

Personification of Truth Came Down

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[0 : 00] You take the scripture portion that is included in your bulletin, insert reasons Jesus gave for coming, and we'll just be looking at a kind of a modified Christmas message after the fact.

But as I've mentioned, I'm not apologizing because Jesus is on target and up to date, doesn't matter what the Sunday of the year it is. And I would like you to join with me, if you would, in a kind of responsive reading.

I will read the first, and then you follow with the others. Gary and Carolyn Harple, Gary would usually be doing this, but he and Carolyn are visiting with relatives in Pennsylvania over this weekend, so they are not with us.

And what you see here on the sheet, front and back, is a number of references from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that are recorded, the reasons that our Lord gave for coming to the earth. And they are varied. We know the principal reason, the one that tops them all, of course, is that he might be the sacrifice for our sins.

[1 : 10] And everything else pales in comparison to that. So I will read the first, and then if you will follow with the second, then we'll go on to the opposite page.

Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. And he said to them, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

Because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him. For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.

[2 : 49] And now my soul has become troubled.

And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this hour came I into the world. I am coming to the world.

For God is upon me who believes in me, and who are not in any heart. And if anyone who hears my pain, and who are not in any heart, I am not objecting, for I am not on the earth of the world, but who save the world.

I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world, and I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father. I look therefore, said to him, so the Lord are in any.

Jesus answered, you say correctly, that I am the King. For the greatest I have been born, and the greatest I have come into the world. You are witness to the truth.

[3 : 54] Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice. And that is a really, really big item. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice.

And would you open scriptures, please, to John's Gospel, chapter 14. Very familiar passage in verse 6. We'll not be spending a great deal of time here, but we must include it because of its importance, and because it reveals our Lord Jesus Christ to be a personification of truth.

Now that's a big word, and I want to kind of break it down, particularly for children who may be present, because it's a very important concept. The term personification is a literary term, and it is designed to speak of something that is not a person, as though it were a person.

And when we talk about Jesus being the personification of truth, it kind of ties in with the statement that he makes here in John 14 about being the way, the truth, and the life.

He's the personification of the way, and he's the personification of the truth, and of the life also. But when you use that word personification, it is simply one of the literary tools that are often engaged in the writing of scripture.

[5 : 22] And we find this especially in the Old Testament, and it is there in the New as well. But the Old Testament just abounds in it because it's kind of like an element of poetry.

And to explain what we're talking about, and we won't spend much time there either, keep your place here and come back, if you would, to Proverbs. Book of Proverbs, chapter 1.

Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 20. We've got an excellent illustration of personification, and it is referred to as wisdom. Proverbs 1.20 says, Wisdom shouts in the street.

She lifts her voice in the square. Really? Wisdom is not a person. Wisdom is an asset.

Wisdom is a reality. Wisdom is a thing, but it isn't a person. And yet, it is employed here as if it were a person.

[6 : 28] Now, why in the world would a writer do that? Some purist might look at it and say, well, that's not very accurate. Actually, that's not very truthful. But you need to understand the usage of figurative language.

Because figurative language is always intended to emphasize or give flavor or expression to something that might be an otherwise common term.

And when you personify it, you are like attaching an individual human being to it and giving it something that just the word wisdom doesn't give.

So, wisdom shouts in the street. And it is talking about wisdom as if it were a woman. And she is making a statement or shouting a declaration.

She lifts her voice in the square. At the head of the noisy streets, she cries out. At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings.

[7 : 31] And on and on, this feminine pronoun, she and her, is used when you aren't talking about a person at all. You're talking about a thing. Wisdom.

But you give an added dimension of meaning and expression to it when you personalize it. So, when we say that Jesus Christ is the personification of truth, that means that the very essence of truth is embodied in this person.

And when he speaks, it is truth speaking. It is wisdom speaking. It is life speaking. It is, well, it is Christ speaking as only he can.

So, back to our text in John 14 and verse 6. It is a verse that is very, very controversial in today's society because never in the history of our nation have we encountered the kind of opposition to exclusivity referring to Jesus Christ as we do today.

It is said loudly and clearly in many venues that for anyone to make the claim that whatever it is that they believe is the truth to the exclusion of others is extremely narrow and bigoted and unjustified.

