

First and Center

Pastor's Blog

January 28, 2020

Jesus said to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, that he, Jesus, had come “to testify to the truth.” Pilate responded to him with a question: “What is truth?” (John 18:37-39)

What a question for our times! When aides to the President of the United States talk about “Alternate Facts;” when video clips can be altered so that things which did not happen appear to have happened; when social media posts that appear legit actually have been generated by Russian “bots,” how does one evaluate an answer to Pilate’s question?



It's hard. That's the thing about “truth.” We think it should be easy, crystal clear, either something is true or it's not. When a child stands by a broken vase and says “I didn't do it!” but you watched as they did do it, you know the child is not telling the truth. Would that life were always that simple.

It's not.

I majored in English in college, and numerous people have said to me over the years what a useless major that was because it did not logically lead to high-paying jobs. Or any jobs, possibly. Yet, I value that time inside many great books, because what I learned there has stood me well in trying to discern truth as an adult. I learned in college how to think. In fact, I learned that there is a great need **to think!** Not just to react to the first thing I hear as truth, but to take time to evaluate and discern, seeking understanding and clarity about truth.

In a culture where people react quickly to social media posts that may, or may not, be true, this time-consuming act of thinking is not popular. There is so much of this fake material out there that people have founded organizations like “Snopes” to ferret out the truth in social media posts. I still like Steven Colbert's old term “truthiness” to describe what people in power say that just doesn't quite add up.

Thinking is slow work in a fast world. Thinking is a deterrent to reactions that spring from racism, sexism, classism, or any of the other ways people like to judge one another. Thinking may be anathema in a “shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later” culture, and yet, it may be what we most need to reclaim in this pivotal moment in our nation's life.

I commit this year to think carefully and react slowly whenever I can, and I ask forgiveness in advance for when I forget, which I will do. Perhaps, we can all practice thinking together.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse
Transitional Minister