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Pentecost 3
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God's Word Stands Firm

1 Kings 22:10-14

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The word from God through which the Holy Spirit teaches us God's truth is 1 Kings 22. The text will be read throughout the sermon.

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

The world's view of truth continually changes. Political truths fluctuate with each news cycle as the story line is spun to favor one side or the other. Commercial truths proclaim this product to be the next big thing only to become yesterday's fading fad. Do you remember the crazes over Tickle Me Elmos, Cabbage Dolls, and Beanie Babies? Scientists continue to perform experiments to challenge the currently accepted theories. For them truth is constantly evolving as new knowledge is gained. And look at how the health news changes with the next headline. It's hard to keep track of what's good for you or not. Is it any wonder that like Pilate people of the world ask, "What is truth?" (John 18:38 NIV84). There seems to be nothing we can trust with absolute sureness.

Yet less than twenty-four hours before Pilate asked that, Jesus had prayed for his disciples, saying, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17 NIV84). Trust his word, dear friends. For God's Word stands firm. That's the theme today. And from the events recorded in 1 Kings 22 during the time of King Ahab, we see illustrated that God's Word stands firm undaunted by lies and undiminished in truth. Those are the two parts.

A. Undaunted by lies

First the setting. Nearly eighty years earlier the northern tribes of Israel had revolted against King Solomon's son. David's family line continued to reign in Jerusalem over Judah, but not over the northern tribes. So there were two kings at this time: Jehoshaphat from David's line was king of Judah and Ahab married to Jezebel was king of Israel ruling from Samaria. Ahab did not follow the Lord.

Now Ahab wanted to recapture an Israelite city that the king of Aram had taken years earlier. He invited Jehoshaphat the King of Judah to help him. Now as a faithful believer, Jehoshaphat said they should seek the counsel of the Lord. So Ahab had his prophets, led by Zedekiah, come out, and they all prophesied victory for the king.

But Jehoshaphat asked Ahab whether there was a prophet of the Lord they could inquire of. Ahab answered that there was still one. His name was Micaiah. But Ahab hated him because he never prophesied anything good about Ahab, only bad. But to please Jehoshaphat Ahab sent for Micaiah as the other prophets prophesied. And that's where the text begins.

"Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah

were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared. "This is what the LORD says: "With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed."

"All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. 'Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,' they said, 'for the LORD will give it into the king's hand.'

"The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably.'" (1 Kings 22:10-13 NIV84).

Notice how the lie of victory comes across. First, it's appealing. Who doesn't want to hear promises of earthly success and happiness? Next it's popular. All the prophets were saying it, and they wanted Micaiah to say it. They had nothing against him as long as he didn't contradict them. Third it had the authority of King Ahab behind it. Fourth it was well-communicated, even using the visual aid of those iron horns. And finally, they claimed it came from the Lord. Those prophets used the name that points not to just any lord or god, but to the LORD, the God of Israel, Yahweh, Jehovah.

Still today, be on your guard, dear Christians. Don't believe something simply because it's appealing. It's so tempting to say, "This must be true because it feels right to me." But our sinful nature within us so easily twists our feelings to run after whatever scratches our itching ears.

Don't believe something simply because it's popular. I'm not only talking about worldly popularity, but even if many churches say, "This is the way to go," that doesn't make it right.

Don't believe something simply because an authority figure says it's true, whether that authority comes from a secular or a religious source.

Don't believe something because it's presentation is so skillful and charismatic.

And don't believe something because it claims to come in the name of the Lord. Remember what Jesus said in the Gospel from Matthew 7: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22, 23 NIV84).

Don't let any of these things discourage or dishearten you about God's truth. Don't let them silence you from sharing God's truth. Don't give into them. Rather stand undaunted with Micaiah and say, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." (2 Kings 22:14 NIV84).

But how do you know what the Lord tells you? Because he already has it all written down for you. That's what the Bible is: God's written word, the Scriptures. Don't believe the lies out there that say the Bible is unclear and no one can be sure what it says. Don't you think that God knows how to say what he means? Yes, there are many interpretations out there and many different churches but not because the Bible is unclear. Rather it's because the fallen, human mind is unclear, clouded by sin. So people read into the Bible what is not there and leave out what God clearly does say.

How can you know God's truth? By knowing your Bible. How do you do know your

Bible? Two keys thoughts here: Read it for yourself and study it with your fellow Christians. For you see, our fellow Christians help us fight our own natural inclinations to read our own ideas into the Bible instead of letting God speak for himself through his written word. That's also why our church body has its pastors thoroughly trained in the Bible. Pastors are not some outside authority telling us what to believe, rather they help us to see all that the Bible says since they've been thoroughly trained in it. They are more aware of the ways the human mind has twisted the Bible and can help us guard against that in ourselves.

B. Undiminished in truth

Now because God's Word stood firm, undaunted by those lies, so did Micaiah. He spoke God's message. He said that Israel would be defeated and Ahab would be killed. He said that what all the others prophets spoke were lies. What did Micaiah receive for his honesty? Zedekiah slapped him and accused him of being a false prophet, and Ahab imprisoned him.

Ahab did his best to prove Micaiah wrong. He went into battle disguised. Only King Jehoshaphat wore royal robes. At first Ahab's rouse appeared to work. The chariot commanders of Aram pursued Jehoshaphat until they realized he wasn't the king of Israel. But Ahab didn't escape. He was hit by a seemingly random arrow and bled to death. God's word does not fail. All the lies in the world can not diminish its truth.

Still today God's word stands firm undiminished in truth despite the raging of the world against it. It's truth first confronts our sinfulness and crushes us. How often haven't you and I neglected God's word failing to read and study it? How often we conform to the world's thinking rather than holding our minds captive to God's word! How often we lack the courage to speak God's truth in love, fearfully of what others might think! Don't diminish the severity of what God's law says to us sinners. God's Word stands firm undiminished in truth. How we deserve to have God take his word away from us and leave us lost and damned! That's what we would have done to someone who treated us the way we've treated God and his word.

But how contrary to our thinking God's ways are! Look at God's patience with Ahab. Ahab had already done many horrible things. But the Lord still sent Micaiah to warn him, even though God knew he wouldn't listen.

Look at God's patiences with you and me. We have Bibles around us. What Good News those written words speak to your heart crushed by sin! God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son—he gave him up on the cross for you—so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Don't imagine that's too good to be true. Don't try to diminish God's love, by doubting whether it's great enough to include you. God's Word stands firm undiminished in truth, undiminished in the promise of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Believe the Good News. Jesus is your Savior. Such Good News never grows old in our hearts. Rather the more we hear it the more we cherish it. Treasure his word as you read it, study it, and share it. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.