[9 : 00] You wouldn't have to look far and wide to find a whole bunch of people who would agree with that today. Christians are thought to be narrow and bigoted because we proclaim that Jesus Christ and he alone is God's only way of salvation.

And their response is, well, la-ti-da, what makes your religion and your faith so special so that everybody else is wrong?

And that's a pretty good question. Most Christians would have great difficulty in answering it. In this text where our Lord Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, one cannot escape the impression that he has gone to extremes here to make that emphasis the way that it is made because in each case, each case, each of these words, way, truth, and life are all articulated. And that means Jesus is saying he is the way and the meaning of that is I myself, ego, emi, I myself, and there is no other way.

I myself am the way and I myself am the truth and I myself am the life and there is no other life.

That's the meaning of the article that articulates it.

[10 : 34] Jesus isn't saying I am a way and I am a truth and I am a life and if you don't happen to like one of those, no big deal.

Pick another one because all the others are just as good as that one. Now really, this is nothing more than a regurgitation of something that existed thousands and thousands of years ago.

The Jewish people came on the scene under Joshua landing in the land of Israel where they were given specific orders that they were to worship no other God save the Lord God Jehovah that brought them out of the land of Egypt and so on and so on and all of the other ways were spurious

and that God literally did have a corner on the truth and I would not be one bit surprised if there were those people who lived around them who thought well you Jews you think that your way of believing and your way of doing is the only way and that it has the sanctions of the true God and everything else is in error.

Right. Yeah, that's pretty much what we believe. And do you know how unpopular that would have been back then? And let me suggest something.

I don't want to read into it but I know human nature a little bit. I would not be a bit surprised if some of the Jews did not eventually become tired of defending this exclusivism and if they were not willing to let go of parts of it and let me ask you this if not how else could it be that so many of them succumbed to idolatry and paganism around them?

[12 : 32] it was only because they had come to the place where they were willing to surrender what had probably become an unpleasant truth that they no longer wanted to defend.

Enter the Baals you see it many times in your scripture B-A-A-L-S enter Ashteroth enter Chemosh enter Milcom enter all of these foreign deities against which God warned the Israelites not to have anything to do with them.

This narrow business one of my favorite one of my favorite expressions I heard from John Lennox when he was debating none other than Richard Dawkins a world famous atheist and they these two men served on the same faculty at Oxford University for years and Dr. John Lennox taught mathematics at Oxford for a number of years and he was a thoroughgoing committed Christian and he had debated Richard Dawkins in a number of venues on different occasions and they were going at it for wherever they were at the time and he remarked how that Christians are viewed often as being bigoted and narrow-minded for insisting that their way this thing of Christianity is the only way and everybody else is wrong well listen doesn't that have an unpleasant sound to it sure it does of course it does anytime anyone comes forth with anything that is this is the way it's the only way and every other way is wrong well what do you mean listen we like our options we want to make choices and some people if they had their way about it would just as soon have a cafeteria lined with different religions where they could just take their tray and go down the line you know and say oh I like

I like a little bit of this I'll take a little bit of Hinduism that sounds good and you put that on your plate and you move a little further and here's Buddhism now they've got some good things going so I'll take a little bit of Buddhism and I'll take a little bit of Shintoism and here's Islam they've got some interesting principles take a little bit of that and you are looked upon as a wise generous person who is willing to recognize the validity of all of these other faiths isn't that big of you it is big of you big and stupid that's exactly what it is I don't want to be unkind but I can't find another word that would describe it better this is exactly what it is and John Lennox went on to say in answer to the charge that Christians are narrow-minded and bigoted and he simply said why should Christians be thought narrow-minded and bigoted for receiving something from Jesus

