

Who's got the Truth
Heb 1:1-4, 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Well brothers and sisters, as we go through these pandemic circumstances together, I think we can all agree how difficult it has been to get a sense of what we can know for certain about the coronavirus, how it affects us and how we should respond.

If you remember all the way back to November of last year when the news first broke that a new virus had sickened some people in the city of Wuhan, it didn't seem to be cause for much concern as it was thought this was just an isolated instance of animal to human transmission and that this virus wasn't capable of human to human transmission.

But... a few weeks later, we learned that this virus was capable of human to human transmission – and that transmission likely took place through close contact with those who were sick.

And the initial list of symptoms were all respiratory related, and similar to influenza - we probably have those memorized

by now – sore throat, fever, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and it was thought that this virus was only a serious concern for the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions.

But then as time went on it became apparent that it wasn't just affecting seniors – there were cases of younger people and even children getting severely ill as well, even dying.

And hospitals were discovering that the virus was affecting more than just respiratory systems.

People were coming in for seemingly unrelated issues like heart attacks, gastrointestinal pain, or loss of smell and taste but ended up testing positive for the coronavirus and their symptoms were linked to having Covid-19.

So the variety of puzzling symptoms has doctors and medical researchers wondering if Covid-19 is truly a respiratory disease or if it is in fact a vascular system disease that starts in the respiratory tracts – they are not certain.

And while initially we thought that only those who were sick and showing symptoms were in danger of spreading the virus, later reports out of China and Korea suggested that community transmission was occurring because of asymptomatic spreaders who were unknowingly contaminating surfaces and objects with the virus.

However... last month a report from the CDC in the U.S. claimed that they have not been able to document a single case that occurred from surface transmission and it appears that surface transmission may not pose as great a risk as was first thought.

And other studies are shedding new light on how we emit microscopic aerosol particles as we breath, sing or “speak moistly” and how they can travel farther than we might expect and linger in enclosed spaces and ventilation systems, potentially contributing to the spread of the virus.

And this potential of aerosol transmission seems to have finally convinced our public health officials, who up to this

point have been non-comital in their recommendations about wearing masks, that that for now... it’s maybe a good idea to do this when you are not able to maintain the recommended distance of six feet/ two meters apart from others... or is it one meter apart now?

Maybe you’ve heard that some countries have narrowed the social distance, while others have not.

And of course, social media is full of anecdotal stories and testimonies about various remedies and preventative options.

I’ve seen posts urging people to make sure they take Vitamin D to help boost their immune system, others are endorsing zinc, and remember that warning about how taking ibuprofen could worsen Covid-19 symptoms... and of course we’ve all heard about Hydroxychloroquine and the controversy surrounding its supposed effectiveness in treating Covid-19.

But most surprising are the studies in China and in the U.S. have found lower percentages of smokers among COVID-19

patients than would be expected, and this have prompted further study to see if nicotine has any effect on the virus.

And when it comes to a potential vaccine, some reports are speculating that it will be over a year away while others seem to indicate that testing and trials are already happening.

And as our country moves out of lockdown and into the various phases of re-opening, and we evaluate our initial response and the efforts that were supposedly necessary to “flatten the curve” many people are questioning the reliability and accuracy of the modeling sets that were used to forecast potential infection and death rates, because the actual numbers are so much lower than what was predicted.

And last but not least this pandemic has been a fertile breeding ground for conspiracy theories, and there have been several notable ones which have spread faster than the coronavirus itself.

There are conspiracy theories focused on the origins of the virus and whether or not it was man-made, and whether it was purposely released into the general public or not.

There are conspiracy theories that say this whole thing is a Plandemic, that the virus is a hoax, and that its all a mainstream media lie concocted by the gov’t in order to justify the suspension of civil liberties and rights, and of course many of us are familiar with how any mention of a vaccine leads to conspiracy theories – in this case Bill Gates seems to get connected with motives of world domination through a mandatory vaccination program.

But my personal favorite is how the installation and activation of 5G cell tower networks is responsible for causing the outbreaks of covid-19 and spreading the coronavirus through higher levels of radiation.

