

This has been an interesting week. As we commemorated Jesus' last Passover meal on Thursday, and on Friday, tried to re-live in our minds, the agony of Jesus' human body on the cross, only to appreciate what He went through to "buy" our freedom from death, the world was caught up in a chaos of its own making.

Amidst the continuing, countless deaths in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and honour and blasphemy killings in Pakistan, a stabbing in Jerusalem of one of our own makes the headlines; then the clash of leaders whose egos are as big as the millions they lead, first between leaders of western countries and the Kremlin, then North Korea was sabre rattling again, and to cap it off, on Friday, we were treated to the "appalling and indefensible" article written by columnist Kelvin MacKenzie in *The Sun* on Friday, comparing the midfielder Ross Barkley to a "gorilla", and further alleging that men in Liverpool with similar "pay packets" to Barkley's, were "drug dealers".

Towards the end of the week, the BBC carried a news item titled, ***"The rise of left-wing, anti-Trump fake news"***, citing an example of an incorrect story of the unflattering, digitally-manipulated image, which suggested that US President Donald Trump had diarrhoea during a recent golf outing, and another falsely suggested he profited from US missile strikes in Syria.

There are well-known companies who by using specialist software, track readers' online behaviour, location and identity.

One research noted, "If you are consuming fake news and your political convictions lean towards the left, you're 34 times more likely than the general population, to be a college graduate.

"If you are consuming fake news and your political convictions lean towards the right, you are 18 times more likely than the general population, to be in the top 20 % of income earners."

And the study revealed another disturbing trend: the more a person consumes fake news, the more likely they are to vote. A researcher remarked, it is "*fascinating and frightening at the same time.*"<sup>1</sup>

The world has not changed over the past 2,000 and more years. The Gospel writer Matthew, writing primarily for Jewish readers, provides an interesting detail following his account of Jesus' resurrection.

**Allow me to read it to you.** *Matthew 27:1-15*

I was listening to a keynote speaker two days ago speaking on the subject, "Does Truth Matter?" who said, "*When Truth does not serve your purposes, truth doesn't matter*"<sup>2</sup>. Truth did not serve the purposes of the religious authorities, therefore sticking with truth, did not matter.

We are living in a world where, not only is *Truth* dispensable, but *Truth* is subjective.

Last year, Oxford Dictionary announced the word of the year as **POST-TRUTH**. We now live in a world in which "truth" is defined by our emotions and personal beliefs, and not defined by objective facts! This presents us with the danger that I can easily appeal to your emotions and expect you to believe what I say as *fact*, and I can raise my voice and become emotional and expect you to believe me, without offering you any objective facts!

We would hope and pray that it never comes to this, that the **emotional** submission of a witness or an accused in a court of law, and not objective facts, would influence a jury's verdict, and a judge would be swayed in their decision of sentencing by the emotions of the witness or the accused, and not by objective facts.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-39610175> at 18:40 on Saturday 15 April, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Ravi Zacharias at Temple University, Philadelphia USA

It may not be far off, and God help us if it does come about, because **Post-truth politics** is already here, a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion, totally disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points, to which factual rebuttals are ignored.

Why is this important on Easter Sunday morning?

Every religion I know, offers you a worship of God. Every religion bar one, offers you salvation through works and penance: do this, and don't do that and God will be pleased, and here's hoping He will reward you in some way, when your time on earth is finished. Every religion I know, makes the claim, *There is only one God, but there are many ways to reach him, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.* Every religion I know struggle to be clear about what happens when I die: will I be greeted with 70 virgins in heaven? will I struggle to stop myself from returning to earth as a lower being (an animal) because I did not live a life worthy of a better reward?

Jesus shows us differently. Jesus tells us, and Easter demonstrates to us, that there is life **after** death, life which first and foremost, restores our relationship with God, and returns us to the creation He first made, in which there was no death.

Lets go back for a moment into the *garden*, the creation God made for us on earth. He gave us every fruit in the garden to eat, but added **one single command:** *of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day you eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, **you shall surely die!*** One simple commandment we could not keep, when we fell for the lie that we could become **as God!** We introduced death into God's world, and Jesus had to come to vanquish, to crush, defeat and demolish death once and for all time.

There are three things about Truth:

1. **Truth cannot contradict itself.** Lies can entangle themselves in contradiction, but Truth cannot contradict itself. My grandmother used to say, *If you tell one lie, you will have to tell another to cover the first, then another to cover the first two, and so on until you find yourself contradicting everything you said.* But Truth cannot contradict itself.
2. **Truth will always prevail;** Truth will triumph and be victorious. This is the very nature of truth! In my limited experience of life, I can say this one thing with great certainty: in difficult times, whenever I have taken **the conscious decision** to bring Truth to the forefront and give it prominence, the author of Truth, God Himself has seen me through those difficult times, and great is His reward.
3. Which leads to the third point about Truth which is, **In Truth is life.** This is Jesus' unique claim which I find, no other religion or faith system offers: in Truth there is life. Jesus says, ***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.*** Jesus being one with the Father tells me, I don't have to **work** my way into the presence of God, I don't have to **find** a way into the presence of God, and I don't have to **talk** my way into the presence of God. Jesus **takes** me, **leads** me into the presence of God.

We started by noting that our post-truth world in which fake news is easily generated and believed as true, a world in which religious leaders offer their opinion, and personal beliefs as a representation of Truth, is not very different from what happened on the day of Jesus' resurrection. The guards knew they were culpable and deserving of punishment if they went to the Commander-in-Chief, the Governor himself. They knew the Truth of what happened, and it was expedient for them to cash in on their knowledge of facts.

So they turn up in front of the Jewish Chief Priests and told them, "all that had taken place"<sup>3</sup>.

To the religious leaders, the *Truth did not serve their purposes; the truth, therefore, did not matter*".

As we celebrate Easter today, among the festivities of food and good company, perhaps we might find time at the end of the day to consider the question: ***Does Truth matter to me?*** Don't expect a quick and easy answer, not because the delicious food and the red or white liquid you washed down with the food will still be singing merry in your blood stream; rather the question, ***Does Truth matter to me?***, will require you to consider the person of Christ Himself. Truth is not an ideology, nor a philosophy, a theory or even a theology. We who call ourselves Christian, Truth is embodied on a person, the person whose Name we take, Christ, who said, ***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life***. I know the way to the Father because I have come from the Father, I am Truth because my Father and I are one, and I am the life, because I live the life my Father lives - eternal life. ***The only way to the Father, is through me.***

The fake news is that the guards slept while the disciples came and stole his body to an undisclosed location.

The Truth is, Jesus was victorious over death, was resurrected and is alive.

**AMEN**

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:11