

**TRUE VALUES**  
**Micah 6:6-8; John 18:33-38a**

**(Read John 18:33-38a)**

**Intro:** I liked my catchy sermon title when I came up with it. In this politically charged climate we're in as the election of the century is looming in nine days everyone is saying they are the values candidate. Whole forests have been sacrificed to produce campaign post cards from both parties saying "Vote for me! I'm the one with true American values!" I received a "non-partisan" voter's guide recently that showed me where each candidate stood on issues. The problem was those were clearly the issues of only one party – the one that stood for particular values.

I feel like Pilate who asked "What is truth?" as I ask what are true values?

So it was ironic that as I looked for this sign and for a True Value Hardware I discovered that if Farm & Home ever was True Value it isn't anymore and I have to go all the way to Belleville or New London to find one – you have to go so far to find True Value. What made it all doubly ironic is that in my digging I found that True Value has filed for bankruptcy. So my catchy sermon title seems to be timely in a society where we're arguing over what true values are and ending up with our own bankrupt versions of them.

We are being asked to vote for true values and we truly ask ourselves

What's true?

And

What are true values?

And my answer is that the answer can only be found HERE!!!!

And so as we live these days – not just the nine days until Election Day – let's make sure this is our only guide rather than a voter's guide or a party platform. They change with each election but the word of God never changes. Listen, *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.* Isaiah 40:8 or in Jesus's own words, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Matthew 24:35. So, with that in mind, let's look at his word – specifically what Jeffrey read earlier and also the passage from John that I read as I opened this talk.

First, in response to the sarcastic questions of the so-called people of God, Micah responds with

**HE has showed us what is good**

- They're essentially asking in a whiney voice, "Whatta ya want from us God?! Do you want burnt offerings of perfect calves or thousands of rams or rivers of olive oil? Or do you want us to sacrifice ourselves on the altar?!" Whatta ya want?!!!"
- The truth is he does want self-sacrifice – but the kind that makes us full of justice as it is described here in the Word of God and that we love kindness – in a world that is getting nastier and more caustic each day, and that we WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD. Peterson puts it this way.

*But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do,  
 what God is looking for in men and women.*

*It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor,  
 be compassionate and loyal in your love,*

*And don't take yourself too seriously—  
 take God seriously.* Micah 6:8 (The Message)

- That is what is good. That is what True Values are. It's right here! God has made it plain right here! Take God seriously and love others like God does – it's the Great Commandment – Love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40)
- Jesus took it further as he was speaking to Pilate. As the Roman Governor arrogantly looks down his nose at him he says to him . . .

**For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37a)**

- And everyone who is of the truth LISTENS TO MY VOICE! (John 18:37b) and NOT the news reader or the headlines. They will lead you into anxiety and depression – for peace that passes understanding we need to listen to the voice of Jesus.

- Let me back up. Pilate could only think in terms of politics and power so he figured that Jesus was just another pretender to the throne who was raising a rebellion. The religious leaders had brought Jesus to Pilate because his blasphemy made him eligible for execution but they needed Pilate to actually sign off on it. They didn't want Pilate to question him – they wanted him to let them kill him.
- Pilate was puzzled by this man. Floyd Filson writes this, "*Pilate didn't understand Jesus, but he perceived that in some sense Jesus was accepting the title of king, so he pushed his question: "So you're a king?" Jesus accepted the title, but it at once moved from the idea of political kingship, which Pilate could understand, to the idea of the kingdom of truth in which every person who responds to divine truth and commits himself to it would listen to him and obey him (v. 37). It is a kingdom of obedience to God's will as made known by Jesus, a kingdom where God is truly made known, accepted as Lord, and obeyed.*"
- Jesus was essentially responding, "Yes I'm king, and you and your Caesar only have any authority because God has allowed it." Pilate may have been looking down his nose at Jesus, but Jesus was saying "My kingdom is far above this one." Specifically he said, "*My kingdom is not of this world*". John 18:36. Saint Augustine pointed out in THE CITY OF GOD "that earthly kingdoms are based upon force, pride, the love of human praise, the desire for domination, and self-interest – all displayed by Pilate and the Roman Empire." But as David Guzik writes, "*The heavenly kingdom, exemplified by Jesus and the cross, is based on love, sacrifice, humility, and righteousness – and is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23).*"
- Here's the truth . . .

### **True values are from heaven**

- Not a hardware store, not Washington, or anywhere else, for that matter.
- Guzik writes this truth that we need to live by each every day, not just during election year: *Pilate's cynical question ("What is truth?") showed he thought Jesus's claim to be a King of Truth was foolish. Probably, Pilate did not mean that there was no truth, but that there was no truth in the kind of spiritual kingdom Jesus represented. For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth, Rome was truth, Caesar was truth, and political power was truth.*
- In our society it is the common belief that truth is what you make it. Guzik again, "*Many in our day ask Pilate's question, but from a different perspective. Noting that many things are true only on the basis of personal preference or perspective, they think all truth is personal, individual. They think there is no true truth about God; there is only my truth and your truth and one is as good as the other. Though this thinking is strong in our day, it denies the One who said: For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.*"
- Here is truth! Here is where you will determine your truth – your truth will be what you know is God's truth and you find that here in God's word.
- That is how, in the end, you will know True Values. Amen.