Christ that no one else even offers wow that pretty well says it what no one else even offers there is no peace no stability no security and no assurance in any other faith I don't care where you go to find it or who is proposing it only in Christ is there that peace that safety that refuge that assurance and everything that goes with it amazing so when he says he is the way the truth and the life we think of our Lord as the personification of truth truth a number of things I've just jotted down that have come to mind and I want to run them by you and so you can just mull them over in your mind and these are very basic and very elemental but I think they're very powerful and I'm especially grateful for any children who may be here because no one is in a better position to be well advantaged and to be able to use these things for the rest of your life as a child who has these principles instilled within them think of this truth is always historical never past nor present truth is always historical truth is something that has always occurred or been said or happened now just think of that concept truth just is truth just is a lie is what is not are you aware that there are far more untruths available to be plugged into than what there are truths do you understand that truth is enormously outweighed by untruth do you realize that there are many many many more false ways than there is the true way all of the counterfeits truths are just that they are counterfeits of the true and how many of them are there a lie is an alternate explanation to what is real it is a distortion of what is true with added ingredients lies lies are the weaving together of untruths strands of material intended to be perceived as true but are not in other words truth just is truth is something that has already taken place but lies have to be made lies are manufactured you understand that lies are not

automatic lies are not what is lies are what is not lies have to be fabricated lies have to be engineered they have to be made they have to be created as opposed to truth lies must be carefully constructed because you do not have real

[20 : 02] factual materials from which to craft them so you have to manufacture the materials you have to make everything up a true story is the opposite of a made up story no one can or needs to make up truth truth is simply a product and a synonym of reality there's an old saying that goes back to my grade school years no one has a good enough memory to be a perfect liar remember that I can tell you something I found it to be true I found it to be true from a couple of understanding and parents who understood their youngster you can tell the truth and just forget it because it won't change tell the truth you don't even have to remember it because it's not going to change I remember hearing an interesting story you may have heard this years ago but it's one of my favorites it's about these four boys teenage boys on a warm spring day and the weather was so inviting and it was just so nice and trees were budding and everything and the temperature is about 75 degrees and one of the four boys had a vehicle had access to a car and the school authorities at that time had given children to go off campus go wherever the local town nearby and get their lunch or whatever as long as they were back to school on time so these four boys they're just kind of piled around you know like boys do and they all piled into this young man's car and they took off and they went and they got their lunch the local hamburger emporium and they were bemoaning the fact that now they had to get back to school and back to class and somebody came up with a bright idea hey man it is such a nice day who wants to go back into that stuffy old classroom this afternoon anybody nobody what choice do we have and the instigator says why don't we just take off and make the best of this day and have fun and of course you might know there were probably four seniors they'd have the brass to do that and and so they went to a little town next to them and went into a local bowling alley and just had a ball had their soft drinks and bowled three or four games and then they stopped and did something else and they killed a little more time and one of them says well now so and so you know the principal he's going to call us on the carpet for not coming back after school what are we going to do we got to we got to have some reason and someone came up with a well we just we just tell him we had we had a flat tire and by the time we got the tire fixed and got back on the road school was out so we just everybody just went on home everybody agreed yeah that's that's reasonable because by the way this was back in the days when flat tires were pretty common so they decided that that would work and the principal the next morning of course he called these four boys in and he didn't know what was going on but he just assumed that they probably played hooky you know couldn't resist the temperature and so on and he got to thinking now if these boys are boys like I was when

I was a boy they may just have a story to tell hmm and he came up with a brilliant idea he called all the four boys in and then he made three of them wait in the outer office while one came in for the interview he says all right where were you yes well we we were planning on coming back to school we got our lunch and everything and and we had this flat tire and by the time we got everything fixed and got back on the road again I see okay well you just wait in the other room and he called in another boy and he had the same story and then he asked him which tire was flat uh oh what are the odds all these boys are going to come up with same flat tire the jig is up you have been busted man and that's exactly what happened because you know a lie is a lie is a lie and they thought they had all the things all the bases covered and this is going to be yeah well truth just is but a lie is manufactured and thought up truth is not thought up truth isn't thought up it just is and it just happens