Now – I’m reminding us of all these pandemic examples, where it has been difficult – frustratingly so at times - to know with any degree of certainty what exactly is going on... and

how it could affect us... and what we ought to do in response... because I want to turn this experience into an object lesson for us about *“who has the truth!”*

When we encounter all this changing information, when the media reports are shifting every couple of weeks, when medical professionals and health authorities can't agree on what is actually going on... we start to wonder who has the truth? Does anyone out there really know what is actually going on? How do we know? How can we find that out?

Brothers and sisters think back over the past three months and try to recall - what did you do to sort through all the conflicting information to try and find the truth?

I'm sure that some of us used credentials and expertise as a way to filter through all the info, while others in a similar fashion looked at who actually had the authority to be making public statements. And I'm sure that many people also assessed the information according to their own sense of what seemed prudent and possible.

And maybe its also good to have us think about and answer the question of WHY we wanted to know the truth about this situation? Why did we want to have accurate and correct and certain knowledge?

Probably because we have heard there is something out there which has the potential to infect us and make us very sick and threaten our lives and the lives of those whom we love and if we make an incorrect move or decision it could lead to a very damaging or even fatal consequence.

And also because the gov't has been making decisions which have affected everyone in terms of businesses and the economy and our daily lives and we want to know if the sacrifices we have been forced to make were justified.

So, brothers and sisters – I know this experience has had many of us wondering... who has the truth? Which is really ironic if you think about it...

That the people in our community, in our city, and across our country – who would normally say truth is relative and that there are no such things as absolutes... and that if something is true for you then its true for you, but not for me... that our society would be in a situation where they want to know with certainty “the truth!”

I think this is the first time since – well I don’t know when – that our modern world has been faced with a such a crisis, where we just don’t really know all that much about it.

And the reason this is so frustrating for us is that we’re not used to being in the dark like this, and we don’t realize that this kind of piecemeal, shifting and changing, contradictory, gathering and sorting of information and evidence which takes time, sometimes a long time - is the normal way that we come to establish what is true.

It doesn’t happen like it does on TV or in the movies where the CSI unit finds some evidence at the scene of a crime and sends it over to the lab and after 30min and a cool soundtrack,

they’ve done all the “science” and have come to conclusive results which identifies the killer.

That’s not real science – that’s science fiction.

So, I think this pandemic has shown the general public that real science doesn’t happen quickly, and its not some sort of uniform institution that can just discover “the truth” as it is needed.

And that is frustrating because this isn’t very helpful when we are in a crisis and we need “the truth” in order to respond quickly - and correctly – in order to make decisions that won’t come back to bite us afterwards.

Now please don’t misunderstand me – I’m not slagging on science here. In fact just a couple weeks ago we looked at how this pandemic illustrated the importance of green spirituality, which is all about discerning the Word of God in creation – and real science plays a significant role in helping us do that.

But our pandemic experience also shows us the limitations we experience in our ability to know and discover the truth and the precarious position we find ourselves in when that is the case.

And I really want to draw on that experience this morning so that we can come to a much fuller appreciation of the need for “revelation” – which is what happens when the truth is shown to us, its fully revealed, there’s complete disclosure - as opposed to having to discover truth through a hit and miss process or step by step methodology.

A revelation in our current circumstances would be discovering that a forgotten file that existed in a lab somewhere which contained all the information about the coronavirus and Covid-19 and how to develop a vaccine and cure for it.

Even though that sounds a bit too much like a conspiracy theory.

Or it would be like someone came forward and said *“last night God spoke to me, and explained what’s going on with the coronavirus and Covid-19 and how to beat it and I wrote it all down so I can tell everyone”*

Even though that just sounds crazy and impossible.

But – they are both correct examples of how a revelation of the truth works.

And brothers and sisters I think we can see why a revelation of the truth about the coronavirus is needed and would be helpful – but even more I want us to see how we need a revelation of the truth when it comes to the sin virus!

Brothers and sisters the frustration and the precarious position that we experience in trying to discover the truth about the coronavirus, illustrates well for us, how scientific inquiry, expertise and common sense is frustrated and prevented from discovering the full truth about God and what is wrong in this world by the sin virus.

If there were no sin in this world, if there was no curse upon the creation – then the Word of God in Creation would be sufficient to reveal the truth of who God is to us.

But the sin virus affects everything – even our capacity for reason and inquiry and rationality.

