



John 7: 40-53

Some in the crowd who heard Jesus speak said, "This is truly the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Messiah." But others said, "The Messiah will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not scripture say that the Messiah will be of David's family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" So a division occurred in the crowd because of him. Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not bring him?" The guards answered, "Never before has anyone spoken like this one." So the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed." Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, "Does our law condemn a person before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "You are not from Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." Then each went to his own house,

Introductory Prayer: Christ, you are the most open-spirited person in history. You are open to all who sincerely seek you. So I seek you now, Lord, through this meditation. I hunger for your friendship and grace. I love you, but I long for my love to grow so I can be ever closer to you and more and more like you.

Petition: Lord, open my heart to you who are truth itself.

1. The Openness and Sincerity are Convincing: Just some moments prior, Christ has spoken of himself as living water (John 7:38), and some in the crowd react much the same way as did the Samaritan woman at the well. At first they thought of him as a prophet, but now they begin to believe that he is the Messiah. "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me..." (John 6:37). Even the temple guards could not bring themselves to arrest him, so compelling were his words. Christ tells his apostles not to prepare any words in their defense when they are dragged before judges and magistrates (Cf. Mark 13:11). Living in the truth is our best preparation for communicating it in a compelling way.

2. Willful Blindness: The leaders however, as Nicodemus points out, are not even willing to encounter Christ and hear him out. Their obstinacy leads them to error: “Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.” (What about Jonah and Hosea?) It also leads them to malice. They are not even willing to give Jesus the benefit of the doubt that he simply might have been delusional about his identity; instead, pushed by jealousy, they have already made up their minds to accuse him of willful deception. Do I knowingly and willingly shy away from the truth, any truth? Do I realize where this could and will lead me?

3. The Truth Will Set You Free: The truth is often difficult to swallow. In particular, the truth about Christ in relation to my life—he is my Lord, he is my Redeemer, he deserves my all—seems somehow fanatic, irrational, and unnatural in a world which values technological progress, political correctness, and looking-out-for-number-one. But Christians worthy of the name, in all centuries and in all walks of life, have discovered that believing in the person of Jesus Christ, who meant every word he said, is an experience of real freedom. It is a freedom from the dead-end world of materialism, sin and death. It is a freedom to live a life of love, truly human and divine, a love like Christ’s love for me, up to death on a Cross!

Conversation with Christ: Lord, no one has ever spoken like you. You have given us your Word in the gospels. I realize that I need to have much more frequent contact with your words so as to free me from my blindness. Let my understanding of your Word never serve me as an occasion of vainglory or arrogance, rather as a tool to help others come to know you better.

Resolution: I will break down a prejudice that I still harbor in my heart against some aspect of Christ’s message.