I don't know if you've seen the film or not but it was a fascinating film it's a true story it was called catch me if you can it was a role that was played by Leonardo DiCaprio DiCaprio and he enacted this actual story that was bizarre as it was it was hard to believe but it was a true story and Tom Hanks played opposite and he was the arresting officer and he worked with the FBI and he was on the trail of Leonardo DiCaprio who had who had who had presented himself as an airline pilot I mean he had the uniform he had the phony credentials he had everything and it enabled him to fly all over the country free of charge he'd go in with his uniform and his case and everything and they just assumed that he was one of the captains you know on the plane and then eventually the ingenious skills that he implemented to pull this off and the brass that this young man had I think he was just in his 20s at the time but he was so self-confident and so persuasive and so convincing nobody even questioned the guy as an airline pilot and then he did the same thing as a

physician as a surgeon and he would actually be in the operating room masked and suited there along with everybody else observing this operation and he would stand there and look just like he knew exactly what was going on and someone would ask him his opinion about something in connection with the surgery and he would say well you know I think but actually before I express my thinking I would like to hear from some of you what you think about this situation and he had ways of wiggling out of everything and each time they would try to catch up with him they would discover that he just flew the coop 30 minutes before they got there and it was one of the most frustrating things this is a true story the FBI if you ever wanted an interesting film it's called Catch Me If You Can and I saw it on television it's quite remarkable and long story short Tom Hanks who was the FBI investigator finally nailed him and he was sentenced to prison and after he'd been in prison I don't know exactly how long the FBI had a particularly difficult case they were trying to crack with somebody who was impersonating and it involved great sums of money etc and they actually went to him in prison and asked if he had any idea how this was being done and he just walked them through the steps and they were absolutely amazed this guy this young man had it all together and he laid it out for them and it resulted in them being able to nab the suspect and bring the case and finally that happened a number of occasions and the

[28 : 30] FBI was able to intervene on his behalf and get him out of prison and as a consultant for the FBI he even had a desk and an office in the FBI building and he would regularly deal with situations internationally that the FBI was trying to deal with working with other international law enforcement agencies and it was amazing how much light this is a story of a bad guy gone good and I don't know that it had any spiritual implications at all there's no reason to insert God into it because I didn't see that in the picture at all but it's just an amazing thing and all he was doing was presenting a big lie do you realize do you realize that all of the misery and heartache and death and disease that has been inflicted upon this nation and this world all began with one lie isn't that something one lie yeah hath God said you shall not surely die and she bought it and where are we today all the problems of our fallen humanity began with the telling and believing of a lie telling the truth is the most godlike god honoring thing you can do telling the truth can even be a costly thing to do but it remains the only thing to do truth and its value is more under denial and attack today than ever people often cannot get what they want by telling the truth so a lie becomes irresistible and this is precisely why we engage in untruths it is to gain something that we don't have or it is to avoid something that we fear is coming by way of punishment like

Adam and Eve when they hid from God they hid from God because they were afraid and they were afraid because they were guilty and they had that sensation of guilt and guilt brings with it the fear of punishment or discovery so the way out is to try to lie your way out law enforcement has to deal with this all the time and there's one aspect of this that troubles me and I don't know what the answer to it is and I would appreciate any insight that anybody might have but it just seems to me just unacceptable and yet the law has permitted it and it is this law enforcement officials are permitted to lie to suspects if they think that it can get them the information that they need and to me that just seems like it is beneath the dignity and the honor of law enforcement to enable policemen for instance who are questioning a witness maybe they think he's guilty of a robbery or maybe he's think he's guilty of a murder or something they have legal permission to lie to that suspect if they think well we know where you were on such and such a night and we have two witnesses who can identify you as having been present and there doesn't have to be a word of truth to that but they make him think that it's true they lie to the suspect and it kind of smacks like that old saying of what makes them any better than the one they're examining if they're able to lie like that there ought to be a better way and yet do you know there are enormous consequences that can be hanging in the balance if they don't get the information that they need it may even cost someone their life so it is a catch-22 thing but it seems to me that there ought to be a better solution and I have a great deal more to say about this and I want to particularly address it in light of what we are all being inundated with today on the election scene with all of the with all of the fabrications and accusations that are going on out there and you better brace yourself because it's only going to get worse in the year 2020 when it gets here as we near the election but all kinds of lies are being told and truth is mingled in with it and it is our responsibility as the electorate to try to figure out who's lying and who's telling the truth and sometimes it gets to be a very tedious task does it not when we look at our Lord

