But throughout our lives we are sold certain lies:
That beauty and sex is where happiness lies,
That joy is in fancy clothes, feathers and fluff,
In sparkling glamorous glittery stuff;
 We're told that our joy will come from relaxation,
 Physical comforts, self-gratification,
 Luxury, gluttony, personal health,
 And most of all, most of all, most of all: Wealth!
But **TRUTH** can't be purchased for any amount,
With all of the cash in your checking account,
Your moolah, your greenbacks, whatever you call it.
No, it doesn't matter "What's in your wallet?!"

No, **TRUTH** can't be found in the ads on TV
That promise the 'YOU' that you wish you could be:
"Oh the friends that you'll have! Oh, the joy that you'll feel,
When FINALLY you have achieved abs of steel!"
 And since you worked out, why not go get some food?
 Super-sized fries, shakes, and burgers? Yeah, dude!
 That hole in your soul that is painfully achin'?
 We're all out of **TRUTH**. Why not fill it with bacon?
But wait, there's more! There's a new phone to buy,
A new show to binge-watch; a new app to try!
Just click 'PURCHASE NOW,' there's no need to be frugal!
The **TRUTH** can't be real if it's not found on Google!"

And if that doesn't work, then I'll tell you another:
That man in the turban? Well he's not your brother.
They'll tell you the **TRUTH** is that we all should fear him.
Exclude him, elude him, don't even get near him!
 And that guy looks Jewish, and that one looks gay.
 Some people say we should push them away.
 And so often people listen because it sounds strong.
 It seems like security. But that's not **TRUTH**. It's wrong.
They sell safety like candy, and like children we buy it;
They sell strength like a drug and like addicts we try it.
Less and less to defend, as we grow more defensive.
More and more to confess as it grows more expensive.

All these lies are told to us, there's no way to miss it,
But don't be mistaken: We all are complicit.
We lie to ourselves that we can't be as **good**
Or as **pure** or **smart** or as **strong** or as we should.
 We lie to ourselves that we're captives to sin,
 That there is no escape from this prison we're in.
 We lie to ourselves that God's too far above us,
 And we're so down low, that God never could love us.
We fall for these lies—we just can't dispel them—
'Cuz throughout our lives, we're the people that tell them.
But wherever we go, and whatever we do,
Deep down inside, we know they're not true.

We know they're not true from the lives that we lead,
And the movies we see, and the books that we read.
All these stories of **TRUTH**—and people who need
To go seek for this **TRUTH**... but they don't quite succeed.
 We've been there ourselves. We have sought it and lost,
 But we'd seek it again, for whatever the cost:
 Every child and adult, every senior and youth—
 We're all hungry, we're thirsty, we're **ACHING** for **TRUTH**.
So we turn from these lies and we try to erase
All the falsehoods we've heard, and instead reach for grace.
We know that these lies have just filled us with strife.
We know that the **TRUTH** is—there much more to life.

We know that our hearts are not steered by depravity.
Our soul pulls toward **TRUTH** the way Earth pulls with gravity.
As children we seek it—that question shows up
When we wonder what we will do when we grow up.
 As adults it's still truth that our hearts are pursuing,
 Though it often is phrased, "WHAT THE HECK AM I DOING?!"
 And with our last breath, when it's all said and done,
 It's often phrased, "My God. What have I done?"
We're sojourning, searching for something to trust.
From cradle to crypt. From dust unto dust.
And with every step we reach for something higher,
Something much deeper we hope will inspire.

And once in a while, when God is so willing,
We catch a brief glimpse of this **TRUTH**—and it's thrilling!
We see **TRUTH** in sunsets, in beautiful valleys,
In icebergs and glaciers, and of course, on Denali.
 We hear **TRUTH** in Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach,
 In country and western, in hip hop, and rock.
 We see it and hear it in mourning and grief
 When we're held in prayer by our neighbor's belief.
When someone's excluded and we share our seat,
Or when someone is hungry, and we help them eat,
When a family is homeless and shivering with fright,
And we provide shelter and food for a night.

There, we see God's **TRUTH** when we love and we care.
When we lift the downtrodden, when we clothe the bare.
When we're judged it won't be on our building or steeple,
But by what we have done for the least of God's people.
 We all stand before Pontius Pilate, but we need not be nervous.
 Pilate asks "What is **TRUTH**?" We respond with our service.
 And although his question can cut like a knife
 We know Christ is the way and the truth and the life.
Our hunger for truth, our spiritual longing,
Is our compass, that points us to whom were belonging....
If you have ears, then hear.... If you have eyes, then see:
Then you'll know the truth. And the truth will set you free.

Amen.