A wise person once said “*Human beings are not rational animals – they are rationalizing animals.*” In other words, we can always find a good reason for our bad or sinful behavior.

And so the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:18, 21 that we have used our capacity for truth to suppress the truth and as a result our thinking becomes darkened and futile, and the Word of God in creation is not sufficient to overcome this effect of sin and show us to the full truth of God and what has happened in this world. Instead we need a revelation to break through and give us the truth directly!

So brothers and sisters – I hope and pray that not only are you understanding this, but that the pandemic experience of “who

has the truth” is opening it up for you in a whole new way so that when I tell you that the scripture is a revelation of the truth – it is giving you a much greater appreciation of the scriptures, a desire to receive the scriptures and to read the scriptures to discover the truth about God, what is wrong in this world and what God has done about it.

I hope that you would feel the frustration of not being able to figure it out and know what is really going on... but then experience the relief and insight as scripture reveals the truth to you.

One of my professors wrote a book about the scripture from this perspective – and He called it “*The True Story of the Whole World*” Now I know that might sound a bit like a conspiracy theory - but its true.

But the thing about conspiracy theories brothers and sisters – is look at who is telling them to you.

For example – the conspiracy theories really started to take off when the coronavirus established itself in the U.S. – prior to that we didn’t hear much about them. But once it landed in America... well, like I said – look at who is telling you all about the conspiracy.

So – should we write off the scripture’s claim to be a revelation of truth from God about what’s really going on in the world as we would a conspiracy theory??

Not according to the Apostle Paul and his advice to Pastor Timothy, because as Paul says in 2 Tim 3:10-11,14 *“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings— what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them... [you should] continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it...”*

Brothers and sisters the truth is that we have seen the witness, the passion, the commitment and the character of those who have encountered the scriptures as a revelation of the truth, there are many of them – over thousands of years.

And a conspiracy theory will always fail to improve your life or your character or your relationships or your situation. It just makes you more suspicious, distrustful and paranoid about that which is actually supposed to benefit you.

Whereas Paul can say in vs. 16-17 that the scriptures are useful for *“teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

And the scriptures also tell us how God actually spoke to people and revealed the truth to them about what had happened in this world, and what He planned to do about it, and that they were to write it down and tell other people about it.

As Hebrews 1:1 says *“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways...”*

So here it is revealed to us in the scripture that God spoke His Word directly to us in order to get His truth past our sinfulness.

And our sinfulness put up quite a fight – people ignored God’s prophets, they thought they were crazy, they ridiculed and mocked them, they even killed them.

But God persisted in speaking His Word to reveal the truth to us. One of the various ways He did that was to give us the Mosaic Law – best summarized in the 10 Commandments – with the intention that it would reveal our sinfulness to us.

But our sin is so crafty and subtle that it twisted the Law into good reasons for sinful behavior.

Still God persisted in speaking His Word to us – pushing past our sin and entering into the creation revealing the truth in a new way – the Word became flesh, Jesus Christ.

So Hebrews 1:2 says *“In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”*

What an amazing description of God’s revelation of the truth – the radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of his being!

In the Word becoming flesh God has succeeded in revealing the truth to us in a way that overcomes our sinful resistance and restores our ability to discern the truth of God’s Word in the creation and respond in faith and obedience.

Now if this still sounds like a bit of a conspiracy theory or just plain old crazy, let me just point out that the way in which God

has pulled off the greatest revelation of the truth – was to do so by becoming someone you could know.

By having a reliable written testimony about someone whose life and witness and character and teachings and miracles you could read about – and know...

So that you could consider all that you have learned from this revelation - and that you might become convinced that it is truth, because you have come to know the one who has revealed it to you.

Brothers and sisters – last week we came to a greater understanding of how Jesus is the way, today I hope you can see why Jesus said *“I am... the truth!”* (John 14:6)

May you eagerly receive the scriptures as the written revelation of truth from God and may they fulfil their stated purpose in your life

May they make you wise for salvation in Christ Jesus and may they teach you, rebuke you, correct you and train you in righteousness, so that you become a servant of God who is thoroughly equipped for every good work!

So... who has the truth brothers and sisters? If you have a bible in your hands – you do! Amen.