Jesus Christ John says and we beheld him and we beheld his glory and you know I think this is one of the reasons why the common people heard him so gladly why they hung on every word in the first place he didn't obfuscate anything he didn't make anything complicated he simplified it and brought it down to their level where they could get it and they loved him for it and it's easy to talk over the heads of people where you leave and they time people get out in the parking lot they say to one another did you understand what he was talking about well that doesn't do anybody any favors so we Paul says Paul says we use great plainness of speech I love that expression we don't sugarcoat it we just speak and tell it like it is we are admonished to speak the truth in love and it's possible to be just one sided in that it is possible to be so loving in what you do and say that you are just gushing all over the place but the truth may not be coming from your mouth and it is possible to tell the truth and do it in a harsh way that divides people and that ostracizes and that that sets people aside and that depreciates people and we need both of those speak the truth in love and love is to be our greatest motivation and the best description

I've ever heard of agape love is when we say and do the thing that is in the best interest of the object of our love that's what real love is it's got nothing to do with feelings and I'm already past what I intended on the time so I think it's Elisha is going to be our young legs for this morning and get your microphone back there if you will see if somebody has questions or comments they'd like to share with us okay one right up here Joe Moore here's the mic thought and people say it if a lie is told enough times it becomes the truth and I'm thinking of evolution in our country today it's not a theory any longer it's the truth versus creation what's your thought about that well you're getting into next week's message now but I would just say this

I dare say I don't think that I don't think that hardly any of us myself included has any idea of the enormous implications and outspreading of the embracing of the evolutionary hypothesis I don't think any of us have any idea the ramifications of that and how extensive it has been and how connected so many things that are taking place in our culture today are related to that it is just it is mind-boggling and it's downright scary but we'll look at that more next week thank you that's a very good question it's it's when I was in Westminster Abbey a number of years ago in London England we visited the Abbey and it's a magnificent structure took them several hundred years just to build the thing because it's so mammoth and so expensive and so beautiful it's just stunning jaw-dropping it's just amazing and I was told that

[38 : 10] Charles Darwin was buried there at Westminster Abbey and you know Westminster Abbey is just an enormous elaborate indoor graveyard that's what it is kings and queens and prime ministers and everybody's buried there like that and one of those buried there was Charles Darwin and I looked in the directory and I just wanted to find the place on the floor where it says Charles Darwin and I stood there and I muttered under my breath with no fear that Darwin would hear me Darwin you were wrong you were wrong and I'll tell you something none of us including myself has any idea of the incredible implications and falling out of evolution and how it has impacted our whole world it is amazing it is amazing the connections are unavoidable and we'll be looking at that next week too other comments or questions did I see some okay well if there aren't any more

I'm glad I took the time that I did and I apologize for my froggy voice would you stand please I guess this is it all right thank you we are we are entering a new year and in many ways it is going to be explosive and you've heard the expression many times over the past couple of years about fake news where you haven't heard anything yet and congressman Jordan I appreciate your presence this morning and we want to remember you especially in prayer as you go back to Washington because brother we know you got a full plate ahead of you and a lot of things you're going to be dealing with for the welfare of this nation and there will be a lot of untruth to overcome and nothing works like the truth works so pray with me if you would please our father we recognize that there is so much involved in this subject it is so expansive and yet so very critical and important and our prayer is for each and every person here and particularly for these precious younger people children who can inculcate the principles and the ideals of truth in their minds and hearts that will serve them so well for all the rest of their life and enable them to honor you and we pray this morning for each of us as we anticipate the upcoming of a new year there are going to be all kinds of opportunities good and bad that will confront us there are going to be all kinds of claims that will be made some true and some false and we desperately need as an electorate we desperately need a spirit of discernment so that we will be able to understand and determine truth from error and we look to you for that direction and we pray for our dear brother Jim as he returns shortly after the new

year to resume his responsibilities in the

House of Representatives we cannot imagine the stress and the pressure that these men serve under but we know that they are there because they have a desire to serve the nation and to serve you and we pray your richest blessing upon them and especially that you will give them the fortitude the courage the stamina physically emotionally mentally that will be needed to withstand so many things that will be coming against them we are grateful for Jim being in the place he is and for his colleagues like him with like heart and mind and we commit them to your grace in Christ's